

Horizons

Memoirs of a British Diplomat

by

Anthony Goodenough

First published 2021
by Goodenough Editions
8 St Paul's Mews, Dorking, RH4 2HP
a.m.goodenough@btinternet.com

This second, shorter, edition covers my working life in the Diplomatic Service and in the charitable world, first as a young teacher with Voluntary Service Overseas in Sarawak and, after retirement, as Secretary General of the Order of St John, Vice President of Wellington College and a Governor of Goodenough College. It does not include material on my early life, my family and ancestors, all of which are covered in the first edition only, under the title "Many Horizons".

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ISBN 978-1-9993116-1-2

Dedication and thanks

This book is dedicated with love and gratitude to
my wife Veronica
and to
our children Eleanor, Nicholas and Robert
and their families,
for whom it was primarily written.

I am also enormously grateful to
my brother Simon
for his endless patience and help in editing the book
and also for allowing me to quote from his recent research into our family
history. He has published the full fruits of his work in his book
'Family' and in a companion volume,
'A Grand Packet of Letters'.

I should also like to express my warm appreciation and gratitude to all my
colleagues in the British Diplomatic Service with whom I was lucky enough to
work in the course of my career. Inevitably, in memoirs of this kind, the word "I"
features far too often and there is not room to do justice to the work of every
individual, only a few of whom are mentioned here by name. But we were all
members of a team which was collectively responsible for whatever we did. I
was most aware of this in my last three jobs, as High Commissioner to Ghana,
Assistant Under Secretary of State in London and High Commissioner to
Canada. My heartfelt thanks to you all.

My particular thanks are due to David Logan, my friend of more than 70 years
from Malta, school, university and the Diplomatic Service, for his advice on the
text and for encouraging me to publish the book.

Finally I want to thank all the Ministers for whom I worked for their political
leadership and personal kindness which made my time in the Diplomatic
Service all the more enjoyable.

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INTRODUCTION

Three general themes emerge from this book. The first is the wide variety of my career. Although it was relatively conventional and, unlike some of my diplomatic colleagues, I was rarely involved in major headline events, it was never dull and always busy. I served a quarter of my time dealing with African affairs, mostly from London but also as High Commissioner to Ghana. Two of my postings were in Europe - Greece and France. One was in Asia - Pakistan. One to North America - as High Commissioner to Canada. Three of these five overseas postings were to dictatorships - Greece, Pakistan and Ghana. The other two were to strong Western democracies - France and Canada. A half of my entire career was spent in London, an unusually high proportion of the total. In London I served in a variety of roles: desk officer, assistant head of department, head of department, under secretary, and ministerial private secretary, all in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), and as an assistant secretary in the Cabinet Office. Three of these London jobs dealt in one way or another with the European Economic Community.

The second and more important underlying theme is of Britain gradually adjusting from its former position as a major power to a more limited role in which it still exercised global responsibilities but was increasingly obliged to prioritise its international aims, making the most of the hand that history dealt us as well as of its new membership of the European Community - until in a fit of national madness we decided to leave it.

The third theme is more personal. A constant challenge throughout my career was how best to balance the demands of the job and the love I felt for my family. Some times they conflicted; and on rare occasions I felt obliged to allow the first to take precedence, although the Diplomatic Service was good at helping its members to reconcile the two as far as possible. In the first edition of this book, under the title 'Many Horizons' I included the main parts of my family's story. Veronica and our children, Eleanor, Nicholas and Robert added an account of their own activities and some of their impressions and memories. This second edition concentrates uniquely on my own working life.

The original draft of the chapters on Africa and its affairs was far longer than appears in this memoir. I have lodged it in the archives of Churchill College to add to the oral account I gave of my career for the British Diplomatic Oral History Programme in case it proves useful for research purposes. This memoir contains a shorter version.

CHAPTER 1

THE FOREIGN OFFICE, 1964 - 1967

I first thought of the Foreign Office as a career at school. A friend was aiming to go to Cambridge before, he hoped, sitting the FO exam. I found that one advantage of being able to tell people that I too wanted to enter the FO was that I had something to say to my uncles and godfathers when they asked me what I was planning to **do** in life. And, gradually, the idea became increasingly firm. I confess that I had very little understanding of what a FO career would entail; but I liked the thought of life overseas and of working for the Government for which my father and maternal grandfather had also worked, the first as a naval officer and the second as a colonial governor.

I had also considered schoolmastering as well as overseas educational publishing, management consultancy, Shell, the British Council and the Commonwealth Development Corporation. My uncle, a senior banker, warned me to steer clear of the latter and feared that I would find government service apt to be cramped and confining and therefore frustrating. But the Warden of New College, my Oxford college, Sir William Hayter, had been Ambassador to the Soviet Union and encouraged me in my ambition to try for the Foreign Office. On the other hand, my mediaeval history tutor, Harry Bell, recommended the Commonwealth Relations Office. "Anthony," he said, "you are a Commonwealth man." As things turned out I was to enter the Foreign Office one year before it and the Commonwealth Relations Office were amalgamated. And I was to serve in two foreign countries, two Commonwealth countries and in Pakistan when it was foreign but just before, happily, it returned to the Commonwealth. So I contrived to follow the advice of both Warden Hayter and Harry Bell.

My entry to the Foreign Office did not go smoothly. I took the preliminary exam of four rather general papers in January of my third year, 1963; but failed to get a high enough mark to qualify for what was known then as Method 2. This was a three day series of interviews and oral tests held by the Civil Service Commission and introduced after World War II for the benefit of candidates who had been fighting in the war and could not therefore have been expected to take an academic exam. But I did qualify for Method I, the original pre-war academic exam in which one sat seven three hour papers in the subject of one's choice shortly after the university final degree exams had finished in June. I spent the intervening three weeks swatting up all my notes again, including some from

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school days since the Civil Service syllabus was not identical to Oxford's. Successful candidates from both Methods then went for final interview at the Civil Service Commission. I heard the result in Sarawak as I recount in Appendix 1.

Thus it was, on 3 September 1964, on my return from Sarawak, I joined the old Foreign Office. Four years later, on 17 October 1968, the Foreign Office was to merge with the Commonwealth Office into the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (since 2020 Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office - FCDO). On that date, Michael Stewart, the last Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, would become the first Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. The process of amalgamating the two offices was under way when I arrived; but I am still proud to have joined the pre-1968 Foreign Office. Rightly or wrongly, we regarded ourselves as an elite.

New entrants were given no formal training, only a seven day introductory course with 20 or so fellow fast streamers, destined for both the Foreign Office (FO) and Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO), a sign of the impending merger. We met under the chairmanship of Sir David Scott, a silver-haired retired diplomat, in the Council Chamber of the old India Office, which had been a separate department of state until the birth of the independent states of India and Pakistan in 1947. Sir David suffered from gout and therefore understandably wore dark blue canvas sailing shoes. His best advice at the course was 'keep your friendships in good repair', by which he meant that we should not allow old friendships to be eroded by distance or time. I have tried to follow this wise principle throughout my life, not always successfully.

I remember only two of our speakers. Sir Patrick Reilly, a Deputy Under Secretary, whose appointment as Ambassador to France would be terminated by George Brown in 1968, spoke on the work of the Foreign Office in general. He was the only speaker to address us on his feet. The others all sat. But Ewen Fergusson's talk about his first overseas posting as a third secretary in Addis Ababa made a deeper impression, perhaps because I enjoyed the thought of life as a junior diplomat in a small cottage on the Embassy's estate at 8,000 feet in the Ethiopian highlands. Ewen too would become Ambassador to France; and I would visit our Embassy in Addis Ababa on several occasions in the future.

More memorable than anything the speakers said was the copy given to each of us of a lecture by the historian and former diplomat, Harold Nicolson, to new entrants in 1945. He had explained the special qualities which he believed a

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member of the British Foreign Service should possess and develop, and which were most likely to render him (there were no 'hers' then) useful to his superiors, to themselves and to the community at large. *"Common-sense, I should take for granted. Average energy and industry; average powers of application and concentration; average intelligence; the avoidance of the more extreme, the more excessive, the more inveterate, the more eccentric, and above all the more overt forms of dissipation: all these I also take for granted. If I were asked to define in one word the quality most essential to any member of the Foreign Service I should use the word 'reliability.'" Nicolson went on to identify the main components of reliability: "namely truthfulness, precision, loyalty, modesty and a sense of proportion."* I myself believe that trustworthiness merits a separate special mention in Nicolson's list. But perhaps this is covered by Nicolson's inclusion of "truthfulness" and "loyalty." A diplomat who cannot be trusted by his superiors, his contemporaries and his host government is not fit to serve in the Foreign Service.

I cannot resist quoting two other sentences from Nicolson's lecture. First: *"Obviously, and without question and in all circumstances, the loyalty which matters most, the one which must have precedence over all other loyalties, is loyalty to the Foreign Secretary."* Secondly, at a more prosaic level: *"..the reason why I was fortunate enough as a young man to be given interesting work at the Foreign Office was in no sense due to my own knowledge, judgement or brilliance, but to the fact that I was also careful to prepare papers or files sent in to my superior in such an order, and with such method, as would save him any unnecessary trouble."* I tried to remember this advice when preparing papers for my own superiors in the Office.

For one reason or another, a surprising number of my fellow new entrants would leave the Service early. And only five of us reached the rank of Ambassador or High Commissioner: David Blatherwick (Egypt), David Gore-Booth (Saudi Arabia and India), Simon Hemans (Kenya and Ukraine), Chris Hulse (Switzerland) and myself (Ghana and Canada). And I have succeeded in remaining in touch with only one fellow entrant, Roger Martin, an unusual and high-principled man who had also served with VSO, as a cadet in Northern Rhodesia, and who resigned as Deputy High Commissioner in Harare in 1986 in fury against British policy to Zimbabwe. Roger's premature departure probably opened the way for my own African appointments later in my career, because his African credentials were greatly superior to mine.

From the course, we went our separate ways, some to hard language training, others to one or other of the departments in the FO or CRO. I assumed that my

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own appointment to South East Asian Department (SEAD) in the FO had been due to my recent experience in Sarawak, however little teaching had equipped me for FO work. But it had at least given me some knowledge of Indonesia's policy of confrontation, a subject which was preoccupying the department when I arrived, even though my own duties were as desk officer for SEATO, the South East Asia Treaty Organisation, and for the Philippines.

On my first day, I found myself behind one of four large desks in what was known as the third room (rooms one and two belonged to the head and assistant head of the department). In the afternoon, the occupants of the other three desks all left for a meeting with their colleagues in the CRO, leaving me instructions to make a note of anyone who telephoned in their absence. Sounds easy. But each desk had two telephones, an internal and external one. Presently one rang. Hardly had I picked it up and was beginning to explain who I was, where its owner was, when he would ring back and could the caller please spell his own name and repeat his number, than first one and then another of the seven other telephones in the room also began to ring. Remember that I had not used a telephone for a year. I got up, left the room, carefully locked it in accordance with the strict rules on security I had been given and went for a walk, leaving the telephones to ring to each other until their owners returned. No: I am not proud of this. And things did get better. But, after my year in the jungle, that first day in SEAD was a shock; and I confess to having wondered if I had made a serious mistake in leaving Sarawak.

Confrontation provided a good example of subjects which would benefit from a merger of the FO and the CRO. Each Office was responsible for a different party to the quarrel: the FO for Britain's relations with Indonesia and the CRO for its relations with Malaysia, a Commonwealth country. The two Offices therefore needed to liaise very closely together. The difficulty was solved pragmatically by the formation of a joint department answerable to both Offices, the Joint Malaysia Indonesia Department (JMID), the first joint department of its kind. It was housed in adjoining rooms on either side of 'the hole in the wall', a narrow passage between the FO and the CRO, on the second floor at the end of the corridor where my own room in SEAD, overlooking Downing Street, was situated. From my window I could watch Harold Wilson arrive at Number 10 having narrowly won the October 1964 election.

SEATO had been created in 1954, largely at US instigation, to block communist expansion in South East Asia. Its members were the US, Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines and Thailand. It lacked military

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forces of its own and, if only because of the presence of France and Pakistan, there was very little of actual political or military value in the Organisation. The US failed to persuade it to support its intervention in Vietnam, and so decided to intervene unilaterally. SEATO did however agree to fund a number of cultural and educational programmes in South East Asia before it was eventually dissolved in 1977. My job was to co-ordinate instructions for our Ambassador in Bangkok who attended a monthly meeting of his colleagues representing the membership, mostly about those programmes and minor housekeeping matters. And I also had the job of preparing for the tenth council meeting in London in 1965. This gave me a lot of drafting practice in the writing of briefs for the British delegation, an understanding of basic FO procedures and experience in liaising with the FO's own internal departments as well as other Ministries, including the Ministry of Defence and the Department of Technical Cooperation in charge of Britain's aid programme. In addition, as desk officer for the Philippines, I was responsible for Britain's bilateral relations with that country, a not very onerous task, although I remember taking an interest in the Philippines' territorial claim to parts of North Borneo.

I shared a room with Derek Tonkin, in charge of the Indonesia and Burma desks. His work on Indonesia overlapped considerably with JMID on confrontation but he was clearly the unrivalled authority on Burma in which few others in Whitehall took much notice outside the Treasury which was, I seem to recall, exercised by certain debts owed to HMG. A busy man, he nevertheless found time to give me advice as I gradually got to grips with the mysteries of FO work. My immediate boss was Donald Murray, who had lost a leg in the Second World War. His official title was simply 'Assistant', a role which was suppressed later as economies struck and the work of the Assistant was divided between the head of the department above and the desk officers below. But he seemed to me to perform a valuable function in protecting the head of the department from a new entrant like me and in relieving the head of some of his responsibilities so that he could concentrate on the most important and urgent business. The head of SEAD at the time was James Cable, a rather remote and alarming figure who proved on closer acquaintance friendly and approachable. I learned to call him James in accordance with the FO habit by which every officer called every other serving at home, however senior, by their Christian names, except for the head of the Office, the Permanent Under Secretary of State, who one addressed as 'PUS'. Abroad the same principle applied. One called the Ambassador 'Sir' and others by their Christian names.

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I used to get invited to occasional diplomatic parties including a reception given by HMG for the SEATO Council meeting in London. I found myself standing next to a craggy figure to whom I diffidently introduced myself. I asked how long he had been in London. "Two years", he replied. "And before that, your Excellency?" (it seemed wise to assume he was an Ambassador). "I was in Kabul". "Ah, your Excellency, in the Foreign Ministry?". "I was Prime Minister" he replied. Mercifully an eddy in the crowd removed me from further confusion.

In the summer of 1965, after the SEATO Council meeting was safely over, I was moved to PUSD, the "Permanent Under Secretary's Department", responsible for liaison between the Foreign Office and the intelligence agencies. My new office, shared with Derek Milton, was on the tenth floor of Century House, a building on the South Bank, with a fine view of St Paul's Cathedral to the east. In those days, when the existence of the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS), was not avowed, we explained our work as being to liaise with the Ministry of Defence. My friends could not understand why an office liaising between the FO on one side of Whitehall and the MOD on the other should be situated on the far side of the river; but put it down to the mysterious ways of Government.

My head of department was that wonderful man, Christopher Ewart-Biggs, later murdered by the IRA (in Dublin as Ambassador). He used to describe our work as 'looking up Whitehall's trouser leg'. He drove a white Jaguar between Century House and the Foreign Office, skilfully and fast despite a black patch over one eye lost in the War. Because of the sensitivity of the work and the need-to-know principle, I used to have to deal direct with Foreign Office senior staff. But I can remember little of the people I worked with in Century House nor what we dealt with, except for one unusual subject well outside the department's normal work.

Thanks largely, I think, to the personal interest of the Secretary to the Cabinet, Sir Burke Trend, it had been decided to commission an Oxford historian, Michael Foot, to write an official history of the secret war-time work in France of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) from official archives. 'SOE in France' had just been published. It had been well reviewed; but several British agents, who felt their exploits had been undervalued or misreported by Foot, took libel action against the author. HMG found itself in the firing line from MPs in and out of Parliament. Someone was needed to help brief Ministers on the facts. I was given the job. I used to have to go back to the original war-time documents, on the basis of which Michael Foot had written his account, to see whether what he had written was supported adequately by the archives. It was academic and

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extremely interesting work. There were also decisions to be taken on whether to publish a second edition of the book in response to demand or whether to wait until the dust had settled a bit. I remember attending a meeting in Burke Trend's office in the Cabinet Office to take stock of the libel cases and reach a decision on a second edition. This must have been one of the rare opportunities for a virtually new entrant to have direct contact in a small meeting with the Cabinet Secretary.

After nearly 18 months in PUSD, Personnel Department sent me on a five month economics course at the Treasury Centre for Administrative Studies (TCAS) in an elegant 18th-Century building on the edge of Regent's Park. There were 20 or so of us, mostly from the Home Civil Service, but with a handful of diplomats, all except me after a first overseas posting.

Looking back on my first three years in the Office, I can detect no plan behind the decisions taken by Personnel Department on my career. I was moved from SEAD to PUSD and then to the TCAS for no apparent reason, except that I had made a reasonably good start, seemed competent, and was available for whatever came up in London until, in the fulness of time, I could be sent abroad. I seemed to be treated as if I had already had my first overseas posting. At any rate, whatever the reason, there I was studying economics on a course which had the reputation of delivering a full Economics degree in five months rather than a University's three years. I rather enjoyed the interlude. Sadly, although I passed the TCAS exams, by the time I came to apply my new knowledge of economics years later, other work had intervened and I had forgotten much of what I had learned.

One unexpected advantage of spending so long in London before my first overseas diplomatic posting was that I met my future wife. Veronica Pender-Cudlip and I were happily married on 22 July 1967 just before leaving for Greece.

CHAPTER 2

DICTATORSHIP IN GREECE: COLONELS, 1967 - 1971

"What about Athens?" a voice said one day on the phone from Personnel Department. I was still at the Treasury Centre for Administrative Studies and had never yet met my personnel officer, nor indeed was I to do so until several years later. "We thought of giving you some Greek language training first," the voice continued. "Fine" I replied, "But I'm planning to get married in July. May my wife learn Greek as well?"

To their credit, Personnel Department agreed, having no doubt consulted the Embassy, that we could both spend six months in Athens learning Greek before I started work in the Embassy in about March 1968. My predecessor had had to leave his wife behind for several months while he studied Greek in Salonica. The Foreign Office were soft hearted enough not to expect us to follow their example immediately after getting married.

So, after our honeymoon, we drove our new Triumph Herald through France and Italy to Ancona where we took the ferry to Patras. We camped on the way in my small childhood tent, not having realised until, penniless, I visited the Embassy on arrival that we were entitled to a handsome daily grant for hotels and our other travel expenses.

We arrived some four months after the coup that had brought the Colonels to power on 21 April 1967. I have no special insights into the causes of the coup. Its immediate origins lay in the election of George Papandreou's Centre Union party in 1964, Greece's first Government to have been controlled from outside the right since 1935. Papandreou sought to heal the wounds of Greece's civil war from 1946-49 by releasing political prisoners and allowing exiles to return. During the next three years, political tensions within Greece grew over policy on Cyprus, Greece's role in the western alliance, Papandreou's economic policies and labour unrest. New elections were called for May 1967 which Papandreou was expected to win. The coup pre-empted these elections. The Junta, as it was widely called, announced the revival of Greek Orthodoxy against corrupting Western influences and the restoration of political calm and peace. It banned all political activity and the independent trade unions and imposed strict Press censorship. Some 6,000 alleged Greek communists and others on the left were arrested and detained, mostly on the Aegean islands of Leros and Yaros. There

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were allegations of torture. In December, King Constantine staged a counter coup against the colonels; but, when it failed, went into exile.

Unpleasant as these events were for many Greeks, I regret to say that they did little to spoil those idyllic first six months of our married lives as we learned Greek together. We lived for a short time in a guest-house, The Greek Home, and then took a flat in Valaoritou Street, near Constitution Square, from which I remember seeing armed soldiers on the rooftop of buildings opposite on the day of the King's abortive counter coup. Later we spent two months with a Greek family in Nea Smyrna, an Athenian suburb, where many Greeks from Asia Minor had settled after the Greek/Turkish exchange of populations in 1922. Throughout this time I had two hours of Greek lessons a day, six days a week, with Alkis Anghelou, who had lost his job as a Professor of Greek Literature at Salonica University at the time of the coup because his brother had been detained on the islands. His wife, Aliko, taught Veronica. Alkis and Aliko used to take us on expeditions outside Athens at weekends and became dear friends. We spent the rest of our time swotting Greek: learning to read and write, memorising vocabulary, listening to the radio and to Linguaphone lessons, going to conversation classes at the American school. Veronica learned to speak and understand colloquial demotic Greek, a huge asset for us both when I began work in the Embassy. My own political and economic vocabulary was probably stronger than hers and in due course I managed to pass the Foreign Office's higher language exam; but she spoke and understand colloquial Greek better than I.

In March 1968, we found a delightful flat on the sixth floor of an apartment block at 43 Karneadou Street in Kolonaki near the Embassy. It was our home for the next three years, during which our two oldest children, Eleanor and Nicholas, were both born. From the balcony we looked out over the rooftops towards Mount Hymettos in the distance and could just see the Parthenon. We were in easy walking distance not only of Kolonaki Square and its pavement cafés but, only a little further, of Constitution Square and even the Acropolis. Behind our street rose Lycabettus Hill which commanded fine views of Athens and its surrounding mountains. I used to walk up fast for exercise. Years later a member of the British Council was murdered by terrorists in his car as he drove along the street outside our flat. I think the terrorists mistook him for a member of the political section of the Embassy, but there was no violence or terrorism under the Colonels' rule and we could travel in perfect safety throughout Athens and the entire country.

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I began work at the Embassy which was then still in Loukianou Street. As Second Secretary in Chancery, the political section, I was responsible for following Greece's internal political affairs in the wake of the coup, trying to understand the Junta's policies, studying their new legislation and assessing their intentions. These seemed to be slowly to work towards the gradual restoration of democracy but in a very restricted form. Tom Bridges, the Head of Chancery and therefore my boss, asked me to get to know some of the younger former politicians. Although some of them had been fairly senior figures in Government, because they were now out of a job, they were interested in maintaining contact with the British Embassy even with a junior figure like me. I gradually built up an acquaintance with half a dozen such people as well as with non-political figures with a professional background and members of the Press. Our friendship with Bob McDonald, a BBC correspondent, and his wife, Donna, dates from then. One of my duties was to discover what had happened to members of the old political world in answer to enquiries from their friends in Britain. Through my contacts with former politicians and the Press, I was usually able to find out if they had been imprisoned and where. I also made friends with the International Red Cross representative, Philip Grande d'Hauteville, who discreetly helped me keep track of the numbers of detainees and their gradual release.

The Embassy tried to assess attitudes of the Greeks themselves to the Colonels's regime. These ranged in my time in Athens, at one extreme, from the visceral hostility to the coup among the politicians I knew, which reflected the resentment of the whole political world, including on the right of the political spectrum, to relief, at the other extreme, in some business circles and parts of the professional middle class at the end of strikes and political demonstrations. Those strongly against the coup also included most of the academic world, intellectuals and unionised labour. In between these extremes lay a probable majority who chose to keep their heads down. Very few people took the risk of active opposition to the regime and those who did were quickly imprisoned.

Shortly after I started work, the Government published a new Constitution on which a referendum to consult the people was to be held in September. It retained the monarchy but gave the armed forces autonomy from governmental and parliamentary control and entrusted them with the role of guardians of the *status quo*. It imposed restrictions on political parties and established a constitutional watchdog, the Constitutional Court, with wide-ranging powers, to regulate the country's political life. The Ambassador asked Chancery for our assessment of this Constitution and Tom asked me to do a first draft. I

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remember, in my ignorance, labouring all weekend on a textual comparison of the document with the existing pre-coup version, a futile exercise because what was needed was a general judgement of the merits of the proposed new Constitution; but Tom kindly sent my analysis to the Foreign Office where I doubt if it was ever read even in the Research Department. Meanwhile, to my admiration, he himself quickly produced for the Ambassador the general assessment for which he had asked. The referendum itself was treated by the regime as a public vote of support on its policies. Participation was obligatory and abstention punishable by imprisonment. The regime employed extensive propaganda in favour of a "yes" vote, while any opposition was silenced. The referendum's results were thus predictably in favour of the new constitution: 92% voted 'Yes'; but, despite obligatory participation, abstention reached over 22%. The Embassy fanned out to observe as many polling booths as possible. I reported orderly queues on a journey from the south of the Peloponnese back to Athens.

To my regret Tom Bridges left soon after my arrival and his place as Head of Chancery was taken by a convivial Liverpudlian Irishman, Lawrence O'Keeffe. I found him more difficult to work for than Tom; and harmony within the Embassy was not helped by the difference of personality between him and John Powell-Jones, who took Derek Dodson's place as the Political Counsellor and who was as different from Lawrence as chalk from cheese. John, in his turn, was very different from the Ambassador. I used to find that Lawrence would heavily re-write my drafts whereas, if he were away and I submitted work direct to John, it would survive unchanged. I therefore learned to time my work accordingly. Soon after Tom left, the Embassy moved to a new building in Ploutarchou Street. It was my job to arrange for its blessing by the Orthodox priest from the church next door, in accordance with Greek custom.

One important piece of work in which I was involved the following year was over Greece's membership of the Council of Europe. We were expecting a vote within the Council on whether Greece should be expelled for violation of human rights under the Colonels. We provided our assessment on the extent of Greece's abuse of such rights, including imprisonment without trial, censorship etc. As far as I can now recall, our recommendation was that Greece was infringing the Council's principles; but, before any vote could take place, Greece decided to withdraw i.e. to jump before being pushed.

The King's departure was a personal disappointment. I was told by Lawrence that there had been a plan for the Ambassador to suggest to the King that he

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might like to play squash with me since he was a keen squash player. The Ambassador had suffered a disappointment of his own, having been advised by his predecessor to lay in a stock of pink champagne, one of the King's favourite drinks. I do not know how long the champagne lay undrunk after the King's departure. Thus are diplomatic wives confounded by the march of history. Incidentally, the Monarchy survived, albeit in the King's absence in Rome, until the regime called a referendum which abolished the Monarchy in 1973 after we had left Athens. It was formally abolished, after a second referendum in 1974 by the democratically elected Prime Minister, Karamanlis.

I was sometimes asked to look after visitors. Thus, before the 1970 General Election in Britain, I accompanied Ted Heath, then leader of the Opposition, and his political adviser, Douglas Hurd, throughout one morning as they broke a journey to Israel and its Arab neighbours in Athens. We visited the Acropolis where a photograph of me showing them the classical ruins appeared later in *Punch* with the caption "Heath visits some constituents whose new home reveals faulty workmanship. 'Don't pay anything,' he counsels." I marched them up Lycabettus but we failed to reach the top in the time available. They also asked to go to a 'political' café where former politicians met to gossip the day away. I chose a café in Kolonaki Square, well-known for its political clientele; but positioned myself between Heath and Hurd on one side and the rest of the room on the other, because I was fearful of Press headlines the next day about 'Heath meets Greek politicians.' I rather regret that decision now. But they seemed satisfied when I returned them to the Residence for lunch.

For my first two years in the Embassy, Harold Wilson was Prime Minister in London. Labour ministers used to come to the Greek islands as tourists in the summer; but few wanted to come to Athens, wary of contact with the dictatorship. Wilson earned headlines in the Greek Press when he accused the regime of 'bestialities' towards its opponents. The word in Greek was used in its technical sense only and caused great offence in Athens and elsewhere. The editor of a right-wing paper in Ioannina on whom I called in March 1968, clearly felt deeply offended, although he was also critical of the British Government's retraction of the charge which he assumed to have been motivated to win commercial contracts.

In a memorandum to the Defence and Overseas Committee in 1969, the Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart (confusingly with the same name as the Ambassador) laid down four main objectives for Britain in Greece: (1) to promote a return to constitutional rule, democratic liberties and conditions of stability; (2) to

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preserve, so far as possible, the military effectiveness of Greece as a NATO ally; (3) to protect British subjects and interests generally, particularly our commercial interests; and (4) to maintain our ability to influence the Greek Government in matters of foreign policy, for example, on Cyprus. The Embassy found it difficult to maintain a balance between these various objectives, particularly after the publicity given to Wilson's use of the word 'bestialities'.

Embassy life was fairly leisurely. We'd start early in the morning and go on to about 2.30pm on three days of the week and on the other two days we'd go home for lunch, have a siesta or a walk in the countryside outside Athens and then come back for another two or three hours work in the evening. We would also work on most Saturday mornings. That sort of life is, I dare say, impossible now, if only because people probably live too far away from the Embassy.

Meanwhile I was travelling widely throughout Greece on official duties. When I asked for leave, the Ambassador used to say "Why do you need leave, Anthony. Isn't life in Greece one long holiday?" I forgave him more easily on my return to the Foreign Office in London. The next chapter gives a detailed account of two particular journeys I made on his instructions in 1969 and 1970. In addition he asked Veronica and me to accompany him and his wife, Damaris (who we called Lady Stewart in those reverential days), on expeditions they made to two of the classical entries to the underworld. With the help of a Greek friend, Evangelos Sakellarios, I reconnoitred the first - in the Peloponnese - beforehand. We discovered that it would require the hire of a guide and a mule in Solos to enable the Ambassador's party to reach the source of the Styx on Mount Chelmos and then cross the hills to Kalavryta from which we could descend to the Gulf of Corinth by rack railway. The Ambassador was delighted as we walked beside him on his mule through the Spring flowers on a bright day as the snow receded. "I cannot remember," he said, "being so happy since I walked in the mountains of Turkey with Freya Stark." My stock rose further when I poured him a glass of retsina which I had cooled in a mountain spring before serving.

Our second visit to the underworld with the Stewarts was more straightforward. We were able to drive - the Stewarts in their official Rolls Royce, Veronica and I in our Morris - to the Sanctuary of the Acheron near Parga on our way to Ioannina in the North of Greece. Apart from these private excursions, I accompanied the Ambassador on one or two official visits he made, including to Rhodes (Rolls Royce included), where I served as interpreter and general aide. My Greek was just about up to the job. Veronica got to know Lady Stewart well as she worked for a short time to fill a temporary vacancy as Social Secretary at

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the Residence. I got used to eating alone with Eleanor in the flat while Veronica was filling a gap in an Ambassadorial lunch or dinner party.

Looking back fifty years, I suppose that Greece was quite a good introduction to life in the Diplomatic Service of that time. It gave me experience of political work in a military dictatorship which was to be relevant to my postings later in the dictatorships of Pakistan and Ghana. It gave us both practice in getting to know and understand a foreign country through travelling as widely as possible and building local friendships and contacts. We were given a modest allowance to entertain such people. The money went much further in our home than in restaurants and we enjoyed inviting Greeks to drinks parties and dinners, largely cooked by Veronica. We also enjoyed being entertained in their own homes. The Embassy gave me experience of working in a team and taught me the importance of looking after its most junior members. When we left Athens, I was fairly confident that, with my reasonably fluent Greek, I could expect to return to the Embassy one day, even with a bit of luck as Ambassador. But fate was against me.

CHAPTER 3

BRITAIN JOINS EUROPE, 1971-1974

Towards the end of my time in the Embassy in Athens, I was introduced to Anthony Royle on a visit he and his wife paid when he was a Junior FCO Minister. I remember attending a dinner given for the Royles by Derek Dodson, the Political Counsellor in the Embassy, and being questioned by Tony Royle on my circle of Greek friends and contacts. I was entrusted with seeing him and his wife off at the airport. I later learned that he had asked for me as his Private Secretary. By ill luck, I could not be released from Athens when he needed me; and so he appointed my old Malta and Pinewood friend, David Logan, as his Private Secretary instead. But the Office found me another Private Secretary job when I came home some months later. This was as Lord Lothian's Private Secretary. Peter Lothian was a Scottish landowner and friend of Alec Douglas Home, Foreign Secretary in Edward Heath's 1970 Government. He served as Parliamentary Under Secretary (i.e. the lowest rank of junior Minister) from 1970 to 1972. He was an extremely nice and astute man, but without ministerial nor indeed much political experience.

In 1972 Lothian was replaced by Lady Tweedsmuir but with the rank of Minister of State rather than Parliamentary under Secretary. She had been a well-known Tory backbencher, having been M.P. for Aberdeen South for twenty years from 1946 to 1966. She was given a peerage in 1970 and became Minister of State in the Scottish Office before coming to the FCO. She was a feisty, energetic, politically savvy minister, popular in the House of Lords, altogether a formidable person. She was married to John Tweedsmuir, son of John Buchan; her first husband, Sir Arthur Grant, had been killed in the war. I became her Private Secretary when Lord Lothian left.

Both Ministers had responsibility for Britain's relations with Africa south of the Sahara; and travelled widely in the continent. In effect they were Minister of Africa, although without the formal title. I am devoting a separate chapter to their African duties. This chapter deals with their other, non-African, work and mine. Both of them acted as spokesperson for foreign affairs in the House of Lords and were therefore involved in every aspect of FCO business in the Lords, including those for which they did not have direct responsibility. In addition, Lothian was Minister for Disarmament; whereas Lady Tweedsmuir had responsibility for economic matters. Their most important subject in the House of Lords in the six months between my arrival on the scene and Britain's

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signature of the EEC Treaty Accession on 22 January 1972 was the terms of our Accession. Britain's chief negotiator, Geoffrey Rippon, and his team of officials used to return to the Office, after an all night session of talks in Brussels, to report on progress to Parliament. They would spend the morning drafting a statement for Rippon to make in the House of Commons that afternoon. Around 12.30 p.m, or earlier if we were lucky, someone would bring a copy along the corridor to my office for Lord Lothian to repeat in the Lords. He would need to be briefed by officials on how to answer their Lordships' supplementary questions on the statement. Officials were sometimes reluctant to give him the attention he needed, largely because the Commons mattered more than the Lords: true but, whether they liked it or not, the Lords were capable of making life awkward for the Government and, anyhow, they existed, as part of the Constitution. Poor Lord Lothian. All too often, he was stumped by a Peer's question; and had to promise to write with the answer. I wish I had been more help, in anticipating the questions that might come up and in insisting on better briefing arrangements beforehand. But I knew very little about the EEC and Britain's negotiations with it. Nor did I have much experience of the Office itself. I used to sit in the official box in the House of Lords, embarrassed to witness my Minister's discomfiture but powerless to help.

I fear that Lothian did not do much better on other FCO business in the Lords. I seem to remember that he coped well enough with subjects within his own responsibility: Africa and Disarmament. But he was expected to answer any question Peers threw at him each day on foreign affairs in Question time. Adequate notice was provided of the initial question; but I fear we did not always foresee the supplementary questions that would be put. And all too often I had to get officials afterwards to draft a letter for Lothian to write to a Peer he had failed to satisfy on the floor of the House.

Priscilla Tweedsmuir proved stronger. Partly she prepared herself better. Partly she was adept at gaining Peers' sympathy and respect and winning them to her side in an argument. I could certainly claim no credit. She formed part of the team of Ministers from all the Departments of State concerned who piloted through the House of Lords the Bill providing for UK Accession to the EEC, which was given Royal assent in October 1972. It was important work and demanded much preparation. She used to spend her weekends at her home in Aberdeen, leaving as early as possible on Friday afternoons and flying down to London often early on Monday mornings. We would send her papers on EEC and other business in a weekend red box by overnight train. I did my best to keep up; but was uneasily aware that she needed more support than I was

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equipped to provide. I used to sit for hours in the officials' box in the House of Lords, or in the corridor outside the chamber, ready to telephone for information from departments to help the Minister deal with points that arose in debate.

I remember the final debate on the UK Accession Bill. After the House of Commons had approved it, the Prime Minister, Edward Heath, came and sat, as was his right, on the steps of the throne in the chamber of the House of Lords to hear the Lords' closing speeches just before the final vote. I had a ring-side view from the official box, a few yards from the PM, and had a strong sense of being present at a major Parliamentary occasion.

I have not re-read the Hansard records of those 1971 and 1972 debates on the EEC and do not propose to rehearse their course. My memory is that the greatest difficulty met by the Government was in satisfying those Peers who objected to UK membership on the grounds that it would compromise UK sovereignty and that it would be incompatible with our obligations to the Commonwealth. The counter argument - put at its simplest - that seemed to carry most weight with backbench peers of all parties was that the EEC would bind France and Germany and the other member states so closely together that they would never go to war again. As for the argument about loss of sovereignty, Heath put the counter argument well in the House of Commons when he said we were sharing our sovereignty to gain an opportunity to influence the EEC's decisions in the future. More should have been made of these counter arguments in the 2016 referendum campaign

I can remember virtually nothing of the work of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament in Geneva. I accompanied Lord Lothian at least once on a visit to our permanent delegation in Geneva, where the Committee used to meet; and also to New York for an annual UN debate on disarmament. I seem to remember that he made a speech or two setting out the British position. But whatever I once knew of the subject was quickly forgotten when he left because Lady Tweedsmuir's responsibilities did not include it and I never dealt with it again in my subsequent career. My feeling at the time was that the Committee's work was a side-show and that what really mattered would be an agreement between the two nuclear-armed superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. Reagan and Gorbachev eventually reached such an agreement.

I accompanied Lady Tweedsmuir to Reykjavik for her negotiations with the Icelandic Government on fishing rights. In September 1972 Iceland declared a 50-mile limit around its coast from which it prohibited British and other

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trawlers. HMG unsurprisingly came under heavy political pressure to protect British fishing interests which were badly affected by their exclusion from these distant waters. The outcome was another Cod War, the second, in which Icelanders sabotaged the nets of British and German trawlers. The Royal Navy did its best to protect our boats without recourse to gunfire; but the thin steel hulls of its ships proved vulnerable to the heavy Icelandic gunboats sent against them. Negotiations followed. Lady Tweedsmuir's experience as MP for Aberdeen South and Minister of State for Scotland from 1970 to 1971 and her personal reputation in Scotland made her a good choice to lead our team. It included representatives of both the owners and trawler men who liked and trusted her. Eventually, after three sets of tough negotiations in Iceland, it was agreed that a limited number of British trawlers would be allowed to operate within the 12-mile limit for the following two years. It was hard to disguise the fact that this represented a victory for Iceland. Worse was to follow in 1975 when Iceland claimed a 200-mile fishing limit; but by that time a Labour Government had taken over and I had been posted to Paris. Happily Lady Tweedsmuir did not repeat a phrase she used in a speech she gave at Chatham House. "I always think," she said, "that instead of a Cod War, one should talk of a Cod Peace." I remember listening in horror to this ad-lib addition to her prepared speech and wondering how best I could explain to her the 'double entendre.' But fortunately her husband spoke to her and she did not repeat herself.

Lady Tweedsmuir's economic responsibilities included a visit to Santiago in Chile in May 1972 for one of the regular four-yearly meetings of the UN Conference on Trade and Development. This was the third occasion on which the developing countries had confronted the rich with the need to use trade and aid measures more effectively to improve living standards in the developing world. We spent a full week in Santiago where the local economy was suffering under the rule of Allende and there were food shortages. Lady Tweedsmuir used the time to meet delegates and listen to major speeches by other delegates before giving one herself setting out Britain's trade and development policies. Her speech went through countless drafts endlessly debated by the large British delegation to make the most of our position. My worst memory is of a meeting in her hotel suite with representatives of some of the British Non-Governmental Organisations such as OXFAM which were trying to persuade HMG to be more generous in its treatment of the developing world. The Minister decided to offer them a cup of tea. I ordered afternoon tea for a dozen or so people, but failed to be precise. I was therefore appalled when there was a knock on the door just before the guests were due to arrive and I opened it to find two waiters with a large multi-tiered trolley piled with elaborate sandwiches, biscuits and cakes: a

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feast wholly inappropriate given local food shortages and that it was for champions of the poor. I just had time to wheel it into the Minister's bathroom before the guests arrived; and then spent the meeting hoping that nobody would want to use the bathroom. Lady Tweedsmuir was forgiving; but could have been greatly embarrassed by my mistake.

In late 1973, I entered the lists for an overseas appointment and made a bid for UKREP Brussels, as Britain's delegation to the EEC was called. I wanted to build on what I had learned about the EEC as a Private Secretary. At first, my chances seemed good. But then I learned that my fellow new entrant from 1964, David Gore-Booth, had got the job I was after. Instead, I suspect with Lady Tweedsmuir's support, I was offered a job in the Economic Section of the Embassy in Paris. Veronica and I were thrilled by the thought of Paris. And I thought that work in the Section would give me a chance to apply some of what I learned at my economics course in 1967: in practice it was very different. Our last few months in London coincided with Heath's battle with the miners, culminating in the 'three day week,' when the Government restricted electricity to industry, the shops and private households in order to eek out coal supplies to the power stations. Goods in the shops grew scarce and we learned to do without power in the flat, reading by candle light or listening to the radio for amusement. When the time came, we were all the more keen to go abroad.

CHAPTER 4

UNFINISHED BUSINESS IN AFRICA, 1971 - 1974

This chapter covers my time as Private Secretary to the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State and then Minister of State in their responsibilities for Africa from 1971 to 1974.

In 1971, only 14 years had elapsed since the first African British colony had achieved its independence to become Ghana in 1957. Some of our other colonies had been given independence much more recently: e.g. Swaziland in 1968. Memories of the colonial past were therefore fresh. But, since granting independence, British Governments had to some extent turned their backs on black Africa. The Government at the time was certainly accused of having done so by many of its critics, both domestic and foreign. A large part of the reason was that two of the most important of our former dependencies, Rhodesia and South Africa, were in the hands of Governments that did not represent the interests of the majority of their populations and were indeed regarded by many as illegitimate, including in Rhodesia's case by the British Government. They therefore represented unfinished business from Britain's colonial past and stood in the way of developing our relations with Africa in a way that would have served both British and African other interests.

During my time as a Private Secretary, therefore, Rhodesia and South Africa dominated Britain's relations with black Africa. Ian Smith's illegal declaration of independence (IDI) in December 1965 had given the white minority control of the Government of Southern Rhodesia. Successive British Governments were to find the search for a way of transferring power to the majority as a whole both difficult and politically damaging to Britain's relations with the rest of black Africa. The problem exercised the Labour Government of Harold Wilson and the Conservative Governments of first Edward Heath and later of Margaret Thatcher who was eventually to find a solution. Because of its importance, the subject was dealt with mainly by the Foreign Secretary rather than at junior ministerial level. Lord Lothian and Lady Tweedsmuir were involved indirectly and in the House of Lords where they were responsible for presenting and defending the Government's policies on this as on other foreign policy issues. I remember sitting in the officials' box in the House of Lords while my Minister took part in major debates on Rhodesia, most dramatically when the Government accepted the findings of Lord Pearce and his Commission that the

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settlement worked out by Lord Goodman with Smith's regime was unacceptable to majority opinion in Rhodesia.

The main issue on South Africa was that of sanctions. The Heath Government had resumed the sale of defence equipment, in particular Wasp helicopters, to apartheid South Africa provided it could not be used for internal security purposes. This policy had outraged many parts of black Africa and HMG's domestic opponents, who objected that arms for external use could be easily diverted for internal repression.

Two other African issues preoccupied Ministers at the time. First was the relationship between our former colonies and the European Economic Community. Negotiations in Brussels on the terms of Britain's entry to the EEC took place during my time as a Private Secretary. These were to lead to Britain joining the EEC on 1 January 1973. The implications for Africa featured in Brussels, in ministerial discussions with African Governments and in debates in the House of Lords.

Secondly, Idi Amin's expulsion of the Asian community from Uganda in 1972 became a major headache for Heath's Government. I believe that, eventually, as many as 30,000 Asians were given refuge in Britain. It fell largely to Lady Tweedsmuir to speak for the Government on this issue in the House of Lords; and, unsurprisingly, she was sometimes given a rough ride by their lordships.

One subject which received much less attention then, in the 1970s, than it was to attract in the 1990s during my time as Under Secretary for Africa, was the quality of African governments and the extent to which they might or might not conform to Western ideals of democracy. This was not surprising given Britain's inability at the time to implant democracy in South Africa and Rhodesia. If Britain couldn't give democracy to its Empire, how could we credibly insist on democracy in our former colonies? Another difference between the 1970s and the 1990s was the lack of interest which Britain took in the 1970s in the economic policies of African Governments. The days when we were to lecture them on the advantages of market-based economies had not yet come.

The most interesting parts of my African duties were accompanying my Ministers on their visits to Africa. I went on nine separate country visits with Lord Lothian and eight with Lady Tweedsmuir. We covered the main countries of the Commonwealth, except for Ghana, which we omitted mainly, I seem to

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remember, because of its reluctance to repay any of its large debt to Britain. We also visited Cameroon, Ethiopia and Zaire.

These visits were intended to familiarise the Ministers with the continent and to keep in touch at Ministerial level with the Governments concerned. At the time, when our relations were bedevilled by the problems of Rhodesia and South Africa, it was considered important to keep a foot in the door. Essentially Britain was marking time until, majority rule having been achieved in both countries, we could cultivate stronger relations with the rest of the continent. The Minister therefore called wherever possible on African Heads of Government, senior Ministers, other senior figures, and the Press; met the local British community (mainly businessmen and farmers) and the staff of British diplomatic missions; and visited the countryside to get some understanding of agriculture, mining, development issues, vocational training, education etc. Our programmes happily sometimes included visits to game parks. The longest of these individual country visits - to Nigeria - lasted for as much as ten days, far longer than any of mine as an Under Secretary in the 1990s when I aimed at covering up to four or even five countries in a fortnight at a time.

My Private Secretary duties were not usually onerous. Besides ensuring that the Ministers had all the briefing that they needed at the right moment, I used to make a record of the main meetings with senior Government figures, scribbling away during the meeting and then dictating a record to a High Commission or Embassy secretary immediately afterwards. I followed up later any specific commitments the Minister had made and drafted thank you letters for the Minister to send to all concerned. I also advised the Mission on any personal preferences the Minister might have. But the real work of looking after the Minister fell on the Head of Mission and his staff; and they knew better than I what sort of ministerial programme was possible and sensible. The Minister was usually also accompanied from London by either one of the AUSSs for Africa or the relevant Head of Department.

The agenda for a visit usually included the main subjects I have already mentioned: Rhodesia, South Africa, Britain's and Africa's relations with the EEC and after 1972 the immigration of Asians to Britain. There might also be some subjects of purely local relevance which required discussion at ministerial level. The most important of these, as I record below, were the Africanisation of British-owned farms, particularly in Kenya and Tanzania, and landing rights for Concorde in Nigeria. Otherwise I am struck, looking back, how relatively thin the agenda was for a typical ministerial visit, particularly compared to the

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agendas for both Ministerial and Under Secretary visits in the 1990s. Such, it is worth repeating, was the effect of the shadow thrown on British/African relations by the difficult problems of Rhodesia and South Africa.

What follows are only the most interesting or amusing of the events I recall from a few of these visits.

Liberia **July 1971**

My introduction to Africa was, as Lord Lothian's newly appointed Private Secretary, on a visit to Liberia in July 1971. The timing was inconvenient, both to Lord Lothian, who was looking forward to the House of Lords' summer recess in a few days and then a holiday in Scotland; and to me, who had not yet unpacked my heavy luggage after my return from the Embassy in Athens. Nor had Veronica and I yet found somewhere to live.

Lord Lothian had not intended to visit Liberia, either in the summer of 1971 or, quite possibly, ever. It featured in no list of Britain's priorities in Africa. Although Britain had always enjoyed a friendly relationship with the country and its Government and had maintained a small Embassy in Monrovia, our material interests there were small.

The Republic of Liberia had begun as a settlement of the American Colonisation Society, who believed blacks would face better chances for freedom in Africa than in the United States. In 1847 the people proclaimed independence and in 1848 elected their first President, Joseph Jenkins Roberts, a wealthy, free-born African-American from Virginia, who had settled in Liberia. By the time of the American Civil War, more than 18,000 black people, mainly freed slaves, from the US and Caribbean had moved to the settlement. Its population in 1971 comprised the descendants of these people and of the indigenous people. Democratic elections had gradually given way to virtually one-party rule.

On Friday 23 July 1971, the President of Liberia, Dr William Tubman, died in a London clinic after prostate surgery. He and his True Whig party had been in power for 27 years. On Tuesday 27 July, it was decided that Prince William of Gloucester, The Queen's cousin, should represent Her Majesty at the funeral in Monrovia on Thursday 29 July; and that Lord Lothian should represent HMG. Having served in the Diplomatic Service, including in the British High Commission in Lagos, Prince William knew West Africa. He did not take an

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ADC to the funeral; and I was told that I would have to look after both him and Lord Lothian. Given that this would be my first overseas trip as a Private Secretary, I felt some trepidation. Lord Lothian was far too kind to say so; but he too must have wondered how I would cope. Luckily for us both, we were accompanied by Harold Smedley, one of the two AUSSs for Africa at the time. I was to get to know him well on subsequent travels in Africa. He had once been High Commissioner to Ghana and was an experienced and indulgent man. I could not foresee that I would one day follow in his steps both as High Commissioner to Ghana and AUSS for Africa.

We had some ten hours to prepare, between hearing of our departure and the midnight take-off of the British Caledonian flight from Heathrow. I just had time to hire morning suit and evening tails from Moss Bros to meet the very formal Liberian dress code and to view a flat in Holland Park which we were in danger of losing unless we put in a bid quickly. Veronica packed my case in Henley-on-Thames where we were living temporarily with my Mother and brought it up to London. Am I right that Veronica and I had time for supper together at Costa's in Notting Hill before leaving for the airport? Meanwhile, Protocol Department ordered a wreath from Harrods which delivered it to the aircraft for Prince William to lay at the right moment.

After a night flight, we landed in Monrovia which was as hot and sticky as I had imagined. The Prince and Minister were met at the airport by Martin Moynihan, the British Ambassador, and by the Speaker of Parliament who was second in seniority to the President himself, now William Tolbert had succeeded Tubman. The Embassy took delivery of the Harrods wreath.

The Prince stayed at the Embassy with the Moynihans; and Harold Smedley and I at the Ducor Intercontinental Hotel where the Liberians were accommodating most visitors. The Emperor of Ethiopia and the Presidents of Mauritania and The Gambia stayed at the President's Executive Mansion. I never discovered where President Houphouet Boigny of the Ivory Coast or General Gowon of Nigeria stayed. With the Prince at the Embassy and me in the Hotel, would this ease or complicate my task as his Acting ADC?

The State Funeral was held at the Centennial Memorial Pavilion. The throngs were so great that we all had to get out of our cars and elbow a way through, dressed in our finery of morning coat and striped trousers. The Pavilion itself was packed. During the long service, the Heads of Delegation were invited to lay their wreaths on the bier. I had been assured that the British wreath, which I

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had still not seen, would be delivered to the Pavilion and handed to the Prince at the right moment. But, when his turn came and he stepped forward to lay it, the wreath could not be found. A search ensued, conducted mainly by the Chief of Protocol and me. Eventually, I suggested to the Prince, whispering in his ear, that he pretend to lay the wreath by leaning over the bier and re-arranging the wreaths already in place. Just at that moment, I heard a glad cry from the Chief of Protocol who had located our wreath. It was so large and magnificent that it had been hung in a place of honour on the pulpit. The Chief of Protocol handed it to me; and I handed it to the Prince, who laid it on the bier. We stepped back to return to our places. Unfortunately I had not realised how close I was to the Emperor Haile Selassie and very nearly trod on his toes. But he was saved by his bodyguards who shouldered me aside, and I slunk away.

The next act in the drama was the procession to the graveyard. All the VIPs followed the bier on foot as it was borne on a gun carriage through the streets. The Prince and Lord Lothian, closely escorted by the Ambassador and me, all found ourselves near the front, just behind the Emperor. Walking beside Haile Selassie was Idi Amin, whose first appearance on the African stage this was, after his overthrow of Obote during the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Singapore. The tiny Emperor and the giant figure of Amin formed a striking pair side by side. I heard one Liberian bystander say to a friend, as we shuffled past in the hot sun: "Is that the Emperor's bodyguard?"

After a while we reached the graveyard. The coffin was placed on metal rollers which, at the press of an electric button, were intended to rotate, carrying the coffin smoothly forward into a magnificent marble tomb. As far as I could see, a lift in the tomb would then lower the coffin into a chamber below ground. The button was pressed; but the coffin failed to move forward. General consternation! But the Prince kept his head. He had spotted that the edge of the coffin had caught on the side of the entrance to the tomb; and that, although the rollers were turning, the coffin itself was stuck. With a prod of his foot, he freed the coffin which slid into the tomb and disappeared from sight into the depths below. General relief all round. But, just at that moment, Kofi Busia, the elected Prime Minister of Ghana, fainted at our feet in the press and heat. Again, it was the Prince who saved the day. He (and his Acting ADC) pushed back the VIPs to clear a space around Busia and give him air. All was well. Busia was led away looking rather shaky. Sadly neither Lord Lothian nor Lady Tweedsmuir were ever to visit Ghana; and so I didn't go there until 1989 when I arrived in Accra as High Commissioner.

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The farewell State Banquet that evening, a white tie and evening tails affair, concluded the programme. There were only two speeches: President Tolbert proposed a toast to the Emperor; and the Emperor, in reply, seemed to give the final seal of legitimacy and approval to Dr Tolbert's succession.

Nigeria December 1973

This was the longest visit Lady Tweedsmuir paid to any single African country: ten days. Alan Campbell, the AUSS, accompanied the Minister throughout. She greatly enjoyed the company of this very amusing man, who was to end his career as Ambassador to Italy.

After independence from British rule in 1960, Nigeria's First Republic had ended with two military coups in 1966, from which General Gowon emerged as President. His military government defeated Biafran's bid for independence in the Civil War of 1967 to 1970. He was President at the time of Lady Tweedsmuir's visit in December 1973 and would remain President until his removal in another military coup in 1975.

We flew first to Kano, on the edge of the desert. The visit to Northern Nigeria was especially timely in view of the Sahelian drought. We went also to Kaduna and Jos in the north before going on to Ibadan and finally Lagos. Our path led through commercial and industrial enterprises, universities, research establishments, museums and hospitals and into the courts of traditional rulers like the Alafin of Oyo near Ibadan. We thus saw economic progress and backwardness side by side.

In Lagos, Lady Tweedsmuir tried to persuade the Federal Commissioner for External Affairs, Dr Okoi Arikpo, to agree that Concorde might land in Lagos on its way to and from South Africa. Sadly her failure meant that Concorde was never able to open a service to the South. Interestingly Dr Arikpo refrained from raising any of the South African and Portuguese complex of problems, presumably because he felt it unnecessary to rehearse well-known positions. But I was surprised that we didn't at least go through the motions of defending British policy on Rhodesia and South Africa, however objectionable our position was to the Nigerians.

Unfortunately the Minister did not meet the President, General Gowon, who was visiting the northern drought-affected areas. But we convinced ourselves

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that the visit had been worthwhile, if only as a means of strengthening personal links between the two countries and demonstrating Britain's continued interest in the largest and most important of her former possessions except for South Africa itself. It probably also gave encouragement to the British community, who enjoyed the Minister's performance in Scottish reels at the St Andrew's Ball in Lagos. It was unfortunate that the visit took place within a few months before the fall of the Heath Government when Lady Tweedsmuir was replaced as Minister for Africa by Labour's Goronwy Roberts and I as Private Secretary by Tony Galsworthy, a Chinese speaker later to become Ambassador to China.

Sierra Leone January 1973

At the time of Lady Tweedsmuir's visit, Siaka Stevens was President, having been elected in 1971. So it was more or less a democracy. But the military had already intervened once and were to do so again.

From the airport, we were taken in the High Commission launch, *Tagarin*, across the vast harbour to Freetown. The Minister held formal talks with the President and his Ministers and discussed Britain's very recent accession to the EEC. But the most memorable part of the visit was to the diamond mines at Yengema to which we flew by light aircraft. I seem to remember that the plane belonged to de Beers. As we came in to land at Yengema, we noticed what looked from the air like large mole hills pockmarking the landing strip. The pilot was able to thread his way between them; and we could then see that they were the diggings of illicit diamond miners hoping to make their fortunes from alluvial diamonds beneath the strip itself. We were taken by car into the centre of Yengema where a large area was covered by more illicit diamond diggings. At the edge of this area was a small brick building with a familiar blue sign over the front: Barclays Bank. We could see the underneath of one of the corner stones, where a miner had been at work in search of diamonds, not in the bank vault but in the ground beneath the foundations of the building. In the squalor of these diggings, Lady Tweedsmuir declined an offer to buy a minute diamond, to which the "owner" was almost certainly not entitled.

The Government drew little tax advantage from the diamond trade, because of the difficulty of controlling access to the diggings. The area was too large to fence securely; and no sooner had a digger and his pickaxe been chased away from one digging than he dug somewhere else ... including on the airport runway. The diamonds themselves could easily be smuggled away tax free. This

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environment was an extraordinary contrast to the diamond “pipe” of Orapa in Botswana which I visited with Lord Lothian in 1972 (see below).

This visit had a particular personal interest for me. My Grandfather, Ransford Slater, had been Governor of Sierra Leone from 1922 to 1927 before his transfer to Accra. He had been knighted there in 1924. I noticed a road sign “Slater Road”, in which the main jail stood; later learned of a plaque with his name in the centre of the town; and wondered if the chair in which the President sat during our meeting with him had once been the Governor’s.

The Gambia January 1973

One of the smallest of Britain’s ex-colonies, The Gambia had achieved independence only in 1965 - under President Jawara, whose democratically-elected Government was still in power when Lady Tweedsmuir visited the country in 1973. Indeed he was still President when I next visited in the 1990s.

In Bathurst, we stayed in the Residence: a delightful wooden building on stilts within the sound of the sea. It had been an old trading fort in colonial times. The Gambians took the Minister’s security very seriously, providing a perpetual mobile guard of honour throughout her time in the capital. On the first evening, a guard detachment paraded on the cliff top to greet her return, clad in beach robe and towel, from a quick bathe below the Residence.

On the first morning, Lady Tweedsmuir paid a courtesy call on President Jawara who showed her round his rose garden and new lawns. She subsequently met him at the local Caledonian Society’s Burns Night supper held in her honour and which the President customarily attended by reason of his veterinary training at Glasgow University. She met him again at a State Dinner which he gave in her honour. And, on the last morning of her visit, she had a full discussion at State House with him and a small group of Ministers and officials. He conducted this meeting in a quiet, courteous manner but crisply, frankly and to the point. Discussions included the implications for The Gambia of Britain’s accession to the EEC. Contrary to what his officials had told us before the meeting, he did not mention Rhodesia or the Portuguese colonies. In short he avoided subjects likely to be controversial between us. He was a charming and considerate host.

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The rest of the visit was spent on visiting a variety of agricultural projects and to the UK Medical Research Council's Centre at Fajara devoted to anti-malaria research. The President lent the Minister his Presidential launch which enabled her to travel up-country to Mansa Konko where the Divisional Commissioner lent us his rambling house. He had studied in Moscow on a Soviet scholarship and had clearly not enjoyed the experience. Our arrival there was delayed by a memorable diversion to James Island, the historic birth-place of British settlement in tropical Africa. I picked up from the ground a fruit of the baobab tree and took it home where we ate its lemon-flavoured seeds. Because of the tide, a dinghy ferried us ashore. At one point half the party were marooned on the island, the outboard motor of the dinghy having fallen in the water, and the rest were on the launch which had stuck on a sand bank attempting a rescue. The tide eventually rose and the two halves of the party - and the engine - were happily re-united. The delay enabled us to watch the sunset and nightfall on this majestic and peaceful river. I half expected Sanders of the River to come around the bend and to hear the singing of Paul Robeson.

We learned a great deal about the work of collective farms, dry-season vegetable growing, agricultural extension services, irrigated rice schemes, livestock development - and the warmth of the welcome given to their visitors by Gambian villagers. We saw nothing dramatic, just the simple facts of everyday African life. And, rare in Africa at the time, nobody had a quarrel to pick with us.

Ethiopia

October 1971 and September/October 1973

The Emperor Hailie Selassie was the Emperor of Ethiopia at the time of Lord Lothian's and Lady Tweedsmuir's visits there in 1971 and 1973 respectively. Their calls on him were among the highlights of my time as a Private Secretary. Ethiopia itself was one of the most interesting of the African countries we visited. It was Africa's oldest independent country. Apart from a five-year occupation by Mussolini's Italy, it had never been colonised and had served as a symbol of African independence throughout the colonial period. It was a founder member of the United Nations and the African base for the Organisation of African Unity and other international organisations.

On each visit, we called on Haile Selassie in his Jubilee Palace. The Minister led the way into a huge room at the far end of which, in front of his throne, stood the small erect figure of the Emperor. We were each introduced and, after a few

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pleasantries, he invited us behind the throne room to a small sitting room where we were given tea and cake (chocolate on the first visit and coffee on the second, or maybe vice versa). Conversation was in French and largely trivial, confined to polite exchanges about Anglo-Ethiopian friendship and the Emperor's affection for the British Royal Family. But in 1973 we discovered that he had a sense of humour. After Lady Tweedsmuir had been introduced, Willie Morris, the Ambassador, a short man more or less the same height as the Emperor, introduced first Martin Ewans and then me. Each of us was over 6 foot. With a smile as he looked up at Martin and me and then down again to the Ambassador, Haile Selassie commented: "I see that Her Majesty chooses her envoy to my Court with care". Willie Morris's predecessor as Ambassador had been Alan Campbell who was also the Emperor's height.

The Emperor did not mention to Lady Tweedsmuir the distress being caused in the countryside by the severe drought at the time of her visit. Here must have lain one of the causes of his fall a year later when he was deposed by the communist Derg. He died a year after that, probably murdered by the Derg. I can still see him in my mind's eye: a small, immensely dignified figure as he stood waiting for us in his Palace.

Kenya October 1971

Lord Lothian's visit to Kenya, the largest and most important of Britain's ex-colonies in East Africa, was the first of a British minister in two years. Despite this, he did not see President Kenyatta.

The most interesting part of the tour was his visit to a prominent British farmer in Kipkabus, near Eldoret, in the Kenyan highlands. Denis Whetham and his wife farmed pyrethrum, an insecticide. He and other British farmers in the area were coming under increasing pressure from local people to sell their farms to Africans. Vice-President Moi told Lord Lothian that he appreciated the problems of the remaining settlers in Kenya and that he was keen to deal effectively with them. The writing was of course on the wall, as it was also in Tanzania; but the Kenyans were a good deal more sensitive in how they handled matters.

Lord Lothian had his ear bent by the settlers. Some of them asserted that their problems should be the major preoccupation of HMG and the High Commission. There were some 270 left at the time in Kenya. I felt sympathy for their likely future; and envy for the life style they had enjoyed in the past. I also

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admired the efficiency with which they farmed, albeit with the benefit of cheap African labour. We compared their farms with one bought two years or so earlier by a retired African police officer, said to be one of the most successful African farmers in the country. It looked reasonably prosperous and well-run; but did not equal the Whetham farm. We also saw another farm in the area which had been sold to an African earlier and which had now deteriorated badly. Lord Lothian was good at listening to the settlers' woes. And the willingness of a Minister to listen probably helped their morale. But neither he nor anyone else could offer a solution to their basic problems caused by the rising tide of Africanisation.

Tanzania

October 1971 and September 1973

I saw more of Tanzania during my time as a Private Secretary than of anywhere else in Africa except Ethiopia, going there with both Lord Lothian and Lady Tweedsmuir. It was still under Julius Nyerere, who had been President since its independence from British rule in 1961.

Lord Lothian's visit was for familiarisation purposes, but also to keep our lines open to the country during a difficult period in the bilateral relationship. He was the first Minister in Heath's Government to visit Tanzania and the first senior member of the Conservative Party to come since 1970. His visit coincided with a further round of negotiations in the attempt to resolve the Rhodesian problem and with the arbitrary expulsion by the Tanzanians of two European farmers, alleged to have abused local labourers and squatters. Both these subjects came up during our call on the President. He was friendly and relaxed, alternating between serious reflection, light-hearted nonchalance and slightly hysterical laughter. I found him one of the most attractive of all the African leaders I was to meet. The discussion covered the main subjects which divided us. Nyerere dismissed the dialogue which some African states were having with South Africa with the remark that Britain should not be fooled by Banda (of Malawi) and Houphouet-Biogny (of the Ivory Coast), who were like "Jews supping with Hitler". And, on arms for South Africa, he was keeping his fingers crossed in the hope that South Africa would not ask for anything beyond the Wasp helicopters that Britain had recently supplied.

Lord Lothian raised with the President the nationalisation, largely without compensation, of properties owned by British citizens and the recent arbitrary expulsion of two of them. Nyerere hinted that Tanzania might compensate some

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of these people. And he admitted that they served the country's interests in the short term. But he ruled out large-scale private farming by foreigners in a socialist Tanzania in the longer term.

The High Commissioner, Horace Phillips, subsequently took Lord Lothian, Harold Smedley (AUSS Africa) and me to visit the couple of dozen British farmers and their wives still in Northern Tanzania, on the fertile slopes of Kilimanjaro, who were threatened with nationalisation and expulsion. This was a fascinating experience. We stayed with one of the farmers whose land looked westwards from Kilimanjaro over the immense interior and met others at their local Club and at a private house for dinner. Some of them grew strawberries which they flew by private light aircraft from their own landing strips to Nairobi to catch scheduled flights to the European market. They had settled there after World War II and had had the time of their lives. As in Kenya, Lord Lothian was submitted to a barrage of criticism of HMG for not doing more to protect them. Only one of them was honest enough to admit that the farmers were a surprising anachronism in a country like Tanzania, and that he for his part was content to carry on his agreeable existence so long as there was something in it for him and local conditions were not intolerable. He described the fun that some of his friends used to have in encouraging local elephants on to their neighbours' land.

We also went to Zanzibar, another memorable experience. It had achieved independence in 1963 and merged with Tanzania in 1964. We called on Sheikh Karume, the First Vice-President, a burly unattractive man who ruled the island with a strong hand and the economic support of East Germany. He received us at the top of the steps of the old British Residency, dressed not in local dress but in a colonial era tight white linen suit, collar and tie. He entertained us to afternoon tea, with cucumber sandwiches, off the EIIR monogrammed tea service which he had taken over with the Residency. We conversed politely on largely trivial matters. I remember also the cloves spread out to dry on the pavements; and the golden sand from which we swam below the High Commissioner's local house just outside the town. Anybody caught stealing the cloves could lose a hand, a punishment not inflicted in the time of my uncle, Robert Foulger, who had been colonial Tanganyika's last Inspector of Police.

Lady Tweedsmuir combined her 1973 visit to Tanzania with attending the annual Commonwealth Finance Ministers meeting which happened to be held there in September 1973. She, Alan Campbell and I were therefore included in the RAF flight on which the Chancellor of the Exchequer and his officials

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travelled. We re-fuelled at Luxor where we were taken to see the temples, an agreeable perk of office for the Ministers and their party. Lady Tweedsmuir and I enjoyed another perk later with a night at the Manyara game park on the shores of a lake in the Rift Valley about fifty miles west of Arusha: one of the finest parks I have visited. It lay at the foot of a cliff on top of which our hotel stood.

Lady Tweedsmuir's travels in the country were extensive. We were flown by Government charter to the Dodoma region to see one of the *ujamaa* collective villages which were Nyerere's pride and where we were welcomed with song and dance by some six or seven hundred villagers. Speeches and gifts were exchanged: a hoe and axe (for labour) and a stool (for repose) in exchange for Lady Tweedsmuir's gift of a British tractor. We drove 350 miles north to Lushoto, a charming town in the Usambara Mountains, where Lady Tweedsmuir was the guest of Mamma Mary Hancock, a remarkable elderly school-mistress and Member of the Tanzanian Parliament who had been a deeply respected resident of the country since she had left Tunbridge Wells more than thirty years earlier.

Another 200 miles drive took us to the slopes of Kilimanjaro where the Minister met British farmers, including John Goodman who ran an efficient, comfortable and prosperous dairy farm and coffee estate. After strawberries and cream on the Goodmans' lawn, Lady Tweedsmuir addressed about a dozen local British farmers and their wives. As with Lord Lothian in 1971, ministerial attention helped their morale at a difficult time.

Uganda October 1971

In January 1971 Milton Obote and his unpleasant Eastern-leaning government, which had ruled Uganda in one form or another since independence in 1962, had been overthrown during his absence in Singapore for the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting. A coup had been launched by Idi Amin. Having served in the King's African Rifles, Amin was thought in London to be a straightforward fellow, intensely loyal to Britain. However much HMG disapproved of coups, we disapproved of Obote more and thought that Amin could be trusted to run the country fairly and in due course to return it to the path of true democracy. How wrong we were.

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Lord Lothian's visit to Uganda in 1971 fell between Idi Amin's coup and his expulsion of Uganda's Asian community in August 1972. During those 19 months, British/Ugandan relations enjoyed a honeymoon.

Like others in the FCO, I had enjoyed the exchange of telegrams between the Office and Dick Slater, our High Commissioner in Kampala, soon after Amin took power. Dick had reported that Amin wanted to visit Britain and had been asked by the FCO to enquire what he would like to do during his visit. The answer had been that he wanted to visit Scotland. This news had naturally pleased Alec Douglas Home, Foreign Secretary at the time, who had instructed officials to set up a good programme. After making further enquiries about Amin's detailed wishes, the High Commissioner reported that Amin had heard that sea-bathing, which he much enjoyed, was exceptionally fine in Scotland and, furthermore, that Edinburgh was a good place to buy brown shoes, size 12. Officials reported this to the Foreign Secretary expecting him to share their amusement. Alec Douglas Home merely said: "The man's quite right. Edinburgh is the best place to buy shoes".

Lord Lothian, another Scot, was therefore looking forward to meeting the new President. Their formal meeting took place in Amin's Command Post (renamed from 'Government House' by Amin) on its hill in the centre of Kampala. Dick Slater, Harold Smedley (AUSS) and I accompanied the Minister. My only memory of their talks was of Lord Lothian encouraging Amin to give priority to the task of getting the Ugandan economy back on its feet. Amin professed to be aware of the need and added that he had come to the conclusion that the economy was a greater enemy than an enemy with a gun.

An incident in this meeting has remained fresh in my memory. A steward brought round a tray of drinks with coca cola, orange juice, water etc. Given that it was mid-morning and, in any case, that Amin was a Muslim, we were not surprised to be offered soft drinks. Lord Lothian took a coke; Amin a glass of water; Harold Smedley, who was sitting next to me, also took water. As usual I was scribbling notes of the discussion. Suddenly I heard Harold splutter and put down his glass with a gulp. I assumed that he had swallowed the wrong way. Afterwards he told us that his water had turned out to be neat gin. We concluded that the steward had muddled the gin with the water, both kept in similar bottles in the Presidential fridge. Did Amin, a Muslim, always prefer gin in mid-morning? I seem to recall that he drank beer at the Slaters' small dinner party that evening of a dozen or so guests including some Cabinet Ministers.

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Amin brought his senior wife, an attractive woman but with little English. All was bonhomie and good humour.

Throughout his conversations with the President and his ministers, Lord Lothian picked up no clue of what was in store for the Asians the following year. All seemed sweetness and light between Britain and the new Ugandan Government. And yet only ten months later, in August 1972, Amin announced the expulsion of the Ugandan Asian community. Of the 80,000 Asians eventually expelled, Britain had to cope with the sudden influx of some 30,000 of British nationality. Amin's subsequent rule was characterised by human rights abuses, ethnic persecution, extrajudicial killings, nepotism, corruption, and gross economic mismanagement. The number of people killed as a result of his regime was estimated by international observers and human rights groups to range from 100,000 to as many as 500,000. It is easy with the benefit of hindsight to criticise HMG for its friendship with Amin in his first year as President. But I still do not believe that it was the wrong policy given what we knew, or rather did not know, at the time. Initially Amin had seemed a much better proposition than Obote.

Malawi **October 1972**

Nyasaland had declared its independence as Malawi under Dr Hastings Banda in 1964. He had quickly introduced one-party rule and got himself appointed as President for life. He was one of the few African leaders to support British policies in southern Africa.

I accompanied Lady Tweedsmuir on her visit to Malawi as leader of a British delegation of MPs to the 18th Annual Conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, an important event for President Banda and Malawi. Banda saw in it an opportunity to advertise Malawi and to promote his policies of contact and dialogue with Southern Africa. Relations with Britain were then excellent because we needed Banda's support in our resistance to sanctions against South Africa. This made him a valued friend in a continent where we had few. He was also on our side in the Cold War. In his conference speech of welcome, he lavished fulsome and embarrassing praise on Britain and made much of Lady Tweedsmuir. The High Commissioner, Robin Haydon, had excellent access to him and indeed was once summoned by Banda at short notice to join a Malawi cabinet meeting. Those were the days! But even then

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Private Secretaries were not included in calls on the President; and so I did no more than shake his hand.

Lady Tweedsmuir made the opening speech in a debate on “Britain and the EEC: what next?” Coming just before Britain’s accession to the EEC on 1 January 1973, she used the occasion to re-assure this Commonwealth audience that the EEC recognised its mission to be open to the world and would take its responsibilities to the developing world seriously. In the debate that followed, some doubts were expressed, however, whether the new Europe would be as outward looking in its relations with the Commonwealth as Britain had been alone. This was to become a familiar theme in the decades that followed.

Otherwise my most vivid memories of that visit are largely personal. I visited my cousins, John and Elizabeth Crossley, on Lake Malawi where John, who had once served in Malawi as a District Officer, was now building boats for local fishermen. I spent a happy day with Veronica’s old friends, Ben and Caroline Cardozo, in Zomba where they led an idyllic life with their growing family while Ben commuted to the rest of the country to carry out his duties as High Commission Defence Adviser. I visited the new capital, Lilongwe, which reminded me of Celesteville in the Baba books. I accompanied the Minister on a visit to the Lake where we gazed from our hotel at the water’s edge towards the hills of Mozambique on the other side. The sand was swept by the hotel staff at sunrise in time for hotel guests to enjoy an early morning swim. Everywhere jacarandas blazed. We were flown over the southern end of the lake to admire the hippos. Malawi seemed a delightful place on the surface, although even then we were uneasily aware of the persecution of Jehovah’s Witnesses. There were more human rights’ abuses to come.

Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland

When the Union of South Africa was formed in 1910 from the main British colonies in Southern Africa, the Bechuanaland Protectorate (now Botswana), Basutoland (now Lesotho) and Swaziland (re-named Eswatini in 2018) were not included, but provision was made for their later incorporation in South Africa. Successive South African governments pressed Britain to transfer jurisdiction over the three territories to South Africa. This might have made administrative and economic sense. But the introduction of apartheid in South Africa in 1948, if nothing else, made incorporation impossible as it was politically unthinkable that they could be entrusted to the tender mercies of South Africa’s apartheid

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Government. Instead, Britain gave independence to Botswana and Lesotho in 1966 and to Swaziland, two years later, in 1968.

Since independence, Britain had had all too little contact with the three countries. So Lord Lothian's visit in 1972 was intended to show that we had not altogether lost interest in them and to give them some moral support in their uneasy relationship with their big South African neighbour. We flew to Johannesburg, which I was to get to know quite well some forty years later after retirement. In 1972 we had no formal contact with the South African Government from which HMG kept its distance in those apartheid days, (although, a little shamefacedly, we had to rely on the courtesy of the South African authorities in facilitating our passage through their country). We used Johannesburg as the hub from which we travelled successively, by a mixture of air and road, to the three capitals of Gaborone (Botswana), Maseru (Lesotho) and Mbabane (Swaziland). Our visit to Botswana was the most interesting.

No FCO minister had visited Botswana since 1967, a year after independence. Lord Lothian's familiarisation visit was therefore timely. Rhodesia and South Africa were the most important subjects covered in discussions with the President, Seretse Khama. He explained his determination to adopt a position of balance between South Africa and the African states to the north. Botswana could tell the former of her opposition to apartheid while explaining to the latter the realities of the racial situation in Southern Africa.

The President also, interestingly, emphasised the basically democratic nature of the traditional tribal institutions of Botswana, which he said helped to explain why the Western-style democracy inherited from Britain was still in such good shape and was working well. He might have also said, but didn't, that his own moderation and good sense were further important reasons. He was one of the most impressive African Heads of Government that we were to meet. He had met his British wife, Joan, in England while studying law in London.

We saw for ourselves how rich Botswana was in precious minerals. Harry Oppenheimer, Chairman of Anglo-American, provided an executive jet for Lord Lothian and party to visit both the diamond mine at Orapa and the copper and nickel mine at Selibe Phikwe. The diamonds were a vital part of Botswana's success. The world's diamonds are mined in two kinds of geological formation. They are either quite widely scattered in alluvial soil on the surface, as I had seen with Lord Lothian in Sierra Leone in 1972; or they are concentrated underground in deep vertical 'pipes' as was the case at Orapa. There, the

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operation was concentrated in a small area on top of the 'pipe', surrounded by a secure fence. The workforce was searched thoroughly on leaving the site each day. The result was that the joint owners, de Beers and the Government, could share the large income; and the people of Botswana benefitted through taxation. In simple terms, on the one hand, in Sierra Leone, alluvial mining, local corruption and bad government produced poverty and disaster. On the other hand, in Botswana, 'pipe' diamonds and good government were ingredients of relative prosperity.

CHAPTER 5

A NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH FRANCE, 1974-1977

France presented a great contrast to Edward Heath's three-day-week Britain. French shops were full of goods, lights were blazing and France seemed in an optimistic frame of mind, but with an annoying tendency to look down condescendingly on Britain's current misfortunes. Shortly after our arrival, Giscard D'Estaing defeated Mitterrand in the Presidential elections.

French language training

First I spent six weeks at a French language course in Besançon in the Jura to 'brush up' my French. I was glad to have spent two months in Paris after leaving Wellington but wished I had achieved greater fluency. Moreover my French had been overlaid by the Greek I had learned in Athens; and all too often, instead of replying to a question in French, I was using Greek.

COCOM

I spent my first year in Paris as the UK representative on the Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls, otherwise known simply as COCOM. It had been established in Paris by the Western powers (NATO plus Japan) after the end of the Second World War to restrict the export to communist countries of high tech equipment which could be used for strategic purposes against the West. It maintained lists of goods, with detailed technical specifications above which exports were embargoed. The Committee ensured that the embargo was respected. But every third year it went into intensive full time negotiations to revise the specifications in the light of the latest information on the technological capacities and requirements of the embargoed countries. This process was known as the List Review. One such Review took place in 1974/75 during my time as Britain's COCOM delegate. We met in a rather dingy semi-basement conference room of a building near the Embassy. The dozen or so national delegates were each accompanied by a supporting cast of expert officials from capitals and, in an advisory capacity, by observers from private sector firms with an interest in exporting high tech equipment to the Soviet Union and its allies. A small permanent secretariat, led by a charming Italian diplomat who rejoiced in the name of M. Indelicato, chaired and recorded our

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discussions and provided simultaneous interpretation from French to English and vice versa.

I was not alone in my ignorance of machine tools, electronic equipment, computers and nuclear components whose specifications we discussed. None of the delegates was an expert. Curiously this did not seem to matter much. The important thing was to understand whether a delegate was proposing that it was safe to lower the specifications under discussion in the interests of increasing exports or dangerous to do so in case export gave the communist bloc a strategic advantage. In other words, we were seeking to balance our commercial against our defence interests. Each delegation tried to define the specifications as far as possible to suit its own commercial advantage without prejudicing our collective safety. Could we, for example, raise the specifications of a particular computer in the interests of getting more business or would that give some kind of advantage to the Soviet Union?

The three most powerful delegations were the American, British and French, largely because we had the best intelligence on communist strategic requirements and the widest range of would-be exporters. In practice discussion often developed into an argument between the American and British delegations in which my American colleague, a crew-cropped Texan called Ted Papendorp, and I took the lead. We sat next to each other. On one occasion, Ted came in after lunch and put a large cardboard box on the table. The Chairman invited me to speak on the next item. I was just about to make my intervention, which was probably going to involve some kind of a verbal assault on the American position, when Ted said: "Wait Mr. Chairman". He took out the box, lifted the lid off and took out a GI helmet. Putting it on his head, he crouched down and said: "Let the British attack commence". This was the kind of atmosphere in which we worked. Ted and I subsequently had lunch together to make peace.

The British official delegation was composed of officials from the Ministry of Defence, Department of Trade and Department of Industry, with occasional appearances from the Trade Relations and Exports Department of the FCO. We all got to know each other pretty well. I used to insist on thorough briefing meetings before we set off for the day's negotiations, partly to ensure I understood what we were trying to achieve and partly to avoid disagreements within the delegation at the table. If necessary we included in those briefings representatives from British firms with an export interest who might be in Paris for a particular item under review. They wanted to ensure that the parameters

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we agreed were as helpful as possible to their own commercial interests. And officials wanted to show the firms that we were on their side.

Before the Review began, I and the key Whitehall officials - Crash Abbots and Jack Stuttard from the Ministry of Defence and Freddie Haynes from the Department of Trade - visited Tokyo, Bonn, Rome and (twice) Washington for bilateral discussions with some of the other COCOM Governments to prepare the ground for the Review itself. Were these journeys strictly necessary? I suspect that one visit to Washington might have been enough and that the others took place out of habit. But they probably helped us to work out what was negotiable and therefore to achieve our aims at the negotiating table. They certainly also established good working relations with the other delegations. And the visit to Tokyo enabled Jack Stuttard and me to visit both the shrine at Nikko, 90 miles north of Tokyo, and via the bullet train the shrines at Kyoto, some 300 miles to the south. All these visits were taking place during our first month in Paris when poor Veronica and the children were in a hotel near the Embassy while Veronica house-hunted in my absence.

We were very glad to move into Number 11, Avenue de la Pommeraie in St Cloud, within sight of the Eiffel Tower and, from the top floor, even of the race course at Longchamps in the Bois de Boulogne. Although our decision not to live in the centre of Paris displeased Ronald Arculus, the Economic Minister in the Embassy, Number 11 was a great improvement on our Holland Park flat, with a small garden and easy access by the suburban line to the Gare Saint Lazare, fifteen minutes walk to the Embassy. We had no difficulty in persuading my French contacts to drive out to St Cloud for dinner in the evening. And when we invited the Arculuses they turned up fifteen minutes early not having realised how close we lived.

I believe that COCOM lasted more or less in the form I knew it until 1994. Although I know nothing of its work after I left it in 1975, I suspect it probably achieved its objectives of keeping sensitive equipment away from the Soviet Union and its allies; of permitting the export of non-sensitive goods; and of preventing our Western commercial competitors from stealing a march on our own industry. Otherwise it would probably not have lasted as long as it did. But others are better qualified to judge its overall value, in particular its effect on the strategic capabilities of the Soviet Union. As for my personal involvement in the List Review, it gave me experience of leading a small team, of multilateral negotiations and of working with the private sector, all of which was to prove useful later.

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The Paris Embassy

One of the unusual features of COCOM work was my independence from the Embassy. I was theoretically part of the Embassy's Economic Section which was under the leadership of the Economic Minister, Ronald Arculus; but neither he nor David Ratford, one of the two Counsellors in the Section who was nominally my boss, took much interest in what the COCOM delegation was doing, except to enquire from time to time when I would be free for the main work of the Section. I was left to get on with the Review. Luckily I had known the Political Minister, Christopher Ewart-Biggs, who had been my Head of Department in PUSD some ten years earlier. He and Jane were extraordinarily kind to Veronica and me in Paris; and he even tried to persuade me to switch from Economic Section to the political work of Chancery. I was tempted; but declined because I thought experience of economic work would help my later career. We were all deeply shocked when he was murdered by the IRA on 21 July 1976 shortly after taking up his appointment as Ambassador to Ireland.

I got to know other members of the Embassy more gradually and some of them became life-long friends, notably David Miers with whom I overlapped in Paris all too briefly and Ivor Rawlinson who I was to see later in Canada where he was the Consul General in Montreal during much of my time in Ottawa. Ivor was responsible for keeping track of the French economy, the one job in which my 1967 economics course would have been directly relevant. I also enjoyed working for the Financial Counsellor, Nicholas Bayne who was responsible for keeping in close touch with the French Ministry of Finance, and whose large shoes I was to try to fill as High Commissioner to Canada years later.

Perhaps the most outstanding of my colleagues was Robin Renwick, a first Secretary in Chancery who would go on to glory as High Commissioner to South Africa, Ambassador to the United States and eventually a Life Peer. George Walden, who was responsible for following political developments in France (and whose young son peed into Nicholas's wellington boots when he came to play) later left the Diplomatic Service, became an MP and Minister for Higher Education in Mrs Thatcher's government for a couple of years. And the Ambassador's Private Secretary, Howard Davies, was also to leave the Service and later to become Chairman of the Financial Services Authority and Director of the London School of Economics. So there was no shortage of talent among my colleagues; and the Ambassador's morning meeting was a lively affair, although Ronald Arculus discouraged the more junior members of Economic Section from attending as, in his view, we had better work to do.

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As for the two Ambassadors during my time in Paris, Sir Edward Tomkins and Sir Nicholas '(Nico') Henderson: I believe I met Tomkins twice only; but saw more of Henderson. Inevitably given the size of the Embassy, he spent little time on economic business and I found him a remote figure. I used to feel nostalgia for our time in Greece accompanying our Ambassador and Damaris Stewart to the mouths of Hades.

EEC work

In the summer of 1975, I switched from COCOM to mainly EEC related work. On 5 June Harold Wilson's Labour Government held a referendum in which voters approved Britain's continued membership of the EEC by 67% to 33% on a national turnout of 64%. (Britain had joined the EEC two and a half years earlier, on 1 January 1973 under the Conservative government of Edward Heath.) Our membership had profound and far reaching effects on British foreign policy and therefore on the operations of Whitehall, especially of the FCO and its overseas Embassies. The main work of protecting and promoting British interests in the EEC took place in Brussels where our Ambassador to the EEC and his staff (known as UKREP, Brussels) were in semi-permanent negotiation with our EEC partners on every conceivable aspect of public policy. But our Embassies in the other member states of the EEC played an essential role in keeping Whitehall and UKREP informed on our partners' policies towards the EEC and on significant domestic developments. They also tried to influence those policies in a direction favourable to Britain. Economic Section was primarily responsible for this work in Paris.

At one time or another during my time in Economic Section I specialised in energy, industrial policy (particularly steel), transport, regional and social policy. This involved keeping in touch with key French officials. I inherited from my predecessors a network of official contacts and from David Miers, in particular, valuable advice on the best technique of introducing myself to them. "You should ring up somebody in the Délégation à l'Energie, for example," he told me, "but you won't get past his secretary until six o'clock in the evening, so ring after six and you'll find that he answers the phone himself. You introduce yourself, and ask to call for a general discussion. And he'll say 'well, my diary is terribly busy, what about say three weeks from now?' You'll say 'Perfect' and you'll make a date to see him in three weeks' time. You must then", continued David, "use those three weeks to brief yourself in detail on the subject concerned. Get detailed information from Whitehall departments on matters

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under current discussion in Brussels. Prepare your vocabulary and at the end of three weeks go along and astound him with your knowledge." I found that David's technique worked. And after the first contact the official concerned would regard me as an *interlocuteur valable* and would be willing to see me or to take my telephone calls; and in due course he would accept a good lunch and give me two hours of undivided attention to spill the beans on French policy on whatever the subject was.

One of the subjects under discussion in Brussels was whether the EEC should agree on a minimum selling price (MSP) for oil; this was a minimum price, not a maximum price, so as to protect British investment in North Sea oil exploration. We had understood that at a recent summit it had been agreed that a minimum selling price be set. I'd been surprised that we'd achieved this because I knew the French were strongly against it. As consumers rather than producers, they naturally wanted to drive down the price of oil as far as possible. I decided to explore French thinking. I invited out to lunch one of the key officials on French energy policy, François Bujong de l'Estang, - a very high-powered man who had worked for a short time as one of General De Gaulle's junior staff and who was later to be French Ambassador in Washington. When I raised the subject of the MSP, he tore me to pieces and said that "If Britain seriously thought the French President had agreed on an MSP, the sooner I disabused Whitehall of the notion the better." I thought this was part of a deliberate campaign on the part of the French to unpick an agreement which had indeed been reached at summit level. Their campaign succeeded. I did not enjoy my lunch.

A happier memory is of a piece of research I did into French thinking on the EEC's Regional Development Policy. We were hoping to get agreement in Brussels on an EEC Regional Development Fund (RDF) from which Britain's poorer regions could benefit as a way of helping to correct the imbalance in Britain's contributions to the EEC budget. I did the rounds of all the French agencies concerned: the Quai D'Orsay (the French Foreign Office), the SGCI (a central coordinating committee for French policy towards the EEC), the Ministry of External Trade, one or two Ministerial private offices. I compiled a report on the attitudes of each agency to the RDF and tried to assess the position that France might take in Brussels on the subject. I was told later that this report had been treated as a good example of the sort of work an Embassy should be contributing to Whitehall deliberations.

I gradually built up a network of about 60 or 70 people in Paris, mainly officials in the Administration but also some in the private sector and a few journalists,

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with whom I established a professional relationship and on whom I could call or telephone for information when I needed to. It was a network very different from the sort I had established in Athens where I had known more politicians than officials. But I found the art of identifying the right people and ferreting out the information I needed an interesting challenge. And I enjoyed the many one-to-one lunches I spent in the company of some formidable Frenchmen. My French improved to fair fluency; but it was one thing to converse with a single individual on a subject I had been able to prepare, and quite another to hold my own at a dinner party with often unknown fellow guests on unforeseeable subjects.

About half way through my time in Paris, I was asked to return to London for six weeks to replace temporarily David Miers in Energy Department of the FCO who had been invited to do a one-off review of diplomatic entertainment worldwide. Veronica and the children stayed in Paris. I enjoyed the job, which gave me a better understanding of HMG's energy policies as well as the opportunity to work as an assistant head of department. My boss was a friendly old-Etonian called Stephen Egerton with an irreverent attitude to authority who was later to become Ambassador to Saudi Arabia. During my time in London, I lived in our Holland Park flat recently vacated by our tenant. But we decided to take the opportunity of my visit to put the flat up for sale in the expectation that we would need something bigger when we were next posted home.

Reflections on Paris

I have mixed feelings about our time in Paris. On the bright side, the work was interesting, demanding and full of variety; and I was lucky to be able to get to know some exceptionally able French officials. Veronica and I enjoyed a happy family life in St Cloud and the opportunity to learn better French.

There were two main problems: one was my fault and the other due to the culture within the Embassy at the time. Although I passed the higher standard of the Foreign Office's French language exam, I was not at ease in the language. With greater fluency I would have found my job much easier and would have made some real friends among my French contacts. As for the Embassy culture, it used to be said that, if someone in the Bonn Embassy were to leave on his desk over lunch any official papers, they would be seized by a colleague keen to take over the work himself; whereas in Paris, colleagues would go so far as to break in to one's security cabinet to get at other people's work. Although, frankly, no-one was much interested in trying to take over my own rather specialist work,

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the atmosphere within parts of the Embassy was more competitive than collegiate. Christopher Ewart-Biggs set a good example among the most senior staff in providing leadership and in fostering a team spirit within the Embassy. But not everyone had his flair in making people feel part of a team. The result was a degree of unhappiness, particularly among junior staff, but also in the middle ranks who felt that their efforts were not always appreciated. I used to return to the Embassy after an absence with a certain trepidation. In later years, the Office got much better at treating the arts of management as an essential part of any senior job in the Service.

Veronica and I decided that I should ask for a home posting after Paris, largely for personal family reasons. I learned much later that Personnel Department had been planning to send me back to Athens as Head of Chancery. But, even if we had known this, we would still have preferred London. And Personnel Department welcomed my decision as, unsurprisingly, there were more volunteers for Athens than for London. It was not until I reached London that I learned what work I would be doing.

CHAPTER 6

TERRORISM AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION, 1977 - 1982

We didn't expect our home posting to last for as long as five years. But what I had thought would be one or at most two appointments turned into three: the first two as Assistant Head of Maritime, Aviation and Environment Department (MAED) and then of European Community Department (Internal) (ECD(I)) and the third, on promotion, to the European Secretariat of the Cabinet Office.

In 1979 our youngest child, Robert, was born. So we became a family of five.

Maritime, Aviation and Environment Department

In MAED my main responsibilities, as the Assistant, were for air service agreements between Britain and countries to which our airlines flew; and responding to hijacking attacks. The head of the department was a friendly and very able man called Martin Morland who I already knew slightly. He left me and the desk officers a fair amount of freedom of action. The lead in Whitehall on air services lay with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) who were responsible for negotiating agreements with other governments to allow international commercial air transport services between Britain and their territories. MAED's job was to ensure that the DTI took enough account of other aspects of Britain's relations with the country with which they were negotiating. We tried to prevent them from taking too hard an approach in their negotiations if, simultaneously, Britain was seeking the cooperation of the country concerned in some other field. For its part, the DTI aimed to isolate air services from all other aspects of our bilateral relationships. The DTI air services department was led by an acerbic Under Secretary called George Rogers who seemed to resent what he saw as Foreign Office interference in the DTI's work. He was as tough with his aviation opposite numbers in other countries as he was with us in the Foreign Office.

I took part in largely fruitless efforts to get permission for Concorde to overfly parts of the world. I vividly recall being told by the DTI one lunch time that the supersonic plane was on its way east, about to enter Indian airspace, but that the Indians had not yet agreed that it could overfly supersonically. Could I do something rather quickly? I rang up the Deputy High Commissioner in New Delhi to find that the poor man had dengue fever. He sprang into action from his sick bed, but failed to persuade the Indians to give permission, with the result

that the plane had to fly subsonically. Rather naturally the Indians saw no reason why their citizens should suffer supersonic booms if our own didn't. Could we have achieved a different result with more time and a different approach? Probably not.

Martin Morland dealt with most of the department's work on Airbus which was going through a critical phase at the time. But, in his absence on summer leave in 1978, I used to accompany Michael Butler, the Deputy Secretary responsible, to senior level Whitehall meetings on the terms of Britain's participation in the project. I was by far the most junior of the officials involved and, although I was treated kindly, my presence added nothing to the outcome: a 20% British share in the company for the construction of the Airbus wings.

I became heavily involved for a few weeks in supporting a British campaign to persuade our partners in the International Civil Aviation Organisation to adopt a UK Doppler aircraft landing control system as the international standard. Disappointingly the ICAO Council selected an alternative system favoured by the Americans. Don't ask me now to explain the rival technical merits of the two competing systems.

Occasionally we had to drop our other work and cope with a hijacking in which there was a fashion. The most dramatic was of Lufthansa flight 181 from Frankfurt to Palma which was seized by the Palestine Liberation Front who were hoping to secure the release from a German prison of members of the Red Army faction. The hijacking took place more or less at the same time as a summit meeting between Prime Minister Callaghan and the West German Chancellor, Helmut Schmidt. Callaghan had offered Schmidt some help with SAS observers in a strictly advisory role. The SAS had been present when the hijacking was brought to a successful conclusion in Mogadishu by the German intervention force, the GSG 9. History doesn't relate the exact role which the SAS played on that occasion. After the incident, I accompanied Clive Whitmore, a Deputy Secretary in the Cabinet Office, to Bonn for a debriefing by the Germans who gave us a detailed account of the incident. The hijackers had been killed; none of the hostages, as I recall, had been harmed.

That incident gave a powerful impetus to Whitehall planning for military intervention in any future terrorist incident. I attended an overnight exercise in Manchester, led by the police, simulating a hostage-taking terrorist attack in the city. My role was to provide Foreign Office advice to the police on the overseas aspects of the case. I used also to work closely on anti-terrorism with the Home

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Office and the Ministry of Defence, both of whom were easier partners than the DTI and never questioned the Foreign Office's role.

About half way through my year in MAED I briefly considered leaving the Diplomatic Service and looking for a job in the private sector. This was the result of a certain amount of frustration both in Paris and in MAED itself, probably caused by a mixture of mid-career blues and lack of scope for individual initiative as a First Secretary in a big Embassy and then a FCO department. My cousin, Roger Goodenough, helpfully gave me an introduction to Lord Camoys, Managing Director of Barclays Merchant Bank. I calculated rather discredibly that my family connection with the Bank might help my application. But an hour with Camoys convinced me that I did not have the right skills for banking and that it could not rival the variety and other advantages of a diplomatic career. So I reconciled myself to making the most of the FCO.

European Integration Department (Internal)

Not long afterwards I was moved to one of the two main FCO departments responsible for Britain's relations with the EEC. One dealt with the EEC's internal affairs and the other with its external relations with the rest of the world. Like MAED, both had to work closely with other Whitehall departments. I was one of two Assistants in European Integration Department (Internal). This was five years after UK accession to the EEC and only three after Harold Wilson's 1975 referendum when Britain had voted overwhelmingly to maintain its membership of the Union in the light of his successful renegotiation of the terms of our membership. The EIDs were very much in the front line of foreign policy.

EID(I) was closely involved in formulating Britain's policy towards the European Parliament. I therefore found myself, in my first year in EID(I), engaged in the final preparations for the first direct elections to the European Parliament, held in 1979. These were in fact the first international elections in history. Until then the Parliament was composed of members appointed from among the EEC's nine national parliaments. Agreement between the member states on how direct elections should be arranged was difficult, primarily because neither Jim Callaghan's Labour Government nor Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Government were willing to adopt any form of proportional representation favoured by other member states. Eventually the EEC agreed that each country should use its own or something like its own electoral system. So Britain, except for Northern Ireland, was able to use its first past-the-post

system. The Parliament's electoral system was far from the only Parliamentary issue to need attention in ECD(I). Another vital one was the Parliament's powers vis-a-vis national Parliaments and the Commission in Brussels, particularly on the EEC budget.

Just as I started in EID(I), when James Callaghan was still in power, it became apparent that the British net contribution to the EEC budget was going to reach the then astronomical sum of £800 million a year. Our contribution had been one of the most contentious issues during the original negotiations on our accession to the EEC. Neither then, nor during Harold Wilson's renegotiation of 1975, had it been possible to agree a long term system of sharing between member states the costs of the EEC budget that Britain considered to be fair. I shall not try to explain the issues here. They are set out admirably by two of the most important British officials involved between 1979 and 1984, namely Michael Butler, in his *Europe: more than a continent*, and David Hannay, in *Britain's quest for a role*. A huge effort by Ministers and officials in the FCO, Treasury and Cabinet Office over the next five years went into reducing Britain's inequitable net contribution, culminating in Mrs Thatcher's eventual success in 1984 in reaching a more or less satisfactory conclusion. As Michael Butler wrote, "Mrs Thatcher herself bore the brunt of the worst moments. She herself had to negotiate points of great difficulty [with her fellow Heads of Government]...She always devoted the necessary time to understanding the complications. She was inflexible in her determination to get a fair deal, but flexible on the lesser points of substance when she needed to be."

Most of the work in EID(I) on the budget problem, in support of David Hannay and Michael Butler, was done by the Head of the Department - first Peter Petrie and later Nick Spreckley - and two very able desk officers - the redoubtable Alyson Bailes and later John Macregor. But I was asked to coordinate work on the levers available to Britain to achieve our objectives, including the possibility of withholding our own budget payments and of invoking the 'Luxembourg Compromise' which gave us a veto on important decisions in the EEC. I was also responsible for coordinating EID's contribution to briefing the Prime Minister for the six monthly European Councils of EEC Heads of Government. In addition I did a certain amount of speech writing for Ministers' use in the House of Commons. It was a fascinating two years, getting to grips with some of the big EEC issues of the day.

The European Secretariat, Cabinet Office

I had expected to be sent abroad again after three years in London. But in 1980, to my surprise and pleasure, I was offered secondment on promotion to the European Secretariat of the Cabinet Office. This was a small office of eight people headed by a Deputy Secretary, Michael Franklin on secondment from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries (MAFF), and under him an Under Secretary, David Elliott from the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). Michael was to end up as Permanent Secretary of MAFF. He was replaced as Head of the Secretariat by David Hancock from the Treasury who was later to become Permanent Secretary of the Department of Education and Science. I was one of two Assistant Secretaries (the equivalents of FCO Counsellors) supported by four Home Civil Service Principals on secondment from various other Whitehall departments. It was rather a top-heavy structure, and after I had left the Secretariat, the number of Assistant Secretaries was reduced from two to one. I was not surprised; it was my only London job when I usually had time for a decent lunch break and even to visit Westminster public library to borrow the books which my long daily train journeys gave me time to read.

The Secretariat was a high powered team, which gave me a unique view of our membership of the EEC, of Whitehall and of the very high quality of most of the officials working on EEC affairs. I started work with some trepidation, very much on my mettle. Our main duties were to service a number of ministerial and official committees relating to the EEC and to coordinate the formation of Britain's EEC policies. The atmosphere was calmer than in the Foreign Office, mainly because we had no parliamentary duties, nor direct dealings with the public, and because we usually had more notice than ordinary Whitehall departments of the problems we were dealing with.

Our committee work consisted of acting as secretaries to ministerial committees and of chairing official level committees. I was one of the secretaries of the main ministerial committee on EEC matters and, as such, drafted the steering brief for whichever minister was chairing the committee's meetings and then wrote a first draft of the minutes of the meetings. My drafts were amended and approved by David Elliott and/or Michael Franklin. Taking minutes of a ministerial meeting was a distinct art. I was introduced early on to the anonymous lines on the subject:

*“And so while the great ones depart to their dinner,
The secretary stays, growing thinner and thinner,
Racking his brains to recall and report*

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What he thinks that they'll think that they ought to have thought."

The convention was, rather than to provide a blow by blow record of everything that had been said at the meeting, to summarise the main points that had been made on each side of the argument; and then to end with the Chairman's summing up. The result was a record of the discussion that was usually much more coherent than the discussion itself had been. Our aim was to circulate the finalised minutes to all Whitehall departments involved within 24 hours of the end of the meeting. Sometimes this involved staying late in the office to complete the work. Only very rarely did a Minister or his department raise objection to *"what we thought that they'd think that they ought to have thought."*

Most Ministers stuck fairly closely to the line recommended by their officials; and we were therefore able to predict what they would say. An exception was Keith Joseph when he was Secretary of State for Industry. I forget the subject under discussion when I witnessed him in action. Far from sticking to the departmental line, he approached the subject in a refreshing spirit of open intellectual curiosity, examining the issues from every angle before reaching his own conclusion in the light of the arguments. If all of his colleagues had done the same, the outcomes might - or might not - have been better. They would certainly have been less predictable.

I chaired the official sub-committee on the enlargement of the EEC which was responsible for working out the line Britain should take in discussion among member states of the applications of Spain, Portugal and Greece. Their accession to the EEC would raise its total membership from nine to twelve. The importance of this lay not so much in the numbers than in the fact that these three important southern European countries were emerging from years of military rule. In joining the ranks of democratic member states they demonstrated the value of the EEC as a magnet in helping to bring dictatorship to an end. This was the first opportunity I'd had in my career to act as a chairman of a formal committee. I began nervously and hesitantly, but eventually learnt the art, with the help of a good deal of careful home-work and the indulgence of colleagues from the main Whitehall departments whose interests would be affected by enlargement. Looking back, I wish very much that I had had practical experience in the art of chairmanship at an earlier stage in my career.

Other work included helping to ensure that the agenda of each European Council included all the items of importance to Britain and coordinating the

preparation of briefs in Whitehall for the Prime Minister's use at the Council. After one Council meeting, Mrs Thatcher invited all the officials who had been involved in its preparation to No. 10 for drinks to say thank-you. This was typical of the interest she took in staff and was much appreciated. She gave us a tour of the main rooms in No. 10 in the course of which she pointed through the windows to the high FCO building on the other side of the street: "They take my light", she said with a half smile.

I used to attend and prepare the agenda and organise follow-up to what was known as the "Friday Butler" meetings which took place (as the name implies) every Friday when Michael Butler, by then our Ambassador to the EEC in Brussels, would fly back for discussions with Whitehall departments at a meeting chaired by Michael Franklin and later by David Hancock, on the week's work ahead. It was a good opportunity to take stock of how Britain was getting on with its various objectives in Brussels.

Michael Franklin proposed at one stage that the European Secretariat should take on a think tank role in Whitehall on EEC affairs. I recall in this context discussion of whether we should write a paper on what was known at the time as "variable geometry": the idea that instead of every member state agreeing to move together at the same speed right across the board, different groups of member states would proceed at varying speeds on this or that aspect of policy. This idea was rejected for fear that Britain would find itself outside an inner circle of those member states able to move faster together. Those were in the days before Britain started to secure special exemptions on some aspects of monetary and social policy. The euro currency, for example, had not yet been launched without us. As for becoming a think tank, the idea sank rapidly without trace. I doubt if the FCO could ever have tolerated such an enhanced role for the Cabinet Office although it might not have been averse to taking on the job itself.

On 2 April 1982 Argentina invaded the Falklands Islands. I recall seeing warning signals in the telegram traffic between the Foreign Office and our Embassy in Buenos Aires before the invasion. I assumed that somebody was dealing with the subject but it wasn't apparent to me that the problem was being properly gripped. The European Secretariat wasn't directly involved in working out Britain's response; but I attended the packed first Whitehall-wide meeting held in the Cabinet Office on the Monday morning after the invasion. It was chaired by Robert Wade-Gery, Deputy Secretary on the overseas and defence side, who had just come back from a holiday in India and had arrived pretty well hot-foot

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from the airport. I greatly admired his outstanding “coolness” under what must have been very considerable pressure. He began the meeting by saying “Well, Ladies and Gentlemen, I think this is an occasion when the best is going to be the enemy of the good; we need to prepare a paper for Ministers by lunchtime on the options available to Britain and we’d like contributions from all departments concerned. Please let me have your drafts by noon. We need good drafts on time rather than the best too late.” I thought it was a good slogan for the occasion.

I enjoyed working with David Elliott, the Under Secretary. I was intrigued by his comment in one of my annual appraisals: “Anthony is more intelligent than clever.” Thinking about this, I decided that he was right, if ‘clever’ meant ‘quick minded’ and ‘intelligent’ meant ‘capacity to understand’. My mind worked more slowly than I would have liked; but I could understand and master a difficult problem if given enough time.

Towards the end of my two years in the Cabinet Office, I took stock. Should I bid for more EEC work or ask to do something different? I had found EEC work important, interesting and demanding and had enjoyed working with first-rate Whitehall and FCO colleagues. I had a personal belief, which has become stronger over the years, in the value of the UK’s membership of the EEC; but I felt that as far as my own career was concerned, it might be more sensible to head in other directions rather than to continue to specialise in European affairs. EEC-related jobs formed a very narrow pyramid and I wasn’t sure there would be jobs at the top of it for me. I thought there was a certain lack of scope for individual initiative and that generalisation offered a better chance of reaching higher in the Service. I was attracted by the idea of the wider world and of something new and different. So instead of bidding for another EEC related job I asked the FCO’s Personnel Department for a posting outside Europe. I have never regretted that decision.

CHAPTER 7

DICTATORSHIP IN PAKISTAN: GENERALS, 1982-1985

My appointment

“What about New Delhi, as Head of Chancery?” I was asked by Personnel Department.

“Yes please”, I replied, “I like the idea of India, and Head of Chancery will give me the management experience I need.”

Two weeks later, Personnel Department rang again. “Change of plan. We’d like you to go to Islamabad as Head of Chancery instead. You’ll find Pakistan just as interesting and the management job even bigger than in New Delhi. They need you in two months time.”

I was never told quite why Personnel Department had changed their minds. But I suspect someone thought that a combination of Robert Wade-Gery as High Commissioner and me as Head of Chancery might have been too demanding for staff; and that Oliver Forster, the more indulgent Ambassador in Islamabad, and I might make a more balanced team. Or perhaps it was just a matter of timing; I was available and Islamabad needed someone more quickly than Delhi.

Robert, our youngest son, was young enough to live with us throughout our posting in Pakistan. His elder sister and brother, Eleanor and Nicholas, spent the school holidays with us from their British boarding schools.

The political scene

Pakistan at the time was undergoing one of its periodic military dictatorships. General Zia-ul-Haq had seized power from Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1977, declared martial law and executed Bhutto in 1979. In the face of internal and external opposition, he might not have survived very long without the Soviet invasion of neighbouring Afghanistan over Christmas 1979. That ensured the Afghan mujahideen and their Pakistan allies the support of the United States and its allies, including Britain, in trying to oust Soviet troops. Far from being an international pariah, Zia became, in the words of one American news agency, “the doughty defender of Western interests and the last bulwark against Communistic expansion to the warm waters of the Gulf”. As long as Russian

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troops were in Kabul and Zia stood firm against the Soviet Union, he was secure and could rely on massive Western military and financial backing. Holding our noses, we gave him our grudging political support, while doing what we could to nudge him towards the restoration of democracy in Pakistan itself.

The most obvious consequence of the Soviet invasion was the Afghan refugee camps around Peshawar and elsewhere along the border as well as the presence of Afghan refugees in some of the larger towns. There were said to be some 3 million refugees throughout the country. They placed a heavy burden on Pakistan. The international community provided a good deal of financial and material assistance both directly in the camps and indirectly via the Pakistan Government. Britain was involved in these programmes through Government aid funds and charities like Save the Children Fund and Oxfam.

As we had found in the Colonels' Greece, although military rule was repressive and unpleasant, it brought internal peace and stability. For most of our time in Pakistan, foreigners were able to travel safely around the country and we were therefore free to go more or less wherever we wanted except for the tribal areas along the Afghan border. As in the days of the British Raj, these were semi-autonomous under the rule of the local chiefs. Even Pakistan government officials did not normally venture to enter them without an armed escort. Occasionally the tribes would make a foray outside their territories to capture a hostage whose release they could trade for the reciprocal release by the federal government of a member of the tribe who might have been imprisoned for what their friends considered an unjustifiable reason. Such a fate befell one of the Embassy drivers. He was released unharmed after some bargaining between his captors and the local Political Agent.

Another important feature of Zia's Government was its attachment to Islam. As a pious believer himself, Zia was gradually seeking to introduce stricter respect for Islam, including the introduction of sharia law. This stopped short of the more barbaric punishments of stoning and the amputation of hands, if only out of fear of the West's reaction. But Western women, including Veronica and Eleanor, found local attitudes to women irksome and at times offensive.

Ever present during our time in Islamabad was the threat, as Pakistan saw it, of India next door. The two countries had gone to war three times since their independence as separate states in 1947. The most recent time had been 1971 when war had led to the creation of Bangladesh in the East and present day Pakistan in the West. Trouble had continued from time to time usually over the

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disputed region of Kashmir where there were occasional armed clashes between Pakistan and Indian troops above the snow line. The enmity between them was all the more dangerous because both countries were developing nuclear weapons.

British Policy towards Pakistan

Our objectives could be listed simply enough, however hard they might be to achieve. In addition to the restoration of democracy in Pakistan, the expulsion of the Soviet Union from Afghanistan, preservation of peace with India, and preventing Pakistan from any further development of nuclear weapons, we worked to protect and promote British commercial and other interests just as we did throughout the world.

But in one respect Pakistan was different. Britain's large community of Pakistani origin, many of whom were in close touch with their families in Pakistan itself, gave the bilateral relationship a special dimension and quality. In retrospect I doubt if Britain made the most of this, either in our official work to promote trade, or in other ways. Furthermore the presence in London of Benazir Bhutto and the activities of the Pakistan opposition in the UK complicated our relations with Zia's Government. In short the Pakistan community in Britain represented both a threat and an opportunity.

All too often the most urgent task seemed to be to manage the rising tide of immigration applications, particularly in Pakistani Kashmir where many of Britain's Pakistani communities had come from. As a result the Embassy was unusual in the size of its immigration section. This grew from about 14 entry clearance staff in my time, half from the Home Office and half from the FCO, to double that number a few years later. Their unenviable task was to examine visa applications to assess whether they met the criteria for the grant of a visa. All too often such applications relied on forged documents of one kind or another, especially false birth and marriage certificates. So they were rightly refused. This could lead to objections from Members of Parliament writing to British Ministers on behalf of the British families of the rejected Pakistani applicants. Our visa staff were under constant pressure. And the Ambassador was sometimes involved in defending their decisions.

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British assets in Pakistan

Britain had useful assets in pursuit of its objectives. History had given us a special place in Pakistani perceptions and even affections, and this usually worked in our favour. We were credited with greater understanding than others of the country and its problems, even when we were being blamed for some of its misfortunes. It was probably true that we exercised unusual influence for our size, although its extent was often exaggerated in Pakistan. I doubt if the Commonwealth made much of a difference, whether Pakistan was in it or, as from 1972 to 1989, outside. Incidentally we all enjoyed hearing, when Pakistan rejoined in 1989, that the old sign on the Embassy's gates reading 'British Embassy' had been about to be thrown away when it was discovered that 'British High Commission' was on the other side. So the sign was thriftily turned around to save the cost of a new one, ready for the next time that Pakistan left the Commonwealth - ten years later.

Nor did Britain's membership of the European Union make much of a difference to bilateral relations, given that our Embassy was bigger and better equipped than other EU Embassies, although the fact that European Union member states usually spoke with one voice on the need for the restoration of democracy and such matters as human rights probably helped. I personally enjoyed working with EU colleagues and was happy to share our political assessments with them, even though we didn't get much in return. Britain's seat on the Security Council counted for more. I have mentioned already the Pakistani community in Britain, potentially a much greater asset than Britain's Conservative Government of the time recognised. We also benefited from the high number of Pakistan's establishment who had been educated in Britain and who continued to visit Britain regularly for business purposes and to maintain personal friendships.

As for material assets, we had not only the Embassy itself but also our Consulate General in Karachi; the BBC was widely respected; and there were close military as well as many other links between the two countries. The British Council was active and valuable. In March 1984 Zia himself, as a gesture of support of the Council, attended a performance in Rawalpindi of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* by the Windmill Theatre Company whose tour of Pakistan was being organised by the Council.

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The Embassy and my job

When we arrived, Oliver Forster (to be knighted the following year), was the Ambassador, a man with long experience of the sub-continent and much loved by all the staff. He used to take part in Embassy theatricals including as the modern Major General in Gilbert and Sullivan. Some of his diplomatic colleagues were shocked by the sight of him cavorting on the stage, wearing union jack socks. But his staff loved it. He retired in November 1984 to be replaced by Dick Fyjis-Walker, who had come from five years as Ambassador to the Sudan. He and his wife, Gaby, threw themselves into the life of Islamabad, taking immense interest in the welfare of staff and quickly winning the affection of their colleagues in the diplomatic corps. I enjoyed working for him, all the more for feeling by that time that I had something to contribute in knowledge and experience.

Because of the large visa section, the size of the Embassy was unusual: some 70 UK-based staff, many of them quite junior. Most of them lived with their families on the compound near the Embassy itself in small terraced houses set amidst lawns and flowering shrubs. It was an attractive scene. There was little in the way of security: no fences or guards except a few local night watchmen known as *chowkidars*. There was also the great boon of a private Club nearby with a bar, a well-screened swimming pool and some hard tennis courts, where Embassy staff could enjoy privacy and ... a beer or two. Given Islam's ban on alcohol and its disapproval of women in bathing suits this was important.

With so many junior staff, the structure of the Embassy was bottom heavy. Beneath the Ambassador were two Counsellors (first Bill Fullerton and then Brian Watkins) and me as Head of Chancery. The former was in charge of the commercial and aid sections of the Embassy and, as Consul General, of consular and immigration work. I shall say more of the role of the Head of Chancery below. The custom was for the first of the Counsellors to have arrived to serve as the Ambassador's deputy and thus to be Chargé d'Affaires when the Ambassador was out of the country. Thus Bill, who had arrived long before me, was Chargé for a couple of months in 1982 soon after my arrival, when Oliver Forster was on leave; and, after Bill's departure in September 1983, I was Chargé for two months during Oliver's home leave and again, for three weeks in 1984, between Oliver's retirement and Dick's arrival. Being Chargé provided valuable experience in running an Embassy. It meant also that one had to attend even more diplomatic entertainment and other official events than usual as well as to look after visiting British ministers and other senior visitors. It also came with

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the perk of being chauffeured in the Ambassador's car with the union flag flying on the bonnet.

I was more than happy to give up the car when Dick Fyjis-Walker arrived and relieved me of my duties as Chargé. We all enjoyed his presentation of credentials even though the ceremony took place on Christmas Eve. In Veronica's words:

"The ceremony was held at the State Guest House, the old C-in-C's house from Victorian days - a fairytale wedding cake confection of a house with towers and balconies and pillars and columns all in dazzling white against a blue blue sky. The Ambassador arrived in a horse drawn landau which clattered into sight escorted by mounted troops on enormous horses which skidded to a halt about six inches from our feet."

We were gratified when the President gave Dick time for a private talk much longer than advertised, keeping the new Korean Ambassador waiting. In the year that remained before our departure, we got to know Dick and Gaby and their small son, Matthew well. Our two families used to picnic in the hills; and Matthew and Robert played happily together.

In addition to the two counsellors and the large visa staff, the Embassy included a number of First, Second and Third Secretaries as well as representatives from other Government Departments, notably a Defence Adviser and a Naval/Air Adviser. The latter were particularly valuable in dealing not only with Pakistan's armed forces but also with its military government.

As Head of Chancery, I was accountable to the Ambassador for the work of the political section in the Embassy, of the Embassy's security, of coordinating work throughout the Embassy and for the welfare of all staff. I shared responsibility for the welfare of immigration staff with the Consul General.

In the political section, I worked most closely with Shona Falconer and Mark Lyall Grant, a young new entrant who had spent some months learning Urdu before starting work in the Embassy. The male dominated society of Pakistan was not an easy working environment for a woman; but Shona was a popular and effective political officer, who later left the Diplomatic Service for a career in Shell. Mark went on to an exceptional diplomatic career, including as Ambassador to Pakistan, Ambassador to the United Nations and finally as National Security Adviser in Number Ten, Downing Street. As a Third Secretary

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he was responsible for day to day reporting on Pakistan's internal developments; and I quickly realised rather ruefully that he could outclass all of us in the speed with which he worked and his sureness of political judgement. A separate section dealt with Afghanistan and its relations with Pakistan. Its members spent quite a lot of their time among the Afghan refugees and the Afghan leaders in Peshawar, including in giving them support and encouragement against the Soviet invaders next door.

Security was a perennial concern. There were various aspects. First was the risk of straight-forward, criminal violence, but this was not serious in a military dictatorship with a strong police force. Second was the risk of a member of the Embassy getting caught by accident in a political demonstration, directed at the Government or someone else e.g. the Indians; but this too was not serious, especially in tightly controlled Islamabad. Third was that the Government might allow or encourage a demonstration against Britain itself and that this might get out of control and lead to violence. In 1979 the American Embassy had been burnt to the ground by an out-of-control mob enraged by a radio report claiming that the United States had bombed the Masjid al-Haram, Islam's holy site at Mecca. Oliver Forster had given refuge to US diplomats in our own Embassy which was next door. At the same time the British Council library in Rawalpindi had been attacked. But nothing of this kind happened during my time in Islamabad. We were always on our guard against an act of terrorism against Britain but were spared such a horror and believed that the military government would protect us.

We were however once the victims of a hoax. One evening in April 1984 the Embassy duty officer received a telephone message warning that a bomb had been planted in the 'Women's Club of the High Commission.' The Embassy Club was searched and then someone remembered that the International Women's Club were having a dance at Brian and Libby Watkins's house. I decided to go over there and persuade them to close the bar and call the bomb disposal squad. A hoax, but it spoilt the party. Did I over react? Perhaps; but I'd do the same again to play safe.

One of my ex officio duties as Head of Chancery was as Chairman of Governors of Islamabad's British School, a primary school mainly for Embassy children, to which Robert went. Normally this involved little work. But in March 1985 we hit turbulence when a new Head Teacher, who the British Council had found for us in Britain, fell foul of the parents. I had to manage her 'resignation' and appoint an acting Head from among the staff. She proved to be a great success; but for a

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time I was preoccupied with sorting the problem out. By ill fortune we were going through a bad patch within the family (see below).

Veronica's suffered emergency appendicitis soon after our arrival. But we enjoyed one stroke of good fortune. At a reception given by the Ambassador, a Pakistani had come up to me, dressed in a smart *sherwani*, the long coat resembling a Western frock coat, worn by Pakistani men on formal occasions. "Hello, Goodenough" he said "Long time no see." Hassan Hamid had been my contemporary at Wellington. We had not known each other at all well then but were to become friends in Islamabad. His father, Major General Shahid Hamid had been Field Marshall Auchinleck's Private Secretary, the first Director General of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency and a Federal Minister in President Ayub Khan's Government. No doubt Hassan had been sent to Wellington on the advice of Auchinleck, himself an Old Wellingtonian.

The Hamids were famously hospitable to Western visitors in their house in Rawalpindi, the old garrison town adjoining Islamabad. Soon after meeting Hassan, they had invited Veronica and me to a dinner for 50 at which we had been two among only half a dozen foreign guests. We were frequent visitors in the years that followed and Hassan used to drop in for a chat at Pembroke House. Later that year, after Veronica's operation, he had told us: "In this country you really need God on your side. In Europe things are well organised and you can manage without Him, but in Pakistan you can't."

Entertainment

Even before Veronica's operation, we found ourselves beginning to be swept along in the autumn season of official diplomatic entertainment. This ebbed and flowed through the year. During school holidays and the various festivals, both Christian and Muslim, invitations were mostly limited to national day receptions and working events for official visitors. But in between there were bursts of social activity. In early September I wrote home:

"We went to our first Chinese dinner party, given by the no. 2, an all diplomats do. It was in an immense room decorated with pictures of what looked like heroes of the long march and workers of the revolution uniting etc. The food was Chinese and very good. Veronica drew a short straw since she sat between one North Korean who spoke a little English and another who didn't. We don't have diplomatic relations with North Korea although we observe reasonable courtesies in circumstances like

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that. She had a hard time of it and spent most of dinner shouting across the very broad table to a congenial Egyptian opposite. I was luckier with a Malaysian and Indian for neighbours and an equally congenial Egyptian opposite."

A few days later Veronica reported home on an amusing dinner party given by the Spanish First Secretary (a handsome bachelor). Other guests included the Portuguese Ambassador (a handsome divorcé) and the interim Brazilian Ambassador.

"Between them they are doing their best to carve up Islamabad. Straight out of Lawrence Durrell. They developed fantasies over the Dip Corps chartering a jumbo to take the whole corps to Peking for the weekend to the puzzlement of the Chinese when a polyglot collection of Eastern, Western bloc and 3rd world people all obviously knowing each other very (too?) well descends from the skies and beats up Peking. A conspiracy to end all conspiracies."

In Veronica's absence, one week I was being entertained variously by Thais, Chinese, Pakistanis, Germans and Bangladeshis. Next week it was to be Australians, Austrians, Danes and Indians! And so it continued throughout our years in Islamabad. In April 1983 I wrote home:

"Tea for 20 on Tuesday, dinner for 24 on Wednesday, a small lunch on Thursday followed by a tea for 60 Embassy wives and children and a staff picnic for 12 recent newcomers on Saturday."

We were usually careful to be ultra polite at diplomatic parties, anxious not to cause offence. But every now and again our tongues escaped. In November Veronica wrote home:

"At a dinner given by the Canadian Counsellor, an American Professor researching the First Afghan War was ranting on about British atrocities during the War and kept on talking about women and children being slaughtered etc, genocide etc, and the tremendous public outcry in America at the time. I thought he was being rather rude and so asked him 'what was happening to the American Indians at the time?' Shock, horror! Laughter around the table from the other guests. We apologised to each other afterwards and we all ended up the best of friends ... sort of"

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Pakistanis could be outspoken too, as Veronica reported home a week or so later:

“We went to the Japanese Embassy the other day for a reception for their Armed Forces Day. We met there a friend of ours, a jolly whisky-drinking retired Pakistani Colonel who said, guffawing, that he had had great delight in saying to the Japanese Defence Attaché: ‘Damn good party ... I bet I’m the only guest here who has both fought against you and been imprisoned by you!’ His language was a great deal more picturesque than that.”

Most of the entertainment was within the diplomatic community and a smallish circle of friendly westernised Pakistanis. But occasionally we were involved in grander affairs. One of these, to which we were invited because the Ambassador was away, was a formal banquet in honour of the visiting Prime Minister of Malaysia in the State Guest House in Rawalpindi, a beautiful old Raj-era house with enormous glittering reception rooms. In Veronica’s words:

“There was lovely silver and crystal (wine glasses full of coca cola) on the tables. After dinner two pipers, resplendent in tartan and snowy white *pugrees* (turban-like headdresses), above furiously concentrating dark dark faces, processed around the room producing more than usually waily Scottish tunes. They played very well but must have puzzled the Malaysians a bit.”

The social round intensified in our final month before leaving: 18 evenings in a row with only one evening’s break, followed by two farewell receptions of our own, one for our official friends and acquaintances, at which Robert, aged five, joined us in the reception line to greet our guests, and the other for staff. Just before flying home, Veronica reported another cocktail snippet:

“An American: ‘Well I’ve bin to Saigon, and I’ve bin to Paris, and I’ve bin to Islamabad - heck - where else is there? But there ain’t no place to compare with ... Las Vegas.’”

The Asia Study Group (ASG) provided both diplomats and a few friendly Pakistanis with a different kind of entertainment. We used to meet in each other’s houses to listen to lectures on some aspect of Asian history or culture. In a town so devoid of other sources of entertainment, the Group was popular. I took my turn in giving a talk - on early Indian history. I later inherited the Chairmanship of the Group from Arlene Fullerton before handing over the job

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to Ruth, the wife of the Head of the Immigration Section, Peter Rollitt. Veronica served on the Committee as the programme secretary. In February 1985 Ruth and Veronica were asked by UNHCR to present to an Afghan refugee camp some volley balls and nets bought with money raised by the ASG at a Pakistan National Puppet Theatre Show. They drove early one morning to the camp off the Grand Trunk Road outside Peshawar. The camp elders were surprised by the appearance of two mere women and avoided shaking their hands on arrival; but by the time they left had thawed enough to shake hands warmly in farewell.

Our entertainment duties included looking after staff, particularly the junior ones. In addition to the occasional knees-up in Pembroke House, including 125 people all drinking their heads off to say goodbye to Oliver Forster on retirement, we used to take newcomers and leavers on picnics to some of our favourite places in the Margalla Hills just above Islamabad and to the pine-wood-clad hills at Karor not far away. With two cars we could invite 10 guests at a time. These were popular occasions especially appreciated by people with young children who had little opportunity to get out of the town. We in our turn received many kindnesses from members of the Embassy, high and low, especially when Veronica was ill.

Every Wednesday the Club held a darts competition. I was invited to join the 'Pitheads' team and not only enjoyed the games themselves but also the company of the members of staff who took part. There was otherwise too little opportunity to meet many of them.

Veronica was invaluable in helping to maintain morale. In the summer holidays of 1983 she organised a varied programme of activities, run by the mothers, for the 40-or-so Embassy children of all ages, including our own. There was something for everybody from 2 - 18: acting, dancing, games of all kinds, a team of other Embassy mothers running the different groups. The result was that the children were fully occupied. So was Veronica!

Inevitably with so large a staff and in a place like Islamabad, accidents happened. One accident led to disaster. Late one night in May 1985 a member of staff was killed in a car crash and her husband badly injured. I had the horrid job of telling the poor man of his wife's death. His father and sister flew out and stayed in Pembroke House to be close to the hospital. It was decided to fly him home in a special air ambulance. The father, sister, one-year-old adopted Pakistani daughter and the body flew separately, leaving us all in shock.

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Travel

I travelled less on official business than in any of my other overseas postings except for Paris. This was because the nature of my job confined me to the Embassy, including to hold the fort to allow the Ambassador and others to travel widely. But Veronica and I seized free weekends and Embassy holidays to explore as much as we could of Pakistan, sometimes with the children, more often without. We were encouraged to do so by Bill and Arlene Fullerton, inveterate travellers, who had got to know the country well and who introduced us to some of their favourite places within easy reach. We took with us *A Travellers Guide to Pakistan*, a mine of useful information and advice published in 1981 by Hilary Adamson and Isobel Shaw, two journalists who had each lived in Pakistan for three years. Hilary's husband had been a member of the Embassy. Without their book, we and many others would have got much less from our years in Pakistan. Thank you both for helping to open our eyes to so many of Pakistan's splendours.

I will record only a few of our travels here, making little distinction between official and private visits.

I visited Peshawar on the Afghan border and Lahore on the Indian to familiarise myself with these two important towns, one the meeting place of Asia and the sub-continent and the other looking south to the sub-continent. In neither did Britain have resident representation. I also flew to Karachi on the coast a couple of times to keep in touch with our resident Consul General there. Karachi was an important political centre, Pakistan's commercial capital and its largest town, of some seven million people, in which there were occasional street disturbances, caused by friction with the many Afghan refugees and between its original inhabitants and those who had arrived from India in 1947.

We paid an early visit, with the children, to the Khyber Pass through which the road from Peshawar to the Afghan border ran. It fully lived up to expectations, grim, steep and menacing, longer than I had expected. Its most impressive feature were the hill-top villages visible from the road each fortified with a 15-foot high mud wall. We passed through Landi Kotal, a local centre for the illegal heroin trade and of the Khyber Rifles Regiment, whose Officers Mess I was able to visit later, admiring the board listing the names of its Colonels from colonial times. The board made no distinction between the British names before 1947 and the mainly Pakistani ones after independence. On that first visit, we were able to drive right down to the frontier post and gaze across at Afghanistan, encouraged

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by the Pakistani sentries to put our feet over the line thus enabling the children to boast that they have been to Afghanistan. No Russians in sight! On a later occasion, I flew up the Pass in a Pakistani military helicopter with a visiting British Minister; but we did not approach the frontier too close for fear of attracting Russian attentions over the border. The bazaar in Peshawar itself was a network of narrow roads and alleys with hundreds of tiny shops selling, as well as all the necessities of life, brass and jewellery, carpets and leather, spices and singing birds. It was a tumult of people all of whom stared at the rare European.

After Veronica's return from convalescence in England, she and I were invited to attend a course in Lahore run by the Pakistan Government for foreigners on all aspects of the country's life and government. We listened to some excellent lectures each morning and the rest of the day were shown the magnificent buildings of this, one of the great Mughal cities of the sub-continent. We admired Kim's Gun in the middle of the Mall. We were taken to the Shalimar Garden just outside the city, built by Shah Jahan in 1642 as a pleasure garden for the royal household. As Veronica reported home, its 45 fountains had been turned on and its lights softly illuminated the scene, with a cacophony of competing muezzins on a warm evening scented with orange blossoms.

Later, we took my mother, who flew out to stay with us, on a private visit to Lahore, on this occasion staying two nights at the Punjab Club - a relic of the Raj with what Veronica told her parents was:

“the saddest sight in Lahore - the fully fitted bar with all the holes and slots for bottles and glasses but nothing in it. We are sure that somewhere secluded in a dark cellar are copious quantities of the hard stuff secreted away until more relaxed times are upon us!”

On another visit at the Punjab Club, with the children this time, we were shaken awake by an earthquake and dashed outside in alarm with other residents, all in our pyjamas. We ignored occasional milder tremors in Islamabad.

We visited Abbottabad, the headquarters of the Punjab Frontier Force (the Piffers) and the Baluch Regiment and the home of the Kakul Military Academy. Don't tell me that Pakistani intelligence didn't know that Osama bin Laden had been living quietly in the town when he was killed there by the Americans in 2011. As well as a military centre, the town was a good base for the tourist. On

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one occasion, returning to Abbottabad from the hills beyond, we had to cross two fords. As Veronica wrote home:

“We were glad to be in the Land Cruiser especially as we saw a Suzuki stranded half-way across one ford! Its occupants, three ‘lovely ladies’ picked their way gingerly across. When we looked at them more closely we realised to our astonishment they were all men - transvestites - who, I’m told, dance at weddings and fiestas instead of women who are not allowed to. Shades of Shakespearean England but it was quite a shock - like meeting Danny la Rue in full fig in the middle of a Yorkshire moor!”

I made two unforgettable expeditions into the Karakoram mountains in the far north, one without the family, one with. In June 1983 I and three Home Office staff from the immigration section, drove up the Karakoram highway, built with Chinese help to link Pakistan to China, and then walked up to Fairy Meadows and beyond to the base camp of Nanga Parbat, the 26,000-foot monster which is the ninth highest mountain in the world. I wrote home:

“Fairy Meadows is an idyllic Alpine meadow with a rippling brook, woods all round and snow covered mountains behind, including Nanga Parbat when it eventually appeared through the clouds. To get to our destination, the base camp, we walked up on the third day to camp just below the snow line and then, the fourth day, along the Rakhiot glacier, a hideous thing, which creaked and groaned ominously and occasionally shed stones and boulders dislodged by the ice melting in the sun. Our last 2 - 300 yards up to the base camp was through thick soft snow which we sank into up to our waists.”

Sadly Veronica missed a weekend in Sind, in the south of the country, due to illness. I stayed with a big landowner whose neighbours would kiss his feet as he stepped out of his house in the morning. In the evening he entertained his guests with a performance of men putting flaming torches into their mouths; others swallowing paraffin and then setting light to their breath which belched out in a great jet of flame; another putting a snake into his nose and out through his mouth. Another world.

We returned to the lovely valley of Swat several times. On one visit, 13 -year-old Nicholas and I went alone and walked together far into the mountains, entirely alone apart from the occasional woodcutter. In those days the valley was peaceful. In later years it was to be troubled by clashes between Islamist

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extremists and the Pakistan army. How lucky we were to have gone when we did.

Shortly before we left Pakistan, Veronica, I and her father, Peter Pender-Cudlip, recently widowed and who was visiting us, were invited by the Nawabzada of Kalabagh, a large landowner, to stay at his home on the Indus about six hours drive from Islamabad. He showed us over his farm: citrus orchards and cattle including a working Persian water wheel powered by buffalo. We stayed in his mogul-style dazzling white guest house overlooking the river and went by boat through the gorges of the Indus just above.

We visited New Delhi, both for official reasons, to exchange views with the High Commission on Indian/Pakistani relations, and as tourists, with and without Eleanor and Nicholas, each time leaving Robert with Embassy friends in Islamabad. We travelled the Golden Triangle to see Jaipur, Fatehpur Sikri and the Taj Mahal at Agra. We admired the freedom of Indian women, striding self-confidently with bare stomachs along the pavement in their colourful saris, in vivid contrast to Pakistani women in Islamabad who were always fully clothed and who often walked with their eyes to the ground or hidden behind burkas. New Delhi made a refreshing contrast.

Official visitors

Official visitors came in several kinds, including important, interesting and fun. Top of the fun category came David Ennals, an Opposition Labour peer who came to see the refugee camps and stayed with us in the Ambassador's absence. Veronica wrote home:

"We all liked Lord Ennals very much indeed. Such an easy and appreciative guest and very much a socialist - washed his own shirts and only with difficulty did the dhobi persuade him to let him iron them. It made one feel quite nostalgic for the Callaghan days of 'cuddly uncle-type politicians'! Robert refers to him as 'Mr Lord Ennals'. They became great friends."

Veronica and I found him one afternoon, having just returned from a shopping expedition, lying on his bed resting his leg which hurt occasionally from a war wound, reading aloud to Robert. Another time we watched him with Robert in the garden beneath a large tree with its leaves falling around them in the wind. He was pretending to shake the tree and in doing so dislodge the leaves; but

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Robert was not deceived. He gave Veronica a lovely shawl which she had chosen in the bazaar, thinking he had asked her to help him buy something for his own family in England. He came twice.

The Waddingtons also were fun. David Waddington was visiting Pakistan as Minister of State in the Home Office at the time, to look at the Embassy's immigration operation. We drove him and his wife, Jilly, to Abbottabad one weekend. To our alarm he disappeared, to be found in the bazaar happily surrounded by a crowd of locals talking to him as if they were his constituents. A few of them might have been, on a visit from Britain. (We met the Waddingtons again in Somerset where they lived in a neighbouring village.)

In the important category, Princess Anne paid a visit. When Veronica asked Beryl Forster if she should wear a hat to greet the Princess at the airport, she replied "Don't you dare - I haven't got one myself!." The Princess laid the foundation stone of the new British Council building; met the staff at a Reception in the Ambassador's Residence (but ran out of time to say hello to the Embassy children and a lot of the staff who were therefore cross); had dinner with the President; and visited a refugee camp in Peshawar. Her motorcade to the camp was supposed to be eight cars but, so enthusiastically do Pathans join in any 'jolly,' that it grew to 38 in which the Ambassador's car was pushed into 19th place. The Princess was pleasant, friendly and relaxed throughout and appeared to be enjoying herself.

Our most interesting official visit was that of the First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir John Fieldhouse, who came with his wife as the guests of the Pakistan Government. I was Chargé d'Affaires at the time and reported home:

"Pakistan's Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral TK Khan, gave a big dinner for 60 guests at naval HQ for the Fieldhouses. We were invited. Veronica sat between the Pakistan Chief of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the last Pakistan Chief of Naval Staff. Next night we gave a return dinner for 24. It was a slightly daunting experience having five Admirals in the house. One agreeable coincidence helped things along. As a midshipman, doing his training with the Royal Navy, TK Khan served for nine months on *HMS Newfoundland* with Captain Goodenough (my father)! He said that *Newfoundland* was known as His Majesty's Goodenough ship. He and Admiral Fieldhouse flanked Veronica while I had Lady F and Mrs Khan on either side of me. Lady F proved to be a formidable lady of generous

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dimensions who originally came from Ireland. She has red hair, is a member of Mensa, and was once Squash champion of the Wrens.”

The next evening President Zia gave a small dinner for 12 guests in Admiral Fieldhouse’s honour - a stag affair, to Lady Fieldhouse’s disgust. As British Chargé I sat on Zia’s right with the First Sea Lord opposite him. At the end of dinner, the President politely got up and, before I knew what was happening, removed my chair to allow me to rise.

There were other VIP visitors from London, including Malcolm Rifkind and Lady Young, both Ministers of State in the FCO, a Scottish Office Minister and the MP, Sir Frederick Bennet. The latter and his wife stayed in a hotel. I was Chargé at the time and accompanied Sir Frederick on a call on Zia.

Molly Ellis

By far the most memorable and interesting of all our visitors, whether official or personal, was Molly Ellis.

Molly was Veronica’s father’s first cousin. In April 1923 she was 17 years old, had just left school in England and was living with her parents in Kohat not far from tribal territory and the Afghan border. Her father was in the British Army and his regiment was stationed there to guard India’s North West frontier.

In her father’s absence on manoeuvres, Molly and her mother slept in the same room. One night she woke to see two shadowy figures attacking her mother who fell ominously silent. The men then turned on Molly and, with a dagger at her throat, persuaded her not to resist. She subsequently wrote a long account of what then happened. Veronica has a copy. The bare facts were as follows.

Molly spent more than a week with her captors, initially travelling by night to escape notice. They took her on foot into the wild mountainous tribal area north of Kohat travelling mostly under cover of darkness and hiding during the day. She was eventually rescued by two Pakistani officials in the local British Administration: Kuli Khan, the District Commissioner, and Moghul Baz Khan, the personal assistant to Sir John Maffey, the Chief Commissioner. The two men had volunteered for the hazardous journey into tribal territories. She was restored, safe, to her father who told her that her mother had been murdered by her captors.

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What had inspired this kidnap of a young woman, a breach of the Pathan code of honour? In a complicated story of injured pride, Ajab Khan, the chief kidnapper, had vowed revenge on the British who had raided his village in a tribal area and searched his women's quarters for arms that he had previously stolen. But his plan had gone terribly wrong when he had cut Mrs Ellis's throat in the struggle and he knew he could be hanged for murder. So he and his brother Shazada and their companions were heading for Afghanistan where they were planning to bargain Molly's freedom with the British authorities in security and at leisure.

A tribal *jirga* later condemned Ajab Khan and his companions to exile in Afghanistan for having broken the Pathan code of honour. His tribe, the Bosti Khel Afridis, were fined, his personal lands were confiscated, his village was razed to the ground and the other villages that had helped him were also heavily fined. He settled in Mazar e Sharif and died in 1959. His son was a hero in the war against the Russians.

Molly later married a young British Army officer and in her turn 'paid, packed and followed' as army wives used to do. They even lived in India but the nearest they got to the North West Frontier was Kashmir. She had never returned to Kohat and had never seen her mother's grave.

Fast forward to 1979, when the BBC broadcast a series of 'Tales of the Raj', telling in their own voices the stories of people who had known what seemed by then to be remote history and to catch these accounts before they were too old to relate them. Soraya, the daughter of Molly's rescuer, Kuli Khan, was visiting London at the time and happened to watch the programme. She suddenly saw her father's photograph on her TV. Familiar with the story since childhood, she was astonished to find that Molly, then aged 75, was very much alive. She got in touch with Molly and invited her to visit her family in Peshawar and to revisit the places of her 1923 adventure.

Molly might well have politely refused but she knew we were living in Islamabad at the time. So, with many misgivings, she decided to visit Pakistan for the first time since she had left as a traumatised 17-year-old. Veronica's account of her visit takes up the story:

'For us in Islamabad, it was rather like having a mixture of the Queen Mother and Maid Marion to stay. For Molly's story had become entwined in the folk lore of the North West Frontier. It had been embroidered in

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poems and music, a film had been made. And over the years the death of her mother was forgotten and instead a romance between her and Ajab Khan had been invented; and her safe return to her father had come to be regarded as an illustration of the honourable traditions of the Pathans.

Molly put them right. On being asked on Pakistan television whether she had been in love with Ajab Khan, she drew herself up to her full five-foot-four-and-a-half inches and looked straight at the interviewer. "Would you", she asked, "fall in love with someone who had killed your mother?" The country gasped But our telephone didn't stop ringing, invitations to Molly poured in and we were assured she would be treated like royalty when she moved on from us to stay with Soraya and her husband Mahmud Jan in Peshawar.

In Islamabad, we invited General Habibullah Khan Khattak, Soraya's brother, to meet Molly before she visited Peshawar. He wrote to me (Veronica) afterwards:

"Since her rescue in 1923 her name was mentioned so many times in our house by my late father, mother, brothers, sisters that we look upon her as one of the family. Seeing that lovely Dresden china doll-like woman in your house touched me emotionally to the core.

Molly doesn't realise the exuberant welcome that awaits her when she reaches Peshawar. She is going to be swept off her feet completely. I hope she will be able to put up with the unbounded hospitality of the numerous Pathans who seem to have taken this lady to their hearts.

Please give her my warm regards and I hope in my excitement I did not hurt her while hugging her."

'And so it proved. In Peshawar, Molly was taken up the Khyber Pass, and 'piped in' to the Khyber Rifles Mess, an honour normally reserved for VIPs. The Governor of the NWFP, General Fazle Haq, gave a special luncheon in her honour in the Durbar Hall in Peshawar, to which Anthony and I were invited, and made a glowing speech about the strong links of respect and history between the Pathans and Britain. A fellow guest was the American Consul, responsible for the millions of dollars which the Americans were pouring into Pakistan to help pay for the struggle against the Russians in Afghanistan. The Governor, suddenly

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spotting this important guest, added that he counted the Americans as 'honorary' British because they spoke the same language as us. So pleased with the visit was the Governor, that, when Anthony suggested that Princess Anne who was shortly to visit Pakistan should also visit the Khyber Pass, he agreed, contrary to his earlier decision.

'Molly was driven through the Darra Pass to Kohat, travelling the road she had been hurried across at dead of night sixty years before. We met her there, having taken minor cross country roads from Islamabad. Near Kohat, we had come to an old British Bailey bridge guarded by an immensely tall and impeccably turned-out Pathan soldier, with bristling moustaches and rifle at the ready. He stopped us and said to Anthony, "Papers please, Sah." Our hearts sank - the only other road would involve a 60-mile diversion via Peshawar and we would never get to Kohat on time. "No papers, Sir", said Anthony out of the car window to the soldier. "Very good, Sah. Pass Sah," he said, saluting smartly and waving us through!"

'In Kohat, Molly planted a commemorative tree at the site of her parents' old bungalow, now replaced by a large colonial style two-storey house inhabited by the local Brigadier, and then visited the neglected Christian cemetery which had been beautifully tidied up for the occasion and her mother's grave decorated with flowers, wreaths and tinsel. As she saw it for the first time, Molly said a quiet prayer under the stares of the throng of curious onlookers.

'I received a letter from a descendant of Ajab Khan, requesting a meeting with Molly, to shake hands and agree that bygones should be bygones. Not surprisingly Molly said no. That was too much to ask.

'The last word must go to Molly. When I visited her later in England I asked her whether she had enjoyed such an exhausting trip (remember, the roads are rough, the heat debilitating, the air dusty, the people demanding, the food different, and she was 77). "Oh yes," she said, "I had a wonderful time. Quite frankly, my dear, for the last 40 years and until I went to Pakistan, I've been terribly bored!" '

We were also lucky enough to meet John Blacker who was in Pakistan doing UN work for the Government on population matters. A friend of John and Gina Harding, who had introduced us, we extracted him from his hotel and invited

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him to live in Pembroke House for his three-month assignment. He gave the Asia Study Group an excellent talk on Pakistan's exploding population problem, pointing out that, as a matter of statistical fact, there was nothing that could stop the population of 90 million in 1983 growing to 180 million within 20 years. I see that in 2019 it had reached 217 million. Such are the iron laws of population growth.

Political developments

There were two major internal political developments during our years in Pakistan. In December 1984, shortly after Dick Fyjis-Walker's arrival, Zia held a referendum to strengthen his position as Head of State. The people were invited to elect or reject him as the future President, the wording of the question making a vote against him appear to be a vote against Islam. 95% of votes were cast in favour of Zia, but only 10% of the electorate participated in the referendum. Even this result was only achieved because he made it illegal to campaign against him or for any of the opposition parties to hold political rallies.

Two months later, on 25 February 1985, general elections were held on a non-party basis to the first National Assembly for over seven years as Zia cautiously began to tread the path away from military dictatorship. We knew some of those elected, including the Speaker and a member of the Kuli Khan clan who we had met during Molly Ellis's visit. Their presence in Islamabad helped to enliven the scene in our final year in Islamabad; and I set about getting to know as many of the key figures as possible, many of whom belonged to the 20 or so extended families who had formed Pakistan's ruling establishment since independence. I had met some of them already, including in Kohat earlier in the year at lunch with a Pathan friend, a member of the Kuli Khan clan - another example of the benefits we had derived from Molly's visit two years earlier.

The new Assembly made little difference to the tight control which Zia exercised throughout the country.

The mujahideen's fight against the Russians in Afghanistan continued. Britain remained indirectly involved. When we left in 1985, I knew nobody who thought that the Russians would leave. Most of us expected that they would eventually succeed in their long term aim of securing access to the warm waters of the Indian Ocean. What none of us knew was what was going on in Moscow and the price in lives and money that the Russians were paying for their

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engagement in Afghanistan. This was to bring about their withdrawal four years later, in 1989.

Pakistan's relations with India remained as troubled as ever. In October 1984, while I was Chargé shortly before Dick Fyjis-Walker's arrival, the Indian Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, was assassinated by two Sikh bodyguards in the aftermath of the Indian Army's June assault on the Golden Temple in Amritsar. As always Indian suspicions initially were directed at Pakistan. I remember the lengths to which the Pakistan Government went to convince the Indians of their innocence.

Conclusion

On 12 November 1985, Veronica, Robert and I left Islamabad. We spent three weeks in Turkey before flying on to Britain where we arrived on 4 December, moving back to 9 Thornton Hill the next day, in good time for the return from school of Eleanor and Nicholas. The Pakistan adventure was over.

President Zia was killed in an air crash on 17 August 1988, together with some of his senior generals and the American Ambassador. The cause of his death has never been proved. He was probably assassinated. Those blamed for his death included Pakistan's opposition, India, Russia, the CIA and Afghan enemies. He remains (in 2020) the country's longest-serving de facto head of state.

For the family, Pakistan had been a mixed experience. Because of Veronica's illnesses, her mother's death, for which Veronica had returned to the UK just in time, oppressive military rule and the growth of Islamic fundamentalism, we were glad to return home. On the other hand, I had found the work professionally rewarding and was confirmed in my ambition to pursue a generalist career outside Europe. My occasional experience as Chargé d'Affaires had given me a taste for a diplomatic mission of my own in due course. And, despite its disadvantages, Pakistan had had much to offer in travel and the friends we had made. I am sad that we have never been able to return to admire once again the sight of the snow-capped Karakoram from the ridge beyond Murree, explore the bazaars in Lahore and Peshawar or gossip with Hassan and his family in Rawalpindi. We were lucky to be there before fundamentalism tightened its hold on the region and terrorism threatened the visitor.

CHAPTER 8

MANAGEMENT INNOVATIONS IN LONDON, 1986-1989

Appointment

Personnel Department had first suggested sending me on a cross-posting from Islamabad to Kuala Lumpur as Commercial Counsellor. This sounded attractive. I had visions of returning to the jungle of Sarawak and looking up old friends from my VSO days in 1963/4. But Veronica and I decided that a return to London would be better for the family, as Eleanor approached university. I am sure we were right. But I was disappointed to be offered a job in the FCO Administration rather than in one of the front line geographical departments. The Administration was responsible for the management of the Service's resources, both people and finance. Until now my main dealings with it had been through Personnel Operations Department (POD) which had dealt with my various postings and those of colleagues in Islamabad. But I was appointed Head not of POD but of its companion department, Personnel Policy Department, (PPD) about which I knew very little.

My disappointment deepened on first arrival in Matthew Parker Street, a rather shabby, nondescript building where most of the Administration departments were housed, five minutes walk from the main FCO. PPD's offices were on the top floor, the sixth, and mine was next door to the men's lavatory on a corridor designated as a smoking zone. The Head of the Administration, known as the Chief Clerk, his two Under Secretary deputies, and Personnel Operations Department were on the ground floor. I kept fit by taking the stairs, two at a time, between their offices or the main entrance and mine.

People

Life began to look up as I got to know my colleagues, many of whom went on to senior Ambassadorial jobs. The Chief Clerk when I arrived was John Whitehead, a cerebral 'systems' man, who went on to be Ambassador to Japan. He was replaced by Mark Russell, no less able but with a larger heart, who was on his last job, having previously been Ambassador to Turkey. The Deputy Chief Clerk, and my immediate boss for most of my time in PPD, was Christopher Long, who I had known at the Treasury Centre for Administrative Studies in 1967: an exceptional linguist who became in due course Ambassador to Egypt and then to Hungary. The Under Secretary for Finance and the Chief Inspector was Roger

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Tomkys who subsequently became High Commissioner to Kenya before appointment on retirement as Master of Pembroke College, Cambridge. The Head of Personnel Services Department was David Wright, another future Ambassador to Japan. David Logan was Head of Personnel Operations Department. He was to become an Ambassador to Turkey. I had known him in Malta, at Pinewood, and at Oxford. Veronica Sutherland, the Head of Security Department, was to become an Ambassador to Ireland, Deputy Secretary General of the Commonwealth, and President of Lucy Cavendish College, Cambridge. Nobody questioned the importance of using so much talent in the Administration when the Service was short of good people in front line jobs elsewhere.

In PPD itself staff turnover was high. I had three Assistants in turn (i.e. deputies): Bruce Dinwiddy, David Fall and Tom Phillips. I was to work again with Bruce when he was Head of Southern Africa Department and then High Commissioner to Tanzania. David would become Ambassador to Thailand; and Tom's future stellar career would include High Commissioner to Uganda, Special Representative to Afghanistan, Ambassador to Israel and finally to Saudi Arabia. My father had worked for Tom's grandfather, Admiral Tom Phillips, on *HMS Prince of Wales* before the Admiral had gone down with the ship under Japanese attack in 1941. The head of recruitment section when I arrived, Anne Grant, would become a High Commissioner to South Africa.

The Personnel Departments: POD, PPD and PSD

Personnel Operations Department (POD) was responsible for individual people - their postings at home and overseas, the management of their careers, their promotions etc. Personnel Policy Department (PPD) dealt, as its name stated, with all the policies relevant to the management of people, including the structure of the Service, manpower planning, recruitment, establishments, equal opportunities and discipline.

The division of responsibilities between PPD and POD assumed that the theoretical world of policy could successfully be separated from the real world of people. Of course it couldn't. Ideally the two should have been dealt with in the same department so that people and policy could go hand in hand. But this would have needed far too large a department. We therefore had to work together, far more closely than was usually necessary between two departments. On the whole the system just about worked, although it was not helped by Recruitment Section, which was part of PPD, being in a separate building.

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The lines between Personnel Services Department (PSD) and the other two Personnel Departments were clearer. PSD dealt with the financial aspects of employment, including pay and allowances. More important from PPD's point of view was Resource Management Department (RMD), formerly called Finance Department, whose responsibility for the Service's budget gave it a key role in all resource management issues.

I learned early on the importance attached by senior management to the independence enjoyed by the Diplomatic Service from the Home Civil Service. We had our own separate legal status in a Diplomatic Service Order in Council under the authority of the Foreign Secretary. This meant that we were responsible for our own self management to a far greater extent than the rest of Whitehall, except for the Northern Ireland Office which also had its own Order in Council. In practice however the Treasury exerted tight control over our affairs through our budget.

Before I had got fully to grips with my new job, POD rang me one day to tell me of a job as Head of Southern European Department (SED) which might unexpectedly become vacant. Was I interested? Indeed I was. It would have given me precisely the sort of political work I had been hoping for after Islamabad. I even had some directly relevant experience from my time in Greece for which SED was responsible among other countries. Sadly almost as soon as the door seemed to open than it closed again. The job did not become vacant after all. So PPD it was to be.

The Diplomatic Service Wives Association

The DSWA, a sort of wives trade union, worked closely with POD to improve conditions of service for wives and families. PPD had little to do with it directly. This was perhaps just as well when Veronica became its Chairman during my spell in PPD. But I was able to give her advice from time to time on how best to pursue DSWA aims; and we enjoyed plotting a bit in private. She was to find a more powerful ally in Lady Howe with the ear of the Secretary of State.

The structure of the Service and manpower planning

PPD's most important task was to ensure that the Service had the right number of officers with the right skills in the right grades to achieve its objectives. The Service was small: about 6,500 officers recruited in the UK (known as UK-based staff) and roughly the same number recruited locally (locally-engaged staff). Was

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this total big enough? In my view, yes. Or, to put it another way, our numbers were in line with our objectives. If we had had more people, we could have opened more overseas offices or reinforced existing ones. This would have enabled us to provide for example a better consular service for British overseas travellers or a better commercial service for businessmen. If we had had fewer than 6,500, we might have had to close some overseas posts or find other ways to reduce our work load. In practice, we spent a lot of time resisting regular Treasury efforts to cut our total numbers. Our Treasury colleagues argued variously that we were overstaffed for our objectives and some of the so-called fat could be cut without damage to the national interest and/or that some of our objectives were unnecessary. As I was leaving the Administration in 1989, the National Audit Office, no doubt at the instigation of the Treasury, were gearing up to conduct a thorough investigation into Diplomatic Service manpower.

The Treasury focussed particular attention on the number of staff in the top four Diplomatic Service grades. Each year they invited me along to review them. Their aim was, by driving down numbers of senior jobs, to force a proportionate reduction in more junior ranks. I argued that, if Britain wanted to exert maximum influence overseas, we needed Ambassadors and other senior staff capable of cultivating and influencing foreign heads of government and senior Ministers. I fear that, under the remorseless pressure of public expenditure cuts over many years, both the seniority of our overseas representation and the overall size of our missions in many countries have fallen. Moreover many UK-based staff have been replaced by locally engaged staff.

The 6,500 UK-based officers included the ten Diplomatic Service grades (ranging from the Head of the Diplomatic Service to the most junior clerk), security and communications staff, secretaries and a few members of the Home Civil Service serving in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office at home. Our manpower planning work focussed on the structure of those ten DS grades. Our aim was to ensure a grade structure that provided officers of the appropriate grade for the jobs that needed doing and a reasonably satisfactory career progression for individual officers without creating disheartening promotion blockages. With the benefit of hindsight, we might have done well to have engaged, on a short term contract, a professional manpower planner from outside the Service with technical expertise in a subject that was not usually associated with foreign policy. Instead we relied largely on common sense.

The ten Diplomatic Service grades were divided into Administrative and Executive staff. The former, known as the A stream, consisted, at least in theory,

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of fast-stream officers capable of the most demanding policy work and of reaching the most senior levels. The latter - the E stream - provided officers with skills for less demanding work. There was inevitably a good deal of debate over where exactly the line lay between the jobs needing the one or the other stream. But in general E-stream officers, rightly or wrongly, were to be found in management, consular and the more junior commercial jobs. Many E-stream officers enjoyed fulfilling careers and reached the middle ranks of the Service. Some became Ambassadors or High Commissioners. A few reached the most senior levels, including the post of Ambassador to South Africa. Getting the right balance at a given level between A and E stream officers was important not only to make the most of individual talents but also to avoid as far as possible promotion blockages.

Soon after I joined PPD in 1986, we conducted a manpower review, one conclusion of which was that the balance between the A and E streams in the middle grades of the Service should be maintained at its existing level. But three years later that balance had been allowed to swing further towards the E stream, probably because of a shortage of A stream officers. Ministers were expressing concern about the shortage of good officers at home and in the Third World, and my fellow heads of department were also complaining that not enough talent was available. There were two main ways of addressing this problem. Either we could move the balance back towards more A stream. But this would have exacerbated E stream promotion blockages and would eventually slow up A stream promotion into the top grades. Or we could try to develop the quality of the E stream with better training and by bringing on the best more quickly. I seem to recall that this latter approach was the one favoured by the Chief Clerk of the time. I had my own doubts that it would work.

At its heart the basic problem we faced revolved around how to reconcile the Service's fairly high demand for officers of outstanding quality with its need to satisfy an individual's expectations of interesting jobs with good promotion prospects. The more outstanding officers there were, the harder it would be to satisfy their expectations as well as those of everyone else throughout their careers. The trick was to ensure the right supply of talent: neither too little to meet demand nor so much that individual ambitions could not be satisfied. Part of the answer was to recognise the importance of providing horses for courses: not all jobs needed a racehorse. The problem was exacerbated by the constantly changing foreign policy agenda and alterations in the priorities of ministers and senior official management. It was made worse by the insistence of some

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ministers that an officer who had caught their eye should be rewarded with a plum job or early promotion.

I have dealt so far with total numbers, with grades, with the separation of the A and E streams and with the demand for more high quality staff. But there was another issue lurking in the background of which Personnel Operations Department was more acutely aware than PPD because it was dealing with individual officers, but which affected PPD's ability to supply enough staff of the right quality. How to deal with those officers who had, in the jargon, 'run out of steam'? Inevitably, over the course of a longish career, a few officers for one reason or another found it difficult to maintain the professional standards expected of their grade. Problems might have arisen in their personal lives; they might not have had the resilience to cope with the challenges they met in their work; they might have suffered from ill health; or have allowed competing private interests to distract them from their professional commitments. Usually the fault lay in their original recruitment. Rigorous though recruitment standards were, a candidate might have succeeded in concealing, albeit unintentionally, deficiencies of character or intellect which only became apparent later. Whatever the reason, sooner or later, POD might not be able to find a suitable job for the person concerned and therefore to find enough suitable people for all the jobs they had to fill.

POD tried to help weaker officers raise their game. It looked for jobs where they could nevertheless be useful. In the last resort, if performance was consistently unacceptable, it would try to get rid of the officer. But the procedures for resorting to compulsory retirement on grounds of limited efficiency were complicated and stacked in favour of the officer. The result might sometimes be that the officer remained in the Service, making it a little more difficult for POD always to find an officer of the right quality for every job. There were only a few such cases. But it would have made a difference if their places had all been taken by officers of even average ability, and even more so if their replacements had been of first rate quality.

The early retirement of more officers, not just the weak, might also be desirable to relieve promotion blockages and make room for younger officers. PPD was constantly being encouraged by senior management to devise schemes for these purposes. One straightforward option was to use the Secretary of State's powers of compulsory retirement on structural grounds, as had happened soon after I had joined the Service. In the early 1970s thirty senior officers had been retired (i.e. dismissed) in this way. This had provoked a storm of criticism in the Service

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and, had it been repeated, would probably have led to a bad-tempered confrontation between the Trade Union side and senior management into which Ministers would have been drawn. Subtler methods were needed. At the time I was leaving PPD, the Administration were trying to stimulate a greater flow of voluntary retirements by promising favourable financial terms combined with what was known as 'up and out'. This meant that an officer would be given one more job, at the next senior grade, on condition that he or she agreed to retire immediately afterwards. Another option was 'up or out', by which officers had to retire if they did not secure a job in the next grade by a certain time. This was a method familiar in the Armed Forces where a Major, for example, was obliged to retire if he did not win promotion to Lt Colonel for his next job. A further theoretical option was known as 'cascade' under which an officer might be able to remain in the Service only if he accepted a job in a lower grade. A High Commissioner to, for example, Ghana might be moved to the Ivory Coast; or an Ambassador to Greece might go to Portugal. For one reason or another, all these options were ruled out.

Ironically, I myself retired a year early, having accepted a four year contract - which I managed to stretch to 4 ½ - for my final job in Canada. I considered challenging the legality of forcing my early retirement, with only a small financial inducement. But, if I had succeeded in securing a further short appointment to take me up to the age of 60, it would probably have been an ad hoc job at home such as running a major diplomatic conference. Neither the hassle nor such a job appealed to me. By such means did the Administration of the day make room for a younger generation. Hoist with my own petard?

Recruitment

I spent far more time wrestling with the problems of manpower planning and the structural issues facing the Service than on recruitment. This operation ran smoothly under first Anne Grant and then Andrew Seaton. They worked closely with the Civil Service Commission to recruit the right numbers of entrants into both the fast A stream and the E stream, numbers which had been set through our manpower planning work described above. Despite competition for recruitment from the City and other employers offering better pay than the Civil Service, there was little sign of difficulty in reaching our number targets for either stream. Moreover E stream entrants seemed to have stronger educational qualifications than their predecessors in earlier years. This trend offered the hope of relieving shortages of quality officers in the years ahead.

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Geoffrey Howe, as Foreign Secretary, unexpectedly took an interest in the age at which we were recruiting fast-stream entrants. He suggested one day that it might be a good idea to raise the age limit considerably in the interests of recruiting candidates with a wider experience of the world. I recall that POD and PPD decided, unusually, to send him a joint paper on the subject, admitting that there was a difference of view between us. POD were very much against late entrants for structural reasons. They would cause a distortion of the pyramid which would adversely affect the progress of the 'normal' entrants just below them. POD were also keen to keep the age limit low because they believed that the Service needed as large a pool as possible of senior officers who had had wide experience of the Service's work.

PPD on the other hand rather liked the idea of trying to attract older applicants, not only for the benefit of their outside experience but also because their arrival could help plug any gaps which might have arisen over time. Geoffrey Howe decided in favour of raising the age limit to, as I recall, 52 by which age an officer would have time for little or no training and only two full jobs before reaching the normal retirement age of 60. Only later did it become illegal to enforce a retirement age of 60. I very much doubt if many people took advantage of the opportunity to join as late as 52, if only because good people would have been earning far more in their outside jobs than the Diplomatic Service was able to offer.

The Civil Service Commission used to invite senior Diplomatic Service officers to join its Final Selection Board when it was interviewing DS candidates. I joined a rota of heads of department for this purpose. It was fascinating work. We were provided with the candidate's application, references and a report by the chairman of the preliminary interview board. Board members took it in turns to engage the candidate in discussion for five or so minutes and then agreed between themselves on whether to accept the candidate or not. Some cases were clear cut, in one direction or the other. Others were borderline - and required anxious debate. I recall few if any cases on which agreement proved so difficult that the Chairman himself had to cast a deciding vote. I used to agonise over whether I had been too tough in my questioning of the candidates or, conversely, too generous in my assessments. I remember only one candidate specifically: one of the rare ethnic minority applicants. We were all conscious of the desirability in principle of accepting him into the Diplomatic Service; but we were equally keen not to bend the rules in the interests of positive discrimination. Happily he was not a borderline applicant but a self confident and impressive person who we had no difficulty in accepting. I came across him

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later, after he had joined the Service, and was delighted to find that he was living up to the Board's expectations.

Pay

PPD had no direct responsibility for pay; but we did have an important indirect interest given its effect on the Service's ability to recruit and retain the right staff. There was some evidence, in a recruitment market that seemed to be getting tougher in the 1990s, that the pay we could offer was not matching that of our competitors. But, in all honesty, we could not reasonably claim that recruitment was suffering; nor that we were losing existing members of the Service to higher paying organisations.

In any case, I thought then, as I think now, that pay was not enough. I had been struck by one of the recommendations of a recent American report on the US Public Service: "the need for the top leadership to articulate early and often the necessary and honourable role that public servants play in the democratic process." I thought that most of us would have liked to be told more often that we were playing a necessary and honourable role. But this would not have been an adequate substitute for poor pay.

Establishments

Establishment Section in PPD was presided over by Peter Kemp, a wise and very experienced officer, older than me. To begin with at least, he found my habit of questioning existing ways of doing things rather tiresome. But we settled into an effective team and I came to depend on him heavily.

Peter's job was a thankless one. The Section had responsibility for FCO establishments i.e. for the size and composition of FCO departments at home and posts overseas. These - both staff numbers and grades - needed to be adjusted as necessary when workloads changed and new tasks had to be performed. The overall distribution of manpower resources was supposed to conform to foreign policy priorities; and, as these changed, so did the pattern of manpower distribution. Once establishments had been agreed, it was for POD to find suitable officers in the right grades to fill the slots.

The Section used to receive a constant stream of requests for an extra officer or for a more senior replacement. Rarely indeed did anyone offer up a surplus or to replace an officer with a more junior one. Usually, unless an extra pair of hands

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was urgently needed at short notice, Peter replied that the department or mission should await the result of the next Inspection; and the Section therefore worked closely with the Overseas Inspectorate. This powerful body consisted of a dozen or so officers, of varying rank but proven independence of mind, who travelled the world reviewing the staffing of all our missions. A Home Inspectorate likewise reviewed the staffing of each FCO department in turn.

The Inspectors would report their findings and recommendations, taking as much account as they felt reasonable of the views of the Head of Mission or department, to the Chief Inspector who was also the Under Secretary for Finance. In due course, the latter held a large meeting to take decisions on the Inspectors' reports. These decisions were sometimes hard fought, particularly when a Head of Mission or the Under Secretary for the area concerned attended the Chief Inspector's meeting to challenge a recommendation on which he or she felt strongly. Peter Kemp always attended these meetings given his overall responsibility for establishments. If at all possible, I would accompany him to lend support, particularly if an Inspector's recommendations were controversial. This was the traditional system through which the Administration had done its best for many years to adjust the staffing of individual missions and departments in accordance with changing workloads and priorities.

The system had however been recently improved by something called the Top Management Round (TMR). Each department and mission submitted annually to the Administration its resource requirements for the coming year. Resource Management Department (RMD) coordinated this exercise in close consultation on establishments with PPD. The idea was to enable top management - in the form of the FCO Board of Management chaired by the Permanent Under Secretary - to take an overall view of the distribution of resources and make any major adjustments that were necessary in the light of changing foreign policy priorities. The principle was a good one although it added to the administrative chores expected of departments and missions and was inevitably criticised by some for being cumbersome and heavy-handed. Its main weakness was that the Board of Management couldn't be expected to take decisions on all the minor changes in establishments that major changes in policy priorities implied.

Thus three processes ran in parallel. The Top Management System provided strategic direction on the allocation of resources, including manpower. RMD and PPD translated this direction into detailed decisions on whatever changes were necessary. Sometimes they had to make ad hoc short term adjustments in response to unforeseen changes in circumstances. And the Inspectorate

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continued its work of ensuring that missions and departments were tightly staffed in accordance with the Board of Management's strategic decisions. This was the theory and it worked fairly well.

It did however, in my view, suffer from weaknesses. First, there was a continued feeling both at home and overseas that the Administration and the Service as a whole - which the Administration existed to support - were on opposite sides; and that the Administration was insufficiently responsive to the Service's needs. With luck, this feeling would soften over time as the Top Management System settled down and gained credibility as an instrument for matching resources to foreign policy priorities.

Secondly, we had not yet worked out how best to combine the old inspection-based system with the new Top Management System and what balance to strike between central control and delegation. Everyone, from the Board of Management downwards, found it easier to identify higher priorities than lower ones. If one department or overseas post was to be strengthened with an extra pair of hands, some other post or department would have to give up an officer. Peter was going to have to be robbed to pay Paul. To some extent the need could be met from savings made in the normal round of staff inspections. But it seemed to us in PPD, as we wrestled with how to find the resources for newly identified higher priorities and requests for extra people for some purpose or other, that the system could be improved by giving each Under Secretary a manpower budget and the delegated authority to shift resources within his/her command. In this way, if someone wanted an extra officer in one post, they would be obliged to consider, at least in the first place, if that officer could be found from within the command. Conversely they would have an incentive to make savings in one place if they knew they would be allowed to deploy the saving elsewhere in the same area. After all, they were in a better position to know how resources could best be deployed in accordance with policy priorities in the area. This was an unfamiliar thought and not one that instinctively appealed to colleagues in hard pressed front line departments preoccupied with "policy" matters.

In my first year in PPD, I cautiously proposed to the then Chief Clerk, John Whitehead, that we should ask one of the geographical Under Secretaries, perhaps the one in charge of South America or Africa, to conduct an experiment with a delegated manpower budget with limited authority to switch jobs within their area. The idea did not find favour. Nor did it do so with the next Chief Clerk, Mark Russell, on whom I tried the idea later. They were concerned

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amongst other things with overburdening busy geographical Under Secretaries and their departments and also about how to manage individual careers if officers might be moved at short notice. So I abandoned the idea and did not imagine that I would get another opportunity to return to it before long, this time as a geographical Under Secretary.

Visa work

During my time in the Administration, visa work was growing as concerns over immigration increased. We were having to find resources to staff larger visa sections in West Africa and the Indian sub continent. And suggestions were even being made that the FCO should transfer responsibility for visa work to the Home Office. I accompanied Tim Eggar, the FCO junior Minister responsible for immigration work, to Nigeria to examine at first hand the difficulties and implications of a new visa regime for Nigerian travellers to Britain. This visit and my previous experience of the large visa operation in Islamabad did nothing to change my view that the FCO should continue to be responsible for this and all other aspects of Britain's overseas operations. I was convinced that we should maintain the principle of a unified Foreign Service under the authority of the Foreign Secretary as one way of helping to ensure a consistent foreign policy. Ceding responsibility for visa staffing to the Home Office might prove to be a step down a slippery slope which we would come to regret.

Organisation

In addition to the organisational issues that I have already discussed - the inspection-based system compared with the new Top Management System and my idea of delegating authority over resources to geographical Under Secretaries - my time in PPD gave me other ideas on how the organisation of the Administration might be improved. Some probably had more merit than others. None was taken up.

I thought that the Chief Clerk and the two Under Secretaries needed a Secretariat and a Planning Committee. To some extent PPD already fulfilled the role of a Secretariat; and it was noticeable how often we were asked to coordinate work that crossed individual departmental lines. Its value would lie more than in coordination. I hoped that it could help tackle some of the problems that went wider than one or two Administration departments. But it would have probably been criticised by the Service as unnecessary and excessively bureaucratic. As for a Planning Committee, I had seen from old

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papers that such a body used to exist and had wondered whether it should be revived. Although the present ad hoc and informal system of consultation between departments worked reasonably well and was more in line with the FCO's traditional way of doing things, I could see a case for a more formal system to consider major issues.

I also suggested that POD and PPD needed a research capability. Much of the ground covered during my time in PPD on major structural and personnel policy issues had been well trodden by our predecessors. Indeed we had a feeling of continually re-inventing the wheel. But we had no ready means of access to our predecessors' work short of crawling through old files which took a prodigious amount of time. It took us several man-hours to research a history of management's use of compulsory and voluntary early retirement from 1965-88 in preparation for discussions on the subject with Treasury Counsel. This should have been available virtually off the shelf. And there were plenty of other examples. We ideally needed, like geographical departments, a personnel research section. One officer would have been enough, to have been found from elsewhere within the Administration.

Similarly, I suggested that we needed a post-Second-World-War history of the FCO and its Administration to include all the various reports and reviews through which the Service had evolved into its present form.

Conduct and Discipline

I found this the most difficult and unpleasant of my responsibilities, even though I was lucky not to be faced with any major disciplinary cases of the kind that occasionally attracted media attention. But I was constantly reminded of the extreme care needed in all such cases, their potential for causing trouble, including unfavourable publicity for the Service and, consequently, the sheer amount of time demanded from the Head of the Department down in their handling. I recall spending one Sunday morning in my office to read from cover to cover the fat personal file of one offender to make sure that I had as complete as possible an understanding of him in the hope of finding an explanation of his conduct or at least mitigating circumstances. Because all such cases had to be given priority and occurred without warning, they could seriously distract the department from other important work and blow us off course.

Most offences were comparatively minor infringements of the regulations: for example accepting an official loan to buy a season ticket but then riding a bicycle

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to work. They could be dealt with by a warning from me. But sometimes they were serious enough to warrant a full scale Disciplinary Board, chaired usually by me, before which the accused would appear, accompanied by a legal adviser and his Trade Union representative. We always tried scrupulously to balance fairness to the individual with upholding the rules and to recommend, if the accused proved guilty, as lenient a punishment as possible.

Equal Opportunities and homosexuality

Like all Government Departments, the FCO was - and is - an equal opportunities employer. PPD's job was to ensure that the Office did not discriminate against any of its employees, in particular on grounds of gender, race or religion. In practice during my time in PPD, the only one of these to give rise to a problem was gender. Happily the rule that required a female officer to resign on marriage had been abolished long ago, in the early 1970s. But there were still far too few women in the Service, especially at senior levels. PPD's recruitment section, itself headed by a woman when I joined the department, did its best to encourage more women to apply to join the Service. And the Civil Service Commission was meticulous in its treatment of candidates of both genders. POD was equally conscientious in trying to treat women on exactly the same basis as men, for example in promotions and in finding jobs in the same post for husband and wife teams.

But problems did sometimes arise. For example, I recall the case of a Head of Mission who resisted the appointment of a woman to his two-person political section. He did so on the grounds that there was already one woman in it and that the appointment of a second would limit the mission's ability to gain access to senior local figures given local attitudes to women. The officer concerned objected to the decision to find her an alternative post and took legal action against what she termed discrimination. The case was settled out of court in the officer's favour on the grounds that the FCO needed to show not that a man could do a particular job better or more easily than a woman but that a woman could not do the job at all. Even in a culture like that of Saudi Arabia, this would probably not have been impossible.

One small change we made was to revise the volume of Diplomatic Service Regulations governing the behaviour expected of all officers. I remember going through the whole volume to find gender neutral circumlocutions around the use of such words as 'he' and 'him.' We should no longer rely on Churchillian references to 'men embracing women.'

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One important policy we did not change: the Service's long-standing ban on employing homosexual officers. I assume that this had been introduced in the 1960s when homosexuality had been legalised in Britain. The justification for the ban was that a homosexual officer might be open to blackmail in countries where it was still banned. The Head of PPD was under a standing instruction to make a written recommendation to the Secretary of State annually on whether the ban should be maintained. I confess that I did not hesitate to recommend its continuation each year. And each year the Secretary of State agreed with my recommendation. The year after I left, my predecessor as Head of PPD, David Walker, much to his credit, questioned the policy and the ban was lifted. I imagine he pointed out that blackmail would only have been possible if an officer had concealed his sexuality. Now, with hindsight, I wish I had questioned the policy myself. I can only plead that I was as much influenced by the prevailing climate of public opinion as others at the time.

At least we avoided one possible mistake. The late 1980s, when I served in the Administration, saw the emergence of AIDS as a major threat to public health. Some were tempted to argue that sufferers from HIV should be banned from the Service if only because they might represent a threat to the health of their colleagues. But the principle was early established that it should be subject to the same rules as other illnesses and that therefore decisions on individual cases should be left to the professional judgement of doctors.

Appointment Boards

As Head of PPD I served as an ex-officio member of the Board, chaired by the Chief Clerk, on appointments at Counsellor level (my own). My Assistant served on the equivalent Board for appointments at First Secretary level (his own). Strictly speaking there was no operational need for our presence on these Boards which were the responsibility of POD not PPD. But I found the experience a good way of getting a better understanding of the human issues involved and getting away from the impersonal world of personnel policy and planning. It was also interesting to see and get to know other members of the Board, most of whom were Under Secretaries. There were some big beasts among them who went on to some of the most senior jobs in the Service.

To prepare for each meeting of the Board, the Chief Clerk held an informal meeting with POD to go through the list of possible candidates for the jobs under consideration. This, mysteriously, was known as 'foxes and geese'. Were the foxes members of the Administration and the geese the possible candidates?

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I used to come away from these meetings rather wishing that I was a member of POD than of PPD. The world of real people was more interesting than policy.

“DOFFCO”

From time to time, the Service ran into public or parliamentary criticism about one or other aspect of its size or performance. It's alleged excessive size was a fairly regular target. When this happened, the Administration was asked to muster the facts so that the criticisms could be countered, ideally by Ministers. PPD was the natural department to lead on this. But the Under Secretary responsible in my time was Nicholas Barrington, responsible, among other things, for what were known as the public departments including information work. He was a good choice and I enjoyed working for him on the subject. We had of course to be careful not to get involved in political controversy and were enjoined to stick strictly to the facts. Nicholas therefore gave the little committee formed for the purpose the resounding title of “DOFFCO”, the acronym for “Dissemination of Facts about the FCO.”

DOFFCO assembled figures to show numbers of staff, of Missions, their functions and costs etc. We also drew comparisons with other organisations including - one of our favourites - the Driving and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) which at the time was slightly larger than the Diplomatic Service. In this way we aimed to show that the Service was comparatively small and was, moreover, tightly staffed with some 200 posts, some very small, widely scattered throughout the world.

Travel

Most of my work was done in London. There were no regular opportunities for overseas travel. However, in addition to my visit with Tim Eggar to Nigeria, I attended a regional conference in Jamaica of Heads of Mission to Caribbean countries; and then visited Bridgetown in Barbados and Kingstown in St Vincent. Our High Commissioner to Barbados was also accredited to St Vincent, where he had a solitary resident deputy in one of our smallest overseas posts. This trip enabled me to get a better understanding of the effectiveness of our diplomatic representation in the Caribbean, conducted through a network of modestly-sized as well as tiny posts. The experience was useful in my establishment work in PPD. The visits also gave me an opportunity to explain to our Missions in the area the Service's overall manpower constraints which limited PPD's ability to meet their staffing requests.

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I made one other overseas visit. Mark Russell, Chief Clerk, invited me to join a small party from the Administration on a visit to Paris to meet our French opposite numbers in the Quai d'Orsay. No doubt we had mutually informative discussions with the French; but my chief memory was of a dinner hosted by our Ambassador, Ewen Fergusson, an ebullient and genial figure, who presided over a splendid table at which his French and British guests opened up like flowers in the warmth of Ewen's sun. What a contrast to the style of two of his predecessors during my time in the Embassy in the 1970s.

Outside Contacts

When I joined PPD in 1986 I was told by the Permanent Under Secretary, Antony Acland, to get out into the world and meet other personnel practitioners: personnel managers in big private companies, business consultants etc. I did not do nearly enough of this and suspect the same was true of my colleagues in the Administration. We all, throughout the FCO, ought to have been cultivating links with others outside the Office doing the same kind of work. One reason why we did not was time; another lack of opportunity, particularly if we lived outside central London as more and more of us did.

CHAPTER 9

DICTATORSHIP IN GHANA: A FLIGHT LIEUTENANT 1989 - 1992

“You’ll be bored in Eastern Europe”, Mark Russell said. “You’ll find Africa far more interesting”.

Mark had once served in Romania and was now, in 1988, Chief Clerk, the traditional title then still used for the Deputy Under Secretary in charge of the FCO’s personnel and administration. As head of Personnel Policy Department, I came under him; and we were discussing my next post which I hoped would be my first as a Head of Mission overseas. I had thought it might be a good plan to develop a new string to my bow by diversifying my experience with a posting to Eastern Europe where I knew Ambassador vacancies were coming up in both Bucharest and Sofia. But Mark thought otherwise and, I dare say, was short of candidates for our missions in Africa. No one then knew that the Berlin Wall would shortly fall and that life for embassies in Eastern Europe would become so interesting.

So, in October 1989, Veronica and I found ourselves in Accra, living in a rectangular box of a house built by the Ministry of Works for the British High Commissioner in the old cantonments shortly after Ghana’s independence in 1957. Its glory was its garden, full of trees and flowering shrubs planted by successive High Commissioners and their wives, including two royal palms where vultures had made their nests and used to eye us hungrily at our breakfast on the terrace.

This was our first overseas posting when none of the children was with us full-time. Eleanor was at university and visited for her holidays, as did Robert from school. Nicholas, between school and university, spent some six months with us before spending the rest of his gap year in Canada and elsewhere.

My Grandfather

In the distance to the south lay the coast and Christiansborg Castle, the seat of Government, where the President lived and where once my grandfather, Sir Alexander Slater, had ruled as Governor of the Gold Coast from 1927 to 1932. It had originally been built by the Danes in 1661 as a safe headquarters for merchants trading for gold, ivory and slaves. It was transferred in 1850 to the

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British Crown and became the official seat of the Governors of the Gold Coast for the next 107 years. There had been some earnest discussion in London, when my appointment was being considered, about whether the Ghanaian Government would accept as High Commissioner the grandson of one of Ghana's colonial governors. The view was that Ghana would, and indeed might be mildly tickled by the relationship. So it proved. I found it intensely moving to serve in a country with such a close family connexion. But I trod carefully.

Towards the end of our short time in Ghana, my mother visited us, with her youngest sister, my Aunt Joan, who, according to family legend, had been the first white colonial baby in Freetown in 1919/20, when her father was Governor of Sierra Leone before he was promoted to Accra. My mother celebrated her 80th birthday with us, having celebrated her 21st as the Governor's daughter in the Castle. We were able to assemble some Ghanaians who remembered Governor Slater, including one who he had inspected in a troop of Boy Scouts. "Governor Slater was a good man," said one. I asked Annan Cato, Chief of State Protocol, if my mother might re-visit the Castle. He consulted the President who promptly agreed. Annan gave Mum, Joan, Veronica and me a guided tour of the Castle including of the battlements overlooking the sea. The day before she left, Annan rang to invite us all to tea with the President but disappointingly we couldn't accept because flight bookings were not changeable.

The name Slater meant much less in modern Ghana than that of his predecessor as Governor, Gordon Guggisburg, who had served in the prosperous years before the Depression and had been able to spend freely on public buildings, including on Achimota College, the Eton of the Gold Coast, and Takoradi Harbour in the West, which remain monuments to enlightened colonial rule. Governor Slater had presided during the Depression and had been forced to retrench, including by reducing the starting salary of the long-suffering Government Clerks from £60 to £48 per annum. He had left behind no great memorials. Only a road beside Korle Bu hospital in the west of the city was named after him; and I occasionally met Ghanaians with his unusual second name, Ransford. I began by wondering if he had been quite such a pillar of good behaviour as my grandmother maintained ... until I learned that it had been the custom to name a child after a well-known person.

Ghana in 1989

In 1989 Ghana was at a critical moment in its post-independence history. It had been the first of Britain's African colonies to win independence, under Kwame

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Nkrumah in 1957. Its future then seemed reasonably bright, with a per-capita income high by African standards. During the 1950s and into the early 1960s it was considered a middle-income country, ranking above Malaysia for example. Its assets included an enterprising and educated people, harmonious tribal relations, reasonable infrastructure, gold, timber and cocoa. But, for the next 20 years its economic performance was well below average in a region noted for its disappointing economic development. Gross economic mismanagement was largely to blame. Real per-capita incomes fell by a third from 1970 to 1982. The real minimum wage fell by an even more painful 62%. Net investment was negative. And Ghana lost human capital also as the rapid deterioration of real wages and living standards caused many of Ghana's better-educated workers – teachers, doctors and civil servants – to emigrate. Inflation averaged some 35% per year compared to about 11% in the rest of sub-Saharan Africa.

Then things got even worse. In the early 1980s, further shocks brought the economy to a virtual standstill. Nigeria expelled many of its migrant labourers, forcing over a million Ghanaian workers to return home. And a severe drought drastically reduced agricultural output, including cocoa production on which the economy as a whole as well as the personal livelihoods of many rural Ghanaians were heavily dependent. Life became very hard indeed for everyone, even for example for the family of a banker friend of mine who told me that they had had to survive on a single meal a day. An over-valued currency made imports prohibitively expensive with the result that shop shelves were empty and spare parts for everything from the mines to cars unobtainable. Malaysia had far outstripped Ghana in wealth and reputation.

As the economy collapsed, so did the Government. After a succession of military coups by Generals, Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings seized power in 1979. Initially he intended to clean up the Government and restore power to an elected Government. The cleaning up included the execution of three former military Heads of State on the beach below Accra. He duly transferred power to an elected Government; but on the last day of 1981, exasperated by continued mismanagement and corruption, he took power again in what became known as his "second coming", this time as Chairman of the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC).

During the next seven years, i.e. prior to my arrival in 1989, Rawlings pursued a tough and consistent policy of economy recovery. This was founded on an agreement with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank negotiated by three remarkable Ghanaians who I came to respect for their skills

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and personal courage: Kwesi Botchwey, Finance Minister; Joe Abbey, a professional economist and High Commissioner to London; and Tsatsu Tsikata, another academic economist, a lawyer and head of the Ghana National Petroleum Corporation, who had once taught at Oxford. They flew to Washington and, dressed in their Ghanaian national dress, reached agreement with the hard men of Washington on an Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) which would eventually lead to Ghana's revival. It embraced exchange control liberalisation, currency devaluation, encouragement of free markets, reform and privatisation of state enterprises, control of public expenditure, an extensive public investment programme in roads, railways, ports, water supply and telecommunications and management reform of the public service and the banks.

This far reaching and painful programme, supported by the international community and a generous aid programme, was accompanied by expenditure to alleviate the plight of the poor as recovery slowly took effect. It was known, clumsily enough, as PAMSCAD: the Programme of Actions to Mitigate the Social Consequences of Adjustment, a title which came to trip lightly off the tongues of politicians and diplomats. Perhaps Britain could have done with a Pamskad as we pursued our own austerity programme. Greece certainly could.

The High Commission and its work

This was the background to the work of the High Commission. I was lucky in my Deputy, first Tom Young and his wife, Elisabeth; and then Mike Greenstreet and Joanna. Tom went on to be High Commissioner to Zambia. Sadly, both he and Mike were to die before their time. We had some congenial colleagues, including Hugh McLeod, who I had known in Islamabad, and Graham McKinley, the Defence Adviser.

We had ambitious objectives. Most important were to support the ERP through our aid programme of some £20 million p.a. and to encourage good government. By the latter we meant the basics: the rule of law, honest administration free of corruption, freedom of speech, Government answerable to the people through some form of electoral process, professional and disciplined armed forces under the control of Government.

In addition we performed all the other usual diplomatic tasks: promotion of commercial exports in support of British businessmen, support for the British Council's office in Accra and Kumasi, immigration control and consular work.

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Britain also ran a small Military Advisory Team of four officers who worked very closely with the Ghanaian Armed Forces to strengthen their military effectiveness and teach them their proper place under constitutional rule. The Defence Adviser played a vital role in this work. And 18-year-old Nicholas, on his gap year between Wellington and Exeter University, also helped - with a dinghy sailing course for Ghanaian naval cadets, as well as working as driver and 'gofer' for a small British NGO which provided pre- and post-natal care in an Accra slum.

President JJ Rawlings and his policies

I could write reams about the work we did. But, with the benefit of hindsight, looking back over the 25 years since we left Ghana, there is one subject that may be of particular interest to the future historian. And that is JJ Rawlings himself, who can reasonably claim to be the main cause of Ghana's recovery and the founder of its present relative prosperity. I suppose it is possible that someone else would have taken action to stop Ghana's descent into chaos if he had not appeared. But none of the Generals that launched their coups in the 1970s were that person and indeed they only made matters worse. And I met no one else, either in or outside Rawlings's own circle, who could have done half as well as he did. Perhaps I should add that I doubt if all Ghana's politicians, either past or present, would share these views.

I tried very hard to get to know Rawlings, because it was obvious that by far the best way to get across HMG's message about the importance of "good government" and the ERP was to win his personal trust and thus gain direct regular personal access to him. I am afraid to say that, in this, I failed. I had only a couple of formal meetings with him when we talked real substance. Lynda Chalker, who combined the jobs of Minister for Overseas Development and Minister for Africa, also met him on some of her visits to Accra and secured his respect. But even she could not always get access to him. Consequently we were obliged to conduct our business through other members of the PNDC, departmental Ministers and others with access of their own to Rawlings. I invested a lot of effort in cultivating these people and was reasonably successful in winning their trust. I have little doubt that much of what I said of any importance reached the ears of Rawlings, if not always in quite the form that I had intended. But, in one way and another, he was left in no doubt of HMG's position on the main items in our agenda. And I like to think that what we said, and what our international friends of like mind were also saying, had a helpful effect in nudging Rawlings and his Government along the hard road to recovery.

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Although I failed in my aim of getting close to Rawlings, I spent a lot of time studying him from a distance, listened to his speeches, talked frequently to people who did know him and had a number of short, casual conversations with him as he moved around the country. On the strength of all this I record here my impressions of Rawlings at the time, his attitude towards the restoration of democracy in Ghana and my first substantive meeting with him which ranks as one of the most interesting encounters in my diplomatic career.

Before leaving London, John Major in his brief period as Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary before Mrs Thatcher moved him to the Treasury, asked me to report on what made Rawlings tick, whether any of his Marxist rhetoric went more than skin deep and whether there was anything we could do to make him more pro-Western in outlook as well as in action. These questions were in my mind during the whole of my time in Ghana.

I didn't find it easy to summarise his complex personality. A towering ego contrasted with a sense of inferiority probably derived from his ethnicity as the son of an Ewe woman in the east of Ghana and a Scottish businessman who later rejected him. I heard several versions of this alleged rejection. Common to them all was that he had visited Scotland as a young man to find his father and had called at what he understood was his home (another version said "shop"). The man who answered his call said that Mr Rawlings was out. Later JJ concluded that it was his father himself who had given him that answer. He failed to make contact then or later.

Rawlings appeared to be a lonely figure: aloof, moody and emotional. He was surprisingly inarticulate for someone who could talk charismatically for hours to a Ghanaian crowd. He was both ruthless and sensitive to the misfortunes of others. He could be impulsive but had shown great consistency of purpose and policy. His early public rhetoric and association with Fidel Castro, Ortega of Nicaragua, Mengistu of Ethiopia and, above all, Ghadaffi had earned him a reputation as a Marxist revolutionary. He remained proud of this image and concerned not to damage it. But at heart he was a pragmatist not an ideologue and certainly never a Marxist.

He was open to influence by those he trusted, in particular by the PNDC member for Foreign Affairs and National Security, Captain Kojo Tsikata, on whose tight and ruthless control over security his hold on power depended, and whose radical, anti-Western views appeared to be gradually moderating. The

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Captain's cousin, Tsatsu Tsikata (one of the three Ghanaian negotiators in Washington) was probably another important influence. In the crucial field of economic policy, he depended heavily on PV Obeng (Prime Minister equivalent), Kwesi Botchey and Joe Abbey (the other Washington negotiators). But he was not an economist.

Here I digress with a memory of what seemed at the time to be an early setback in my efforts to win Rawlings's trust. As a new High Commissioner, in accordance with diplomatic custom, I had been dutifully going the rounds of other Heads of Mission. I was told later by a Ghanaian civil servant friend that Rawlings had been told that I had said to an Eastern European Ambassador that he, Rawlings, didn't understand economics. My friend believed that the Ambassador had been deliberately trying to poison Rawlings against me or that someone else had deliberately made mischief out of what the Ambassador had said. I fear that there was probably some truth in what I was reported to have said although my remark was taken out of context and exaggerated. Indeed it is possible that all I did was to have asked the Ambassador whether he thought that Rawlings understood economics. The fact that I might have been right in any judgement I made was of course irrelevant. I shall never know the truth of the story and what effect, if any, my reported incautious remark actually had on Rawlings or my reputation. But the incident was a lesson in how careful I needed to be and how easy it was to fall victim to the local variant of Chinese whispers.

But whispers could also help. On one occasion I took part in some kind of development seminar at which a number of Western heads of mission were invited to speak. When my turn came, I prefaced my remarks by saying how proud I had been to have been given my name label for the conference with 'Ghana' written below my name (a mistake). I had pinned it on my jacket and showed it the audience. I heard within the day that Rawlings had heard of my remark from a Ghanaian official who had been present; and that it had gone down well. I hoped that he had also heard of my subsequent remarks about the importance Britain attached to "good government" in deciding how to allocate our aid.

Here ends the digression. Now back to my assessment of Rawlings. I was told he spent more time with comparatively junior figures in the Castle than with many of his Ministers. These young Turks had similar anti-Western prejudices to his own and were thus able to influence him on a wide range of issues (including maybe on what the new British High Commissioner was saying to fellow

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diplomats?) His wife, an attractive lady who was as difficult to meet as he was, was believed to be trying to build a political constituency for him (and for herself, as later became obvious) amongst Ghana's women. She had a disproportionate voice in some government decisions including appointments.

I concluded that there were a number of specific forces that motivated Rawlings. He was intensely patriotic and therefore determined to rescue Ghana from the corruption and economic decay of the past and to restore her good name in the world. He was genuinely concerned for the lot of ordinary Ghanaians and sympathetic towards the poor. He was deeply suspicious of an international order which he believed discriminated against developing countries and allowed the Western world to exploit them. He had a particular distrust of the private sector for reasons that no one could explain to me. He was acutely sensitive to any discrimination, real or imagined, by expatriates against Ghanaians, whites against blacks. But this feeling was combined with a respect for individual expatriates and a willingness to accept their presence in Ghana when they had particular skills to contribute. Above all he had become determined not to surrender power for a second time until he was satisfied that Ghana's economic recovery had become irreversible.

If Rawlings distrusted the world economic order so much, why then had he accepted an economic recovery programme based on orthodox IMF/World Bank economic liberalism? The answer lay in his patriotism and his determination to help the poor in Ghana. As a German visitor said, "He gives the impression of loving his country so much that he is even prepared to accept capitalist policies and help". When he took power in 1981 for the second time, Ghana was bankrupt and only the West had the resources and interest to rescue her. He therefore swallowed his scruples and accepted international conditional financing. But he did not altogether abandon his revolutionary anti-colonial rhetoric, partly out of deference to the left-wing members and supporters of his Government. In the four years before my arrival, this rhetoric had diminished. Even UK policies on South Africa came in for less criticism. And there had been a noticeable warming of UK/Ghana relations which it was the job of the High Commission to nourish.

Our main weapon was the aid programme. And much discussion took place, first between the Overseas Development Administration (ODA) and the FCO in which the High Commission took full part, and then with the Ghana Government on how Britain could best help. Our programme included balance-of-payments capital aid, help with PAMSCAD and technical advice on how

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Ghana could make the existing economic order, of which she was so suspicious, work more in her favour; e.g. by attracting more inward investment, promoting her exports and privatising her State owned assets. The ODA also funded a programme of police training. This and our military assistance programme provided a much-needed service and earned us the goodwill of Rawlings and his PNDC.

We also overhauled our visa operations in the High Commission. These had attracted a lot of criticism for the length of the queue and inadequate queuing facilities after a visa regime had had to be introduced in Ghana and elsewhere. London provided more staff and a sheltered waiting area was built in record time to provide a quicker and more dignified service for the thousands of Ghanaians who wanted to visit the UK. I remember the tangible good effect this had on the High Commission's reputation in Accra.

The High Commission developed stronger relations with carefully selected key figures through inviting them to London. We also began to argue for a UK invitation to Rawlings himself. But I recognised that this was unlikely to be politically acceptable in London until his anti-Western rhetoric had further abated and he had committed himself more firmly to the restoration of democratic rule.

The issue of when and if Rawlings intended to restore parliamentary rule dominated my time and thought in Accra. And the tactical question facing Britain and its international friends was how far we should go in pressing them to do so and how we should set about it. I used to debate these questions in correspondence with West African Department in the FCO. Charlotte Ryecroft, its head, was a particularly helpful and constructive interlocutor. Tragically she was later to be killed in a road accident in Canada.

Rawlings's professed aim, from early in his rule, was respectable: to give power to the people and ensure their full participation in the processes by which they were governed. But he did not know how to achieve this and probably believed that, without himself, power would be monopolised by the rich. By the time I arrived at the end of 1989, I doubt if he had made up his mind how long to stay in power. And he did not understand the importance in economic development of what the President of the World Bank was calling "good governance" and of a better balance between government and the governed.

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He had recently taken a tentative first step with elections in 1988/89 to Assemblies in Ghana's 110 districts. I used to try to meet District Assembly members in my provincial tours. Although political parties remained banned and a third of the members were appointed by the Government, the other two-thirds were elected. Assembly powers were heavily circumscribed. Ghanaians could air their views and grievances and, more importantly, the Government declared that the Assemblies were to be the channel through which grass-roots opinion would determine future political development. But Justice Annan (Vice President equivalent) told me that this bottom-up approach could take another five years or so to lead to a next stage, which itself had not yet been defined.

In the second half of 1990, Rawlings launched a series of regional seminars to consult the District Assemblies and other grass-roots organisations on the form of democracy that would best suit Ghanaian circumstances. Opinion in this political debate polarised between those who wanted an immediate return to multi-party politics and those who preferred a no-party political system based on the Assemblies. Many observers feared that the debate had been intended as a smoke-screen behind which the PNDC could prolong their power. But, whatever the intention, a momentum seemed to be gathering.

In January 1991, Rawlings announced "the final phase in our journey as a provisional government and the road towards ... a new constitutional order". A new constitution was to be prepared during 1991 with the help of a national consultative body and a drafting group of constitutional experts. In May the Government announced that the new Constitution would include provision for political parties and, after discussion in a Consultative Assembly, be submitted to a National referendum in early 1992.

In the event the timing slipped and, by the time I left Ghana in early 1992, work on the Constitution was still in progress and no referendum had yet been held. But, by the end of the year, the process had been completed and elections held: Ghana's first for 13 years, which were judged by international observers to have been largely free and fair. Rawlings won them and went on to win the next elections, in 1996, also judged largely free and fair. He then stood down in accordance with the Constitution, a rare example of an African dictator voluntarily giving up power.

With the benefit of hindsight, it all looks straightforward. But throughout our time in Accra, it was far from obvious that Rawlings would adopt such a bold and rapid progress towards democracy. And the High Commission agonised

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continually over how far we should go in pressing him to do so. In public I confined myself to pressing the cause of good government. In private we made it clear that our aid programme was dependent on Ghana's willingness to move towards greater pluralism. Quietly, mostly behind the scenes, taking whatever opportunities arose, including at Ministerial level, we tried to nudge the Ghanaians along the road away from military dictatorship and towards greater public participation. I have little doubt that what we and other Western countries said and did have a significant effect on the speed with which Rawlings eventually moved towards the 1992 elections.

My first meeting with Rawlings

To my frustration, my first meeting with Rawlings did not take place until 6 July 1990 after I had been in post for some nine months. My predecessor, Arthur Wyatt, had left me graphic accounts of several long tête-a-tête meetings with him. But he now seemed to want to keep diplomats at a distance; and we waited in a queue until he was ready to see a number of us, in the order of arrival, on a single day. I was told I would have twenty minutes or so with him; but the call lasted an hour and a half to the visible dismay of the Chief of State Protocol. My Yugoslav and South Korean colleagues, who were next in line, had a long wait.

Rawlings and I sat together on the divan in an upstairs room in the Castle. I think it was in part of the building which had been added since my grandfather's day. A number of officials were present, including Jack Wilmot, the acting head of the MFA. Rawlings sat turned slightly away from me and began with a side-long glance almost over his right shoulder by asking my impressions of Ghana so far. I launched into what proved to be a long monologue, far too long but it enabled me to make a number of key points and I was hoping that sooner or later I would succeed in triggering a response from him. Eventually he sparked, with fascinating results.

In my opening monologue I began by thanking him for the warm and courteous welcome I had received and my ready access to members of his Government. I had been travelling throughout the country to learn about it at first hand and had now visited all the Regions. I had seen the slow but perceptible effects that the ERP was having in the rural areas but understood the difficulties faced by those still in the heat of the fire (a phrase used by Rawlings in a speech the day before). I had seen for myself the effects on farmers of depressed commodity prices. I had seen less at first hand of urban poverty but my son had told me of his experiences doing voluntary work at a health clinic in Nima (one of Accra's

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slums). I had also seen some of the District Assemblies at work and had been reading that morning with great interest his speech on them in Sunyani on 5 July.

Rawlings sat impassively, listening with little expression although occasionally he showed a flicker of interest.

I plugged on by reviewing our bilateral relations. I said that these seemed better than a few years ago; but I was struck by the contrast between the political relationship where we seemed often at odds with each other, e.g. over South Africa, and the every-day effective easy co-operation we enjoyed on practical matters. I gave as examples of the latter: co-operation on drugs and other security matters, the work of our Military Advisory Team, the British Council's activities including in Junior Secondary School reform, immigration work on which I told him of the improvements we were making to our visa operation and the work of countless Ghanaians in the UK and of UK citizens in Ghana. I said that we appreciated the contribution made by the former to our national life and economy; and I had been glad to meet numerous UK citizens apparently doing useful work throughout Ghana whose contribution I understood was appreciated. I then spoke of the value of recent Ministerial contacts in helping to improve mutual understanding. More such contacts would be helpful in improving political relations. Diplomats were not enough. He smiled.

Still no reaction from Rawlings. I began to think he would never speak.

So I turned to trade, aid and the ERP. I said that I was glad to find that there was substantial commercial business in both directions. A steady stream of UK businessmen and potential investors came through my office. They understood the importance of operating within the law and were in general serious and responsible people. I mentioned Britain's interest in the contract to renovate Kotoka airport. Tough negotiations were now taking place and I hoped that, with the £8 million grant we had now offered, agreement could be reached soon (no reaction from Rawlings). I said that Britain was continuing its support for the ERP and that I had just announced two new pledges totalling £26 million. We admired the ERP and welcomed its consistency of purpose e.g. on exchange rate reform, privatisation, reform of the civil service, education and banking sectors. But recovery was a long haul. It seemed to me that the two main current problems were how to tackle the worryingly high rate of inflation and to encourage private investment. The latter would be vital in regenerating the economy.

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At this point I asked Rawlings for his reaction. Was I on the right lines? He said with a smile, "Yes, I think so. What did I think of his recent speech about District Assemblies?" I asked whether he wanted me to be frank. He said, 'Yes'. I said that my understanding was that he was placing great emphasis on the need for a government more responsive to the needs and wishes of ordinary people. The critical point seemed to me to be to find the right political structures which would enable the governed to control the way power was used in the State and to have a say in the appointment and removal of office holders through free elections. The nature of these structures would vary from country to country depending on local circumstances. He had talked in Sunyani of the District Assemblies' role in strengthening public participation at the grass roots and of the need to create structures at town, area and even unit levels. But what structures did he have in mind above District level? How could government as a whole at the national level become accountable to the people?

Rawlings then either dodged my question or didn't understand it. He asked one of the officials present to explain local structures to enable people to express themselves. Annan Cato, the Chief of State Protocol, an outstanding diplomat later to be Ghana's High Commissioner in London, intervened helpfully by saying that he thought I meant what structures were planned above the District level and, less helpfully, that this question was premature because the Government first wanted to establish the District Assemblies firmly before considering the next step. They were one element on the road to democracy and others would follow in due course. I had another go at getting the conversation back to where I wanted it. I referred to a recent speech given by Mr Hurd, as Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, in which he had spoken of the importance of accountability, control of corruption and greater public participation. These were constant themes in the Chairman's own speeches. But good government and economic recovery, which went hand in hand, depended also on such things as the rule of law, freedom of speech and of the Press, respect for human rights and political institutions which make government responsible to the governed.

I had lit the blue touch paper. Rawlings then took over the discussion. To my relief, he silenced another attempt by his advisers to intervene again. Then, speaking with considerable passion and his upper lip quivering, he talked first about a German woman he had known ten or so years ago. She had recently published a book full of filthy slanders about him and allegations about their relationship (I assumed that he was talking about *A Piece of Madness; Memories of*

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Africa by Ilka Model). Was this, Rawlings asked, what I meant by freedom of speech? What good was done by circulating such trash?

For a moment, so threateningly and aggressively did he speak, that I feared he would bring the meeting to an abrupt halt. But he continued in similar vein. It was futile, he said, to talk of the rule of law when Ghana's legal community offered so little protection to the ordinary man in the street. Upper lip trembling again, he spoke of the case of a six-year-old boy whom he had seen with whip-lash mark on his back inflicted by his step-mother. "Don't talk to me about the rule of law if the legal system can't even protect a child six years old." The lawyers and big business were in league together. Some of the bankers had stolen vast sums of money. He would personally like to be able to strip all the clothes off their backs "down to their underpants."

A minute or two later, after he had cooled down a bit, I reverted to this remark. I said that six-year-old children might be molested and bankers steal in Britain as in Ghana. But it was for the law courts to deal with such cases rather than the Head of State. He said "OK, but if the law courts don't, I will" and roared with laughter. One of the advisers chipped in and argued that the Ghanaian legal system provided for all sorts of satisfactory safeguards. I was wrong to suggest otherwise. I forbore to point out that it had been his Head of State who had criticised Ghana's legal system. I said that the difficulty seemed to be to find a way of strengthening the legal system to offer protection against abuse. It must be possible to find experts to give advice on such matters. Perhaps this was an area where Britain could help. Rawlings welcomed this idea.

I asked if we could go back to the question of private investment. Rawlings nodded. I said that I had listened very carefully to his speeches on private investment and the private sector. His personal attitude as expressed in public was crucial. People both inside and outside Ghana attached enormous importance to what he said. He immediately replied that he understood this, but the difficulties (unspecified) were enormous. Big businessmen abused their position. He referred to some local distributors for a big British company who had built a factory on someone else's land. Despite this, Rawlings had helped get the daughter of one of the businessmen involved back after she had been kidnapped. He spoke also of the owner of one of the Accra night clubs who had invited the Chief of Police to attend a foundation-laying ceremony for the club. The "idiot policeman" had attended, apparently not understanding that the owner could use his presence to intimidate people with whom the owner subsequently dealt. Rawlings was scathing also about other well-known

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Ghanaian businessmen whom he accused of abusing their wealth and positions. Reverting to our earlier discussion about democracy, he said that one of the benefits of the Revolution had been to enable the factory workers, through their elected Committees for the Defence of the Revolution, to have a voice in the conduct of the business. In this way the rights of the people had been protected and a better balance achieved between the rich profiteers and the little man who got so little.

I said that it seemed to me that the main difficulty was to find some way of encouraging the private sector and thus to unleash individual energy and initiative (he nodded), at the same time preventing abuses by the rich and protecting the small man. I knew that, under his leadership, the Ghanaian economy had recovered to an astonishing extent since 1982. But, if the recovery was to be sustained and self-generating growth achieved, the private sector would have to supply the main engine of growth. Rawlings again nodded his agreement. He said that he would be meeting his economic advisers later in the day to consider policy towards the private sector, including on privatisation. He also wanted at some stage to have a good talk with private-sector representatives. I said that progress on privatisation would be welcome.

He then launched into a fresh tirade, this time against the Divestiture (i.e. privatisation) Implementation Committee for its slowness in implementing the policy. They had huge piles of files but actually did nothing. It was high time something was done about it. At this point he was speaking more to his advisers than to me, and they shuffled their feet uncomfortably. I said that privatisation was a very difficult exercise as we had discovered in the UK. I did not know whether our own experience was relevant to Ghana but perhaps we should share it. Rawlings said "Don't hesitate, don't hold back. Let us have any advice you've got." I said that I had suggested to Ebo Tawiah (PNDC member in charge of divestiture) how we could help. He agreed enthusiastically: "Yes: let's work something out".

Rawlings raised the Abu affair. A German company was alleged to have built a road which had subsequently subsided. "Those bloody Germans" had thought that they could get away with shoddy work. Did I realise that ordinary Ghanaians could have been killed on that road when it started to subside?

About half way through all this, the risk of me being thrown out receded. Rawlings thawed considerably. He turned towards me and from time to time patted me on the knee and once gave it a hard thump. He moved up the divan

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to sit closer and sometimes, for greater effect, put his face close to mine. We stared at one another eye ball to eye ball. At one point he said "He's an Englishman. Give him some tea", which is when the advisers realised that they were in for a longer meeting still. He became very friendly and made numerous warm references to the help that Britain had given. He mentioned our military team approvingly and expressed regret that our police adviser had gone. I explained that he was ill and hoped to be back soon. Rawlings said that Ghana needed more of our police advisers.

Eventually the advisers got restive and made signs that the meeting should end. I said that I had one more question. Our meeting had been valuable in helping me to understand his views. Could we meet regularly? "Yes" he said "we should certainly do that". He said that he had difficulty in getting his feelings and ideas across sometimes; but just because he was not articulate did not mean that he did not have important things to say. "I feel so frustrated sometimes," he said. He repeated again that we should certainly meet more often.

Finally he stood up. He asked whether he had answered all my questions and laughed when I replied that he had made a beginning. He said that the main point that he wanted to leave with me was that he did understand the importance of the private sector and, yes, he did want to find the right way of restoring true democracy.

The meeting had fallen into three parts: first my long monologue when I began to despair of getting him to talk; second when the advisers tried to intervene with technicalities; and, much the longest, when he finally came to life. He spoke with great force, passion and at times charm, but inarticulately and with long pauses when he searched for words or thoughts and brushed aside attempts by me or his advisers to help him out or otherwise intervene. He sometimes lost the thread of the argument and preferred to use specific stories to illustrate his meaning. Throughout a sense of sincerity, honesty and genuine concern for the ordinary Ghanaian came across strongly. He was uninterested in wider international subjects including South Africa. He looked fit and well, although I was struck by the trembling of the upper lip during the emotional passages. He didn't smoke and his mood fluctuated from the initial rather sullen reserve, through emotional excitement, to calmer waters towards the end when he spoke with real warmth about what Britain was doing in Ghana. I found the experience daunting and exciting and left with a feeling that I might be able to get on closer terms with him. How wrong I proved to be.

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I was of course encouraged to hear Rawlings say that he wanted to find the right way of restoring true democracy. But this begged the question of what true democracy was. I shall have more to say on this important subject in Chapter 17.

International issues

Not long after my arrival, the Ghanaians joined other anglophone members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in setting up the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to intervene in the Liberian civil war. ECOMOG'S first Force Commander was a Ghanaian Lieutenant General: Arnold Qainoo, one of the nine members of the PNDC, who unexpectedly called at the High Commission one day to ask for my advice and help. I was careful to avoid making any British commitment. He was a friendly and gregarious man who I got to know quite well. When I eventually called on him to say goodbye, he presented me with a small wooden animal carving which he asked me always to keep on my desk to remind me of him. This I have done and there it stands to this day.

I recall another encounter with a senior Minister with less affection. At the time of the first Iraq war, I received instructions from the FCO to ask for the diplomatic support of the Ghanaian Government at the UN and in dealings with Saddam Hussein's Government. I called on Obed Asamoah, Ghana's Foreign Secretary. In delivering my message, I spoke in fairly firm terms. Probably too firm. He reacted sharply by getting up from his arm-chair and walking over to his desk, making it clear that our meeting was over and I should leave. It took me several weeks to restore my relationship with him. This I did by suggesting that I call for a general *tour d'horizon*, in the course of which I went through all the ways in which Britain was giving Ghana help with development aid, military assistance, through the British Council etc. He expressed surprise. "I had not realised that you were doing so much," he said. We were back on terms. Looking back, the incident did no harm and may even have given me a reputation for willingness to talk tough when necessary.

I spent little time in discussing other international issues with senior Government figures. On such matters as South Africa, we agreed to differ. Mandela's release from prison and President De Klerk's overtures to the ANC were beginning in any case to ease a major source of disagreement between Britain and African critics of our policy towards Southern Africa. Mandela himself visited Ghana during my time there, as part of a tour of his international supporters. The Diplomatic Corps were invited to greet him at the airport on

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arrival. I remember shaking his hand as he moved down the line of diplomats on the tarmac. He had a word for each of us. To me he said that he had enjoyed meeting John Major recently in London. That evening we were all invited to a Government reception in his honour. He was the only one in black tie, not having been warned, as he told us in his speech, of Ghana's informality.

The airport contract

Negotiation of the Kotoka international airport contract, which I had mentioned to Rawlings, provided an instructive glimpse into the workings of Ghanaian government. When we arrived it was a pleasant, friendly, if rather ramshackle, airport with little security where crowds of jolly people met and saw off their friends and relations, without serious barriers between air-side and land-side. Our house wasn't far away and we got used to the roar of planes as they took off over our heads. The pineapple planes were particularly noisy, because they were heavily loaded with fruit for the European market to make the maximum use of available space in the plane and took off early in the morning when the air was cooler and, we were told, lift was better. They woke us at 5 a.m. or so with a noise like the end of the world as they sometimes seemed barely to clear the roof over our bedroom.

Both Plessey and Taylor Woodrow (called Taysec in Ghana) were determined to procure the joint contract for a complete renovation of the airport, including the terminal, the runway and all the electronics and navigation instruments. The ODA agreed to provide aid funds to help pay for the work in view of the importance of the airport for the economy in general. Our main competitor was a French consortium supported naturally by the French Embassy in the same way that we in the High Commission gave all the support we could to Plessey and Taysec. The scene was set for a titanic struggle between France and Britain. We felt that our honour, as well as our national commercial interest, was at stake. And my friendly French colleague and I, who normally enjoyed the best of personal relations, eyed each other with increasing unease and suspicion. I lobbied every Ghanaian minister and official who I thought might conceivably have a say in the matter and paid particular attention to Botchwey, the Finance Minister.

One happy day, Botchwey rang me up to say that the contract had been awarded to the British. I was of course absolutely delighted. The next morning EU Ambassadors had one of their regular weekly meetings to exchange information and views on whatever was going on at the time. The French Ambassador could

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hardly meet my eye. He was clearly extremely upset. I later discovered that the reason for his discomfiture was not only the obvious one that Britain had won and France had lost but that he had been assured, right up until the day of decision, that the contract would go to France. We had each been negotiating with different parts of the Government which each supported a different side and each believed that its side would win. I could well imagine how angry I would have been in my French colleague's position. But this did not spoil my own enjoyment of British success.

It was never easy to know exactly where power lay and how best to navigate through government thickets. I was to discover later, in rather a similar commercial contest, that the same applied to the Canadian administration, as indeed it does in Whitehall and elsewhere, not just in the developing world. An Ambassador or High Commissioner would always do well to find some sympathetic knowledgeable local person who could provide friendly informal advice when he or she didn't know where to turn. In Ghana I was exceptionally lucky in this respect. My cousin, Roger Goodenough, had given me an introduction to Sam Sey who had once been Barclays Bank local manager and had gone on to be Deputy Governor of the Bank of Ghana. He had also served for a time as a governor of London House for overseas graduates (later to be called Goodenough College on which more will follow in chapter 21 below). He and his wife, Elisabeth, invited Veronica and me to a family supper soon after we arrived. He was to become a friend whom I learned to trust and respect. We were shocked by his early death followed shortly by the death of Elisabeth. During most of our time in Ghana I could rely on Sam to help guide me through Ghanaian personalities and customs. He did so without compromising his own loyalty to his own country and people. It was typical of the man that he seemed to enjoy the respect of all sides of the local political spectrum.

Provincial touring

As I had told Rawlings, I did a great deal of provincial touring which provided fascinating glimpses into rural and small-town life and opportunities for uninhibited discussion with provincial officials and chiefs. It also demanded lots of short-notice speech-making. Some of these stick in the mind. At Kete Krachi, largely cut off by the Volta Lake and therefore little-visited by passing dignitaries, I was taken to visit the local secondary school where I suddenly found myself in an assembly room with 600 students waiting attentively for me to address them. On another occasion, in Kumasi I was invited by the students to attend the 31st anniversary celebration of Queen Elizabeth II Hall at the

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University. I had expected to play a passive role but should have known better. Luckily I arrived on time and the ceremony began 45 minutes late. We were given copies of the programme. Idly scanning it, I observed that there was to be an address by the guest of honour. I asked the Vice-Chancellor who this was; and he replied "I don't know but expect it's you". Accordingly I improvised some notes for a jokey speech suitable for an informal meeting of students which I anticipated. That was my second mistake.

In the fullness of time the Vice-Chancellor and I were driven in state to a nearby football field, surrounded three-deep by students, their families and others with nothing better to do. The Student Cadet Corps came smartly to attention and a police band struck up as we mounted a fine platform on which University Dignitaries, Army and Police Representatives were assembled. The Band played the Ghanaian National Anthem. The Vice-Chancellor and I inspected the Cadets and the Band. There followed a march-past, taking-of-salute and review-order. I tore up my jokey speech and, while the Hall Master and Hall President gave welcoming addresses, composed something more suitable for the dignity of the occasion.

Once the Guest of Honour (me as predicted by the V-C) had addressed the multitude, the Army Representative took his turn. He delivered a brisk pep-talk on the importance of good relations between the Army and the University and the need for peace and good order on the campus. The effect of this was only slightly marred by the late arrival of a bedraggled sheep on the parade ground whose frantic baaing provoked gales of laughter from the students who kept on driving it back towards the rostrum to prolong the fun.

An essential part of any provincial tour by a diplomat, particularly by a British High Commissioner in view of our colonial history, was a call on the local Chief. The most important of these was the Asantehene, Otumfuo Opoku Ware II, Chief of the Ashanti, against whose ancestor we had fought the Ashanti wars in the Nineteenth Century. Indeed we had exiled that ancestor to the Seychelles. This shared history if anything strengthened the affection between modern Britain and Ashanti.

My first call on the Asantehene, who had been away, staying at his house near Harrods in London, when I first visited Kumasi, took place in June 1990 and was a formal affair. I was accompanied by Veronica and by my linguist, Mrs Nina Chachu, local representative of the British Council. I was ushered to a large gilded arm chair, with red damask upholstery, next to the Otumfuo who sat on a

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magnificent throne, dressed in ceremonial cloth and wearing huge gold rings and other ornaments. He was accompanied by his Personal Secretary, Mr ASY Andoh, and his senior linguist, Nana Boakye Yam II. Veronica sat with other lesser chiefs around us. Mr Andoh began by asking Mrs Chachu what my mission was. She replied formally that I would explain which I did. My remarks were interpreted in chunks by Mr Andoh to the senior linguist who then repeated them in Twi to the Otumfuo who thus had three chances to hear me since he spoke perfect English. He replied by the same route. Once this formal exchange was over, the Otumfuo turned to me and suggested we continue our discussion in English without intermediaries.

One of the most moving calls Veronica and I paid was on the Sandema Na at his small mud brick Palace just west of Tono in Upper East Region not far from Ghana's northern border with Niger. The old man was nearly 80 and blind from Onchocerciasis, like so many northern Ghanaians at that time. But he was a tall and immensely impressive figure after 60 years as Chief "on the skin". He received us in a small upper room through which a soft warm breeze blew from the surrounding arid countryside. We exchanged speeches through an interpreter and continued speaking through the interpreter as the Sandema Na spoke no English. He recalled his only visit to London, for the Coronation in 1953 when he remembered seeing, before blindness had overcome him, the same birds in London as he knew from Sandema. They were bathing in the puddles of the Mall. The water lilies in the lake at Buckingham Palace to which he had been invited for a garden party were also familiar from Northern Ghana. On the wall behind him were pictures of King George VI and of Queen Elizabeth II, a certificate of entry in International Who's Who and a fine pendulum clock. We exchanged gifts: a tunic, hat and some cloth for us and a bottle of Black Label Whisky for him. Afterwards we were treated to a fine display of dancing outside the Palace: we sitting on one side and he and his elders on the other under a magnificent ceremonial umbrella.

Exchange of gifts was customary on such occasions. Black Label always went down well – they used to drink it mixed with Campari. And as often as not, I used to receive a Ghanaian tunic or a wooden stool. But I was once given a live turkey and was wondering what to do with it when the problem was solved by the local District Secretary who suggested that I hand it over to be eaten by the patients of a health clinic to which we had been hijacked by the Nigerian SRN midwife, a formidable lady.

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In addition to calls on chiefs, a typical morning's programme might include visits to a cassava-processing project constructed by the 31st December Women's Movement, a day-care centre, a Junior Secondary School, which might or might not have a roof, a new well and a briefing by the District Secretary. We also inspected numerous KVIPs. The Kumasi Ventilated Improved Privy came in a variety of sizes, one even extending to a twelve seater, which we were careful to inspect from up wind. They made a valuable contribution to local health and convenience.

Naturally these visits had an ulterior motive on the part of our local hosts who were looking for funds to support their projects. Luckily the High Commission had a small budget for such purposes without having recourse to the ODA itself which preferred to devote its aid to more strategic national schemes. Usually our hosts were content to draw our attention to their current needs and to include a general request for help in their welcoming addresses. They well understood that we could not always respond. Only once did they go further. After a day's journey along atrocious muddy roads in the forest west of Kumasi, when we had been accompanied by a strong press contingent, we were greeted by the Assembly Presiding Member (alias the Chief). By then it was pouring with rain and a durbar, which had been planned, had to be truncated. The Presiding Member made his welcoming address, appealing for a new water supply and funds for the planned health centre. He then announced that "the Chiefs and people of Nerebehi have unanimously decided to install the British High Commissioner as "Nkosuohene" of Nerebehi under the stool name of Nana Amaniampong I. Thus enstooled as a Development Chief, I returned to Accra with the expectations of the people of Nerebehi weighing heavily upon me.

The Economic Recovery Programme included rehabilitation of the Ghana Railway Corporation, which Britain and some other European Community members were supporting. Towards the end of our time in Ghana, the Dutch Ambassador, Sam Bloembergen, proposed to his EC colleagues that we travel together by rail from Takoradi in the west to Kumasi in the centre as an act of Community solidarity. We were a party of 16: the Danish, Dutch and French Ambassadors and their wives, the Italian and German Ambassadors, the EC delegate (later delegates were to become known as Ambassadors as the Commission's powers were extended) and his wife, five children and myself. Only the Spanish Ambassador was absent pleading urgent other business. Reluctantly Veronica opted out also, on advice from Ghanaian friends who feared that the train might well arrive more than 24 hours late. If so, she would have missed her flight to London the next day.

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In their heyday, the railways carried two million tonnes of freight and over six million passengers a year. By 1984 these figures had fallen to 373,000 tonnes and 2.2 million passengers. Most of this traffic was carried on the Western line on which we were to travel and which had been partly renovated. East Germany had provided 160 new coaches on barter terms. Britain had just agreed to rehabilitate some locomotives. This gave me an edge on most of my colleagues. The stations we passed through were as dilapidated as so many other Ghanaian public buildings. Some of the signal boxes looked as if they hadn't been touched since my grandfather's day in the 1930s. But the signals worked.

The day of our journey illustrated one of the railways' problems. Told to expect a 6 a.m. start, this slipped to 7 and then 8 a.m. We finally left at 8.45 a.m. in a special train put on for our benefit. The delay was caused by the derailment of a timber wagon the previous evening. Further delay followed as we proceeded in fits and starts at a stately 30-40 mph along the line while the obstacle was removed. We finally arrived in Kumasi in the evening only four hours late. Veronica might have caught her plane after all. I won the EC sweepstake on our arrival time, organised by the Italian Ambassador, by the simple expedient of selecting a time half an hour after the latest chosen by any of my more optimistic colleagues.

Lawrence Durrell would have enjoyed the spectacle we presented of diplomats at work. We and the escorting railway staff were comfortably accommodated in four VIP coaches. There was too much train noise for continuous conversation. In the case of the Italian Ambassador, a charming and highly intelligent man, this did not matter since none of us was ever sure what language he was speaking at any given moment. A good deal of attention was paid to food. Most of us had brought enough to share, with the result that elaborate compliments were paid to the vast quantities that emerged from a variety of picnic boxes. The EC delegate's was the biggest, needing at least two people to carry it. The Italian Ambassador produced a vast cake which looked daunting but which proved unexpectedly delicious. We lavished him with thanks and compliments, to make up for our inability to understand him. We read a bit (*Le Monde* for the French Ambassador and *Martin Chuzzlewit* in the original for the Danish). Some played bridge. We admired the view: lush green forest with few big surviving trees, surprisingly hilly: not easy country to build a railway in. But the colonial government had known what it was doing. The track follows the line of the great gold fields running northeast/southwest from Obuasi, through Dunkwa, to Tarkwa and not far from Prestea; it goes through the heart of the timber

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country; passes the manganese mine at Nsuta; and connects with the branch line from the bauxite mine at Awaso. It links Kumasi, capital of Ashanti, with the port of Takoradi, opened by Governor Slater in 1928.

Entertaining

We were able to make good use of our budget for entertaining Ghanaians and indeed the British and diplomatic communities. Ghanaians were rewarding guests. One only needed a few to ensure much jollity. Add a few more and one had a ball. We used Veronica's and my combined fiftieth birthdays, which we called our hundredth, to entertain to supper a hundred or so of our friends and contacts, including two members of the PNDC. Lively entertainment was provided by a troupe of traditional dancers; one of our guests commenting that this party was the first of its kind that they had been able to enjoy for a very long time as only a few years earlier it would have caused outrage in a time of acute economic crisis.

I also used to invite particularly interesting or important individuals for tête-à-tête lunches in the Residence. These provided the opportunity for surprisingly frank discussions with senior figures. I remember in particular Justice Annan coming to the house in this way. My aim was gradually to build a relationship of trust through which I could tackle some of our key objectives.

Catering for what became a heavy entertainment load fell on Veronica's shoulders as well as management of the household staff who numbered two cooks, a steward, house-boy, laundryman and three gardeners. Veronica would sally out intrepidly, in terrific heat and humidity in a small second hand Peugeot we bought locally, with a bundle of cedi notes (we called it a wodge) to shop wherever she could find the right food. Supplies became more plentiful as Ghana's economy gradually recovered. But it was hot and hard work. Towards the end of our posting we engaged a driver to make Veronica's task a little easier in the heavy Accra traffic.

Many educated Ghanaians knew Britain better than we knew Ghana. But their knowledge of modern Britain was not always up-to-date. We attended a performance of Macbeth by a troupe of mostly black actors from London, invited by the British Council. The audience's first reaction was of disappointment. They had not expected the actors to be black and they assumed therefore that they were Ghanaians and not from London at all. But once the play began, the audience joined in enthusiastically by reciting the best known

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lines with the actors, including “Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow...” showing how well Shakespeare had been taught locally. When MacBeth appeared not to see Banquo’s ghost, the audience called out “look, behind you”. Just like Shakespeare’s own audiences in the pit at the Globe Theatre.

Our lives in Ghana were not all work. At weekends, particularly when the family were with us, we often drove to the beach at Mile 16 just to the west of Accra where we had a small plot enclosed by a scanty palm-frond hedge under the shade of the palm trees. We rented it from the local chief. You had to be careful of the undertow and quite strong currents when you swam. Drowning was a real risk. We used to buy fish from the local fishermen whose great canoes were drawn up on the sand nearby; and a local boy cooked them for us on a barbecue, bringing the glowing starter coals along in a coconut shell. We enjoyed the inscriptions on the canoes. One read “Don’t rush”; another “To be a man is not a day job”.

The buses too were similarly inscribed with a variety of improving slogans: “God bless 007”, “God is in control”, “six feet at last”, “no condition is permanent”, “no time to die”. Ghanaians loved such exhortations. Over the entrance to a Printing House in Kumasi ran these lines:

“This is a printing house, cross-roads of civilisation, refuge of all arts against ravages of time. Armoury of fearless truth against whispering rumours, incessant trumpet of trade. From this house words may fly abroad, not to perish as wavers of sound, but fixed in time. Not corrupted by hurrying hand, but verified in proof. Friend on entering this house you stand on sacred ground.”

We used to visit the gardens at Koforidua on the escarpment north of Accra as well as Prampram, Ada and Keta on the coast to the east. We also spent a pleasant weekend at a guest house in the hills above Ho.

Ghana’s francophone neighbours

In November 1990, we made a memorable 17-day expedition in three land rovers to Ghana’s francophone neighbours: Togo, Benin, Burkino Faso, Niger, Mali and Ivory Coast, in the company of the High Commission Defence Adviser, Graham McKinley, and his wife Jackie, and of the Dutch Managing Director of Shell Ghana, Alexander Baelaerts, and his wife Carola. We took two Ghanaian drivers with us: Mohammed and Quarshie.

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I knew little of the political situation in any of the countries we visited. The current presidents of Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali - Colonel Ali Saibou, Blaise Compaoré and Moussa Traoré - had all come to power through a military coup. But, as tourists we had no contact with Governments and saw little evidence of military rule during our tour. But the common French heritage was ever-present in the language and the common currency, the CFA franc, which saved us the trouble of constant money-changing.

We had planned to visit Timbuktu via Gao in Mali. But in Kara, Northern Togo, our first overnight stop, I received a telegram from Roger Beetham in Dakar, British Ambassador to Senegal and Mali, via the Honorary Consul in Lome. It read "You are obviously not aware that since the summer there have been serious incidents between Touaregs and the Mali army in and around Gao with several hundred deaths. There is a state of emergency in Gao province and a curfew in Timbuctoo. Road travel between Gao and the Niger border (where foreigners have been among those killed) and north and east of Gao is strongly discouraged both by the Mali authorities and by ourselves and consular department in London". I felt foolish not to have consulted Roger earlier and was grateful he had taken so much trouble to track us down (and spare himself the trouble of having to pick up the bits if we had met any revolting Touaregs).

To cut a long story short, and although we received conflicting advice from the US Ambassador in Niamey, capital of Niger, who advised that access to Timbuktu via Gao would probably have been safe, we decided that discretion was the better part..... and so aborted our plan to visit Timbuktu. Instead we went as far as Ayorou, a market town on the edge of the desert three and a half hours' drive north of Niamey, where we saw tall Touareg tribesmen from the desert in magnificent cloaks of blue and green, leading their camels in the dusty market square. Near Ayorou we found a guide to take us hippo watching on the Niger river. The pirogue he had arranged was not at the appointed place; and instead he flagged down a passing pirogue taxi and persuaded its passengers to disembark while it took us to see the hippos wallowing in mud on a bank in the middle of the river. Later, we hunted for quartz crystals and iron smelt from an ancient Touarag forge on the desolate edge of the desert.

From Ayorou we turned back, re-entering Burkina Faso and then entering Mali further to the west. It was here, at a campsite on a bad and little-used road north of Ouagadougou, between Ouahigouya and Koro, that we heard of Mrs Thatcher's resignation as we listened to the World Service six o'clock news sitting enjoying an evening sundowner. We speculated on the result of the

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leadership contest, now between Hurd, Heseltine and Major as Mohammed and Quarshie went off to town to try to get a Landrover roof-rack welded. They returned with bottles of ice-cold beer, which we drank under a sky bright with stars and to the sound of the sinister barking of jackals and dogs in the distance. The border crossing to Mali may have been remote and we even saw a sign for Upper Volta, the old name for Burkina Faso. But the news of Mrs Thatcher's resignation had reached the policeman at the lonely dusty border post. When he saw our passports, he said "Vous êtes britanniques. Dites moi. La dame de fer. Pourquoi est ce qu'elle a demissioné?"

In Mali we visited the magnificent mud-built mosques at Mopti and Djenne on the Niger river and then the Dogon valley near Bandiagara. Here an animist people, who had refused to convert to Islam, had built villages in defensible positions along the walls of a great escarpment. Dogon art and sculpture has subsequently made the area a popular tourist destination. But we were the only tourists.

Some nights we camped and the rest we found hotels. In all but one of our campsites - south of Douenza - we were quickly surrounded by well-behaved local villagers and children who watched our every move with close attention. At our first - just inside Niger - a storm dispersed our audience. By the time Graham had taken advantage of a rain shower to cover himself thoroughly in soap, the rain stopped. Wherever we were we spent hours admiring the night sky bright with stars and listening to the rustle and cry of passing animals. The hotels were of varying quality but we usually had no difficulty in finding one. Only in Bobo Dioulassa did our visit coincide with a local conference and all the hotels were fully booked. The choice seemed to be to drive out of town to find a campsite and ... the local brothel. Eventually, with directions from some nervous soldiers who had stopped our land rovers at the point of their guns, we found a Catholic Mission where Veronica persuaded the Sister Superior to grant us refuge for the night.

So we failed in our original objective of getting to Timbuktu, which we shall now never see. And the circumstances under which we were to leave Ghana meant that we had to abandon a vague plan to follow in the footsteps of Tom and Elisabeth Young who intrepidly returned home from Accra by land across the Sahara. But our circumnavigation of modern Ghana gave us a glimpse of francophone Africa and the dry areas of the Sahel, where the medieval kingdom of Ghana had once been, and helped to put modern Ghana in perspective for us. I was left with the feeling that Britain should give higher priority to closer

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regional integration in West Africa as a framework for Ghanaian stability and prosperity and therefore for the pursuit of long-term British interests in the area. There is nothing like visiting a place and long hours of travel to stimulate thought.

Departure

I had expected to spend at least three years in Ghana. And we had been looking forward to welcoming other friends and family to visit us and to exploring all the parts of the country we had not yet seen. So I was surprised to get a short-wave radio message in the car one day, as I was returning from a call, to tell me that a personal telegram awaited me in the office. Such telegrams were rare and meant that the sender did not want anyone else in the High Commission to see its contents. The only other one I had received in Accra was to ask me if I would accept a CMG if The Queen were to approve its award. I had said yes. I couldn't imagine what was now in store.

The telegram said that the Number 1 Board in the FCO had decided to appoint me as Assistant Under Secretary of State (AUSS) for Africa and the Commonwealth and that I was needed back in London as quickly as possible. At the time Veronica was in Britain with Eleanor and I did not expect her back for another week or so. But, although I knew that there was much in Ghana that Veronica enjoyed, I also knew that there were good family reasons why some time at home would be welcome. In any case I had no choice: the Board "had decided". So I replied that, although disappointed to leave Ghana so soon and at such short notice, I was honoured to accept the appointment. All this was true.

The indirect cause of this development was, bizarrely, the break up of the old Soviet Union and the FCO's need to find someone to serve at short notice as the first British Ambassador to Ukraine which had now emerged from the Soviet grip. The obvious candidate was Simon Hemans, the then AUSS for Africa, who was a Russian speaker. So someone had to be found to take his place. And, although there was a common view in the Office that Personnel Department did not go in for much in the way of forward planning in making appointments, on this occasion it could hardly be blamed for failing to foresee such an unlikely chain of events.

I was given three weeks to extract myself from Accra and two more before I would be needed at my new London desk. This would enable me, the FCO thoughtfully suggested, to make a familiarisation visit to Southern Africa and

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then to have a few days to settle in at home again. This was the closest I came to understanding the feelings of those of my FCO colleagues whose postings were abruptly cut short by such unforeseen events as war and revolution. Our Ghanaian friends were surprised and hurt that we should leave in such short order, one threatening to lead a protest march to the High Commission with a banner reading "Hands Off Our High Commissioner!".

Further local evidence of the new world order came when I saw to my surprise that the Russian Ambassador to Ghana had driven out to Accra airport to say goodbye to us. He also was probably surprised to find that we were flying to the UK via Zimbabwe and South Africa. We had twenty four hours in Harare and I had a few days of familiarisation in Johannesburg and Capetown while Veronica stayed with her father and stepmother, Bunty, at Hermanus in the Cape, a good place to recover from the strains of packing in Accra. She flew home direct, while I went on to visit both Mozambique and Kenya to begin to learn more about wider African affairs. We then invoked the diplomatic break clause in our tenants' lease of our house in Wimbledon and were able to secure entry at roughly the same time as I began work in the FCO once again.

CHAPTER 10

AND A DICTATORSHIP IN TOGO, 1989 - 1992

I was not only British High Commissioner to Ghana but also the non-resident British Ambassador to Togo, next door. This was my only experience of serving as an Ambassador, not that there was much difference from being a High Commissioner.

Like the rest of Africa, Togo owed its highly artificial frontiers to its colonial past. It had been a German protectorate from 1884 to 1914, encompassing what is now Togo and most of what is now the Volta Region of eastern Ghana. At the outbreak of World War 1, it was invaded by British and French forces and placed under military rule. In 1916 it was divided into separate British and French administrative zones, and this was formalised in 1922 with the creation of British Togoland and French Togoland. The British area was integrated into Ghana in 1957 following a plebiscite in which 58% of its residents voted in favour of joining Ghana upon its independence, rather than remaining under British-administered trusteeship. The French-ruled area became the Republic of Togo in 1960 and is now known as the Togolese Republic. The Togo/Ghana frontier divides the Ewe tribe and even individual families. This engenders tensions between the two countries from time to time.

Since 1975 British interests in Togo had not been thought important enough to justify a resident Embassy; and what work there was had been done by an Honorary Consul in Lomé and by staff in Accra, a day's drive to the west by the coastal road.

In my time the Honorary Consul was a British citizen, straight out of the pages of Graham Greene, who owned a tug boat and some barges which he used to deliver heavy goods from one port to another along the West African coast. He took care to arm himself heavily against local pirates off the Liberian coast. He was on good terms with the port authorities, customs and police in Lomé and was therefore well placed to help British citizens who got into trouble. Without his local support the Embassy's task in Lomé would have been much more difficult. Towards the end of my posting, we had to replace him and found another British citizen prepared to take on the duties of Honorary Consul. She and her husband enterprisingly ran a local English-medium language school.

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I had had to brush up my French beforehand; and took the FCO's higher level French exam after I had arrived in Accra. My oral examiner was a rather shy Togolese who was kind enough to pass me. Neither I nor the FCO knew if he had done so because my French had reached the right standard or out of misplaced respect for an Ambassador.

My predecessor was never able to present his credentials to President Eyadema and therefore did not formally become Ambassador because of the President's unwillingness to receive him, apparently in protest against our refusal to open a resident mission. I doubt if British interests suffered significantly.

In my case, President Eyadema felt obliged to receive me because of the imminent signature in Lomé of the Lomé IV Convention, an agreement between the EC and the developing countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific, providing for aid and trade between them. Togolese officials wanted Britain to send a Minister to sign on behalf of the UK. I told them that this would be difficult if I had not presented my credentials beforehand. The Italians were in the same position. The Togolese caved in; and so I and my Italian colleague in Accra went along together for the credentials ceremony which took place shortly after dawn one morning.

After the short credentials ceremony, we were entertained by the President to a glass of champagne and were then doorstepped in French by the Togolese Press. I worked hard beforehand to prepare my remarks to ensure I made the most of this chance to get some publicity for the little that Britain was doing in Togo; and was gratified that the interviews were the leading items of TV news that evening. The Italian Ambassador got equal treatment for his remarks about the remarkable beauty of the country and the profound importance which Italy attached to its relations with Togo. He said nothing of substance but his French was more eloquent than mine and he had obviously made it all up on the spur of the moment: a lesson in how to deal with the local Press without overworking.

Shortly after, less than two months after my arrival in Accra, Lord Reay, a Government whip in the House of Lords, flew out to Lomé to sign the Convention in company with scores of other national representatives. I did my best to look after him in a country of which I knew next to nothing; a case of the blind leading the blind. The British Honorary Consul proved invaluable.

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Thereafter, as the properly accredited British Ambassador, I did my best to breathe life into our relations with Togo. I hoped to maximise British exports, encourage Togolese moderation in international affairs and persuade them to show greater respect for human rights. I hoped that we might also be able to build on Eyadema's own long tenure of power and his ambitions as a would-be mediator in his neighbours' quarrels. He had after all been President since he murdered his predecessor in 1967.

In the event, these worthy aims were overtaken by unexpected political turmoil and economic decline in Togo. The political changes in Eastern Europe and signs of change elsewhere in Africa generated pressure on Eyadema from Togolese public opinion to move towards more open government, greater respect for human rights and freedom of expression. There were student protests and violence in the streets.

First, Eyadema conceded the establishment of a constitutional commission charged with producing a draft constitution to be put to a referendum at the end of 1991. The aim was multi-party politics. But the President came under growing pressure to move faster. By August 1991, after serious violence, he had surrendered much of his power to Kokou Koffigou, President of the Togolese Human Rights League who was appointed Prime Minister of a transitional government.

Koffigoh tried unsuccessfully to assert his government's authority and prepare for elections. Brave, decent, moderate, but without political experience, he survived three attempts by armed soldiers to take over the radio and TV stations and one direct attempt to arrest him personally. But then the transitional Government precipitated a dramatic army intervention by announcing a ban on the organisation which had provided Togo's one-party rule. The army besieged and then stormed Koffigoh's residence, suffering over 100 casualties, and took him to the Presidential Palace for talks with Eyadema. Surprisingly, rather than resign, Koffigoh announced the formation of a government of national unity. It included some of Eyadema's former ministers. In formal terms, Koffigoh had lost none of his powers. In reality, however, his authority had been undermined and Eyadema's correspondingly revived. By the time I left West Africa, the future was uncertain.

Although Eyadema's rule had been seriously challenged, he ultimately consolidated power again and won multi-party presidential elections in 1993, 1998 and 2003. The opposition boycotted the 1993 election and denounced the

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1998 and 2003 election results as fraudulent. At the time of his death, Eyadema was the longest-serving ruler in Africa.

Britain played no part in the events of 1990/1. I paid one short courtesy call on Koffigoh to signal our support for political change and to offer our moral backing. Otherwise the Embassy's main priority was the safety of the small British community. The main risk was that one of them would be caught in the crossfire, but happily none was hurt. We kept our consular lists up to date and mapped the whereabouts of all known British citizens: some 80 at the latest count. We established a warden network and a direct radio link with the new Honorary Consul at the British school. We also kept in good repair our relations with the French, German and US Embassies. The latter had agreed to take formal responsibility for evacuating the British community if necessary.

We also did our best to continue to monitor economic developments in Togo. 1990 had been a poor year, thanks to late rains, a fall in phosphate production, high population growth, depressed world cocoa and coffee prices and a sharp rise in the oil price. Despite this, Togo had maintained its Structural Adjustment Programme and therefore the support of the IMF and other Western donors. But, as the political situation deteriorated, so also did the economy. In 1991, growth was negative, partly because of the Government's policy of trying to head off political trouble by conceding higher wage increases and a loss of Government revenue due to the disruption of work. The Government suspended its Structural Adjustment Programme with the result that the IMF and World Bank stopped their financial support. Germany suspended its financial and military assistance in protest at the army's attack on Koffigoh's residence.

British bilateral aid was always tiny. We had two technical assistance staff engaged on research into the large grain-borer beetle, which threatened grain storage; and we ran a small English Language Training programme worth some £200,000 p.a. In the middle of 1991 the Embassy was instructed to inform the Togolese Government that, for reasons of economy, Britain had decided to end the language programme. However Togo continued to receive some £4 million of British aid through multilateral channels. Unsurprisingly the Togolese informed us shortly afterwards that they would be closing their Embassy in London, also for economic reasons. In future their accreditation would be from Paris. So we would be quits.

British exports to Togo were very small. In a normal year, they might be worth some £10 million mostly in the form of transit trade to countries to the north of

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Togo. In 1991, exceptionally, this figure rose to some £19 million, due to the sale of eight more Scorpion tanks to join the twelve that the army had acquired in 1988. The timing of their delivery was embarrassing, coming just before the army's attack on Koffigoh's residence. We persuaded ourselves that they made no difference to the outcome.

Twice in my time, an RN survey ship visited the port of Lomé. This helped to sustain the illusion of British interest. My own visits to Lomé were few in number. Veronica and I used to try to hold an annual Queen's Birthday Party for the small British community and as many senior Togolese as could be persuaded to attend. And one year we joined the resident diplomatic corps to watch the annual National Day parade. The highlight of this was a procession of service men and women, floats, choirs etc who marched past the President on his saluting stand. They sang lustily, including to the strains of Handel's Hallelujah Chorus. They had adapted the words from 'Hallelujah, Hallelujah' to 'Eyadema, Eyadema'. The procession seemed endless until we realised that the same people kept re-appearing as they marched in a wide circle around the saluting base and spectator stands. This occasion neatly illustrated Eyadema's personality cult. Before his political troubles, he had nursed ambitions to replace President Houphouet Boigny of the Ivory Coast in his role as one of the grand old men of Africa.

On Armistice Day each year a small, moving, ceremony took place at Wahala north of Lomé where there was a tiny cemetery with four World War I graves, surrounded by a low white stone wall. Two British officers and two Germans were buried there, casualties of an action on 22 August 1914 when a small British force tried to destroy a German wireless transmitter at Kenama. In touch with Berlin, it would have been able to coordinate German attacks on Allied shipping in the eastern Atlantic. One of the British casualties had been Lieutenant George Masterman Thompson, based in the Gold Coast, who thus became the first British officer to be killed in action in World War I. He was 24 when he fell. Each year the British Defence Adviser in Accra and, in some years, the British High Commissioner, a.k.a. the British Ambassador to Togo, used to attend the ceremony along with the German Ambassador to Togo because two of the graves were of German officers. On the occasion that I attended, my hospitable German colleague invited us back to his Embassy for lunch. I did not discover until long afterwards that Lieutenant Thompson was a fellow Old Wellingtonian having been at the College before the War.

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The resident diplomats were invariably helpful, probably glad to see some different faces in such a small capital. The hospitable French Ambassador presided in some style over a strong French presence. During the street violence that threatened Eyadema's rule towards the end of my posting, he played a big part in mediating between the different factions. So I tried to keep in close touch with this near Pro-Consular figure to find out what was happening. Not for the first or last time, I was glad to have served in the British Embassy in Paris. The experience had been good for my French and given me helpful familiarity with France and its diplomats. I encountered much kindness from my French colleagues throughout my career.

Gnassingbe Eyadema ruled until his death in 2005. He was succeeded in what amounted to a coup by his son, Faure Gnassingbe, who continues in power to this day (2021). Although 'elected' from time to time, he is as much a dictator as his father.

CHAPTER 11

GOOD GOVERNMENT IN AFRICA, 1992 – 1995

I began my new job as Assistant Under Secretary of State (AUSS) for Africa and the Commonwealth a few weeks before John Major's unexpected victory at the polls in 1992 and therefore served under Conservative Ministers throughout my time in London, first under Douglas Hurd as Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and, towards the end, under Malcolm Rifkind. My own Minister of State was Lynda Chalker who combined the job of Minister for Overseas Development with that of Minister for Africa. In most ways this simplified my own job and ensured at least that there could be no conflict of interest on Africa between a Minister for Africa and a Minister for Overseas Development. It also meant that I spent more time visiting by myself as AUSS, particularly to those countries with only a small British aid programme. Despite great energy, Lady Chalker couldn't spare as much time as she would have liked in Africa given her responsibilities for the rest of the world. But it also meant that some countries received less ministerial attention than British interests required.

Very occasionally I was summoned to No 10 to attend meetings between the Prime Minister and senior Africans. I used to sit next to him and answer any scribbled questions he would pass me. I remember for example calls by Mandela, Rawlings and a Nigerian. John Major was always friendly to me personally and I sometimes got the impression that he was relieved to get away from more unpleasant work. I also used to see him at meetings of Commonwealth Prime Ministers of which more later.

I was lucky to have above me in the hierarchy, as Deputy Under Secretary, first Mark Elliott, with whom I had been at New College and who had remained a friend ever since, and then David Wright, who I had got to know well in the Administration before I went to Ghana. They took a close interest in South Africa and provided valuable support when needed but otherwise spent most of their time on other responsibilities.

All the day-to-day work of managing British relations with Africa and of liaising with other Government Ministries was done by the FCO's African Departments, whose work I supervised. The number of these had gradually shrunk during my career as the priority which successive Governments gave to the region in their foreign policies diminished. When I had last dealt with Africa in the 1970s, as a Private Secretary, there had been four, including a Rhodesian Department. When

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I had been in Ghana, West African Department (WAD) had been one of three. But my arrival as AUSS coincided more or less with the amalgamation of WAD with East African Department (EAD), leaving only two departments for Africa. We took the opportunity to rename those two: African Department Equatorial and African Department Southern (ADE and ADS), with the convenient consequence that, instead of appearing separately under W and E in the Office telephone directory, they would in future appear together at the front. When I mentioned this at the Permanent Under Secretary's morning meeting, David Gillmore laughingly accused me of a minor coup. I was lucky in the heads of both departments in my time: successively Tom Harris and David MacLennan in ADE; and Robin Christopher, Charles Humfrey and then Bruce Dinwiddy in ADS. I had known Bruce well in Personnel Policy Department when he was the Assistant Head of Department.

As AUSS for the Commonwealth, I supervised also Commonwealth Coordination Department under David Broad. It dealt with general Commonwealth issues and not with individual Commonwealth countries. Much its biggest job was to prepare and manage British participation in the biennial Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conferences of which I had the misfortune to attend two and on which I shall say more in a separate chapter on the Commonwealth.

My job was to advise Ministers on policy towards Sub-Saharan Africa (including the Indian Ocean) and the Commonwealth; to supervise my three departments and the 25 British Diplomatic Missions covering 45 countries (some Missions covered more than one country, as I had covered Togo from Ghana); and to manage the financial and manpower resources allocated to support our African policies. Those resources included the 54 staff in my three home departments and some 250 UK staff and a similar number of locally engaged staff in the 25 Missions in Africa. To the cost of all this was added the cost of the overseas estate (i.e. Embassies, High Commissions, staff housing etc), IT and transport. I also had a regular opportunity to comment on the budgets of the British Council in Africa, the BBC African service and the Overseas Development Administration's activities in Africa.

Far and away the most important country in Africa was and remains South Africa; and it was the transition to majority rule there that commanded the attention of senior Ministers, including occasionally of the Prime Minister himself. A high priority was also given to our relations with Nigeria and Kenya. Otherwise Lynda Chalker and her officials were left to promote British interests

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in the region as best we could. Only when things went badly wrong, as they did in Somalia and Rwanda, where incidentally few direct British interests were at stake, did the rest of the Office show much interest in what we were up to.

I have more to say about South Africa and other individual countries below.

AUSS Management role

It was sometimes tricky to know exactly how far to involve myself in events and how best to define the Under Secretary supervisory role. But I seized one early opportunity to support a change in the traditional role. In doing so I irritated some of my colleagues, particularly later on when the organisational changes I supported and piloted were widely implemented. Because the changes were organisational, they may sound rather boring and they certainly bored some people. But they interested me and I thought that they could have a helpful effect on the management of foreign policy.

My interest in the subject had begun as Head of Personnel Policy Department (PPD) from 1986 to 1989. I have described in an earlier chapter my suggestion that one of the geographical Under Secretaries, perhaps the one in charge of Britain's interests in South America or Africa, should be asked to conduct an experiment with a delegated manpower budget with limited authority to switch jobs within their area. The idea had fallen on stony ground at the time.

Shortly after my return to the FCO in 1992, I learned that the Board of Management were about to hold a strategy meeting over a weekend at the Foreign Secretary's country house, Chevening, and that organisational matters were to be on the agenda. The Board consisted of the Deputy Under Secretaries under the chairmanship of the Permanent Under Secretary, then David Gillmore, who I grew to like and admire enormously. Mere Assistant Under Secretaries (AUSSs) were not as a rule invited. But, taking my courage in both hands, I told David that I had ideas on involving AUSSs in the management of resources and suggested that my presence might be helpful. He invited me to attend. During the meeting I volunteered to act as a guinea pig in a pilot scheme to test the delegation of resources to an AUSS command, more or less in the way I had proposed in PPD three or four years previously. Jeremy Greenstock, AUSS for Europe, a powerful figure later to become Ambassador to the UN in New York, also volunteered. So, both the European and the African Commands took part in the pilot scheme.

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The scheme came to embrace not only establishments but some money too, including for example the budget for funding Government invitations to overseas VIPs and the one for financing small gifts and projects which had hitherto been at the discretion of individual heads of mission. There was also discussion about including in the pilot scheme overseas scholarship funds and the money to pay for British Military training teams. The thought was that the people in our overseas posts, visits, gifts, small projects, scholarships and military training were all essentially instruments available to help in the pursuit of our foreign policy and that they ought therefore to be in the hands of the people charged with implementing that policy. After all, they knew far better than the administration departments how resources could be put to best use.

The implementation of these arrangements bristled with minor technical difficulty; and I was to find myself embroiled in all sorts of esoteric detailed discussion. But the principle was simple. And I took the view that, if we used the pilot scheme to work out the details before rolling it out more widely across the Service, we would be able to devise reasonably painless and workable arrangements for general application. Perhaps unfortunately, it was decided quite soon that the scheme looked so promising and conformed so well with wider management reforms that were under way in Whitehall that it should be implemented across the Service before it had been fully tested and perfected in one or two areas first. I think, with the benefit of hindsight, that this was a mistake. It ran into a fair amount of disgruntled opposition and criticism from colleagues who didn't want to be bothered with what they regarded as administrative chores, preferring as they did the pure milk of policy work.

This scheme did not take up too much of my time because I was provided with an extra officer to run it for me. He did so initially from within ADE; but later he formed the nucleus of a small section working direct to me that led not only on resource management but also on the formulation of an Africa-wide strategy. In this way, almost paradoxically, delegating resource management to an AUSS Command, far from distracting effort from policy work, actually strengthened our policy capability.

Towards the end of my time as Under Secretary for Africa, I was asked to brief John Coles on this new scheme of resource management. He was preparing himself to take over from David Gillmore as Permanent Under Secretary. We met over a sandwich lunch with the Chief Clerk, Andrew Wood. Although I didn't realise it at the time, I came to wonder later whether, in fact, I was a candidate to succeed Andrew as Chief Clerk and that this was a convenient way for John to

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size me up. Whether or not this was so, I have no doubt that Rob Young, on whom his choice eventually fell, made a much better Chief Clerk than I would have done.

British interests in Africa

Although these managerial changes were to become a distinctive and important part of my job as an AUSS, they took very much second place to my policy responsibilities. Looking back, I should probably have started in the job by taking stock of British interests in Africa as a whole. But starting any new job is like boarding a moving train. There was little time for reflection as I struggled with the daily issues that crossed my desk. But writing this now, over a quarter of a century later, I begin with an overall assessment of the nature and extent of British interests in a part of the world which, frankly, remained a rather low priority for the Office as a whole. Inevitably what follows owes a good deal to that valuable advantage point called hindsight.

Douglas Hurd used to talk of the hand that Britain had been dealt by history. He meant our relations with those countries which had once been part of the British Empire and were now our partners in the Commonwealth. In 1992 sixteen of these were in Africa. South Africa re-joined in 1994; and three more joined later: Cameroon, Mozambique and Rwanda. Hurd's point was that, whether we liked it or not and however slight material British interests might be in a given country, the fact was that we were linked by history and, to some extent, Britain had a moral responsibility towards such countries. Of course Britain did have important material interests in some of them, particularly South Africa, Kenya and Nigeria. And even if they had not been members of the Commonwealth, we would have wanted a strong relationship with them. But it was significant that a country the size and wealth of Zaire, not in the Commonwealth, did not feature in any list of British priorities in Africa. Conversely, we paid a surprising amount of attention to such smaller Commonwealth countries as Malawi, Lesotho and Sierra Leone precisely because they formed part of that hand dealt us by history.

Part of our calculation was the fear that some of these countries might collapse and, if they did, our moral responsibility would have demanded that we help to rescue them. I recall, for example, a visit I paid to Malawi in 1993. I concluded that, in addition to £100 million of investments and a sizeable number of British citizens (both no doubt due to the historical connexion), Malawi faced the risk of political instability and economic decline. If the economy were to collapse, it

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might cost us a great deal to rescue. Here was an argument for maintaining a large aid programme in Malawi.

The migration problems from 2015 onwards illustrate the point vividly. I recall discussion in the 1990s of whether Britain should have been doing more to support the economies of the Commonwealth countries of West Africa so as to help reduce the pressures from visa applicants seeking entry to Britain. At the time, the risk of Nigerians flooding across the Mediterranean to Southern Europe would have seemed fanciful. Now - in 2021 - things look different. Britain seems to me to have a strong interest in assisting the Nigerian Government to confront Boko Haram and in strengthening West African societies more generally with a view to encouraging people to stay in their own countries. The trouble is that the potential problem is so vast as to be unmanageable. Instability in Nigeria, or Zaire, or Ethiopia, or in any other significant African country could easily spill over their borders and destabilise their neighbours, generating massive movements of refugees, many of whom will head gradually northwards.

In 1992, as now, Britain had a general interest in promoting democracy and "good government" (on which more later), not only because this policy would strengthen stability in the country concerned but also, indirectly, in the rest of Africa, because failure in one place would reduce the credibility of those policies elsewhere.

We also had, and have, a general humanitarian responsibility, as a rich member of the international community, to provide emergency relief to the poor and destitute. This required us, for example, to relieve the victims of famine in Ethiopia, floods in Mozambique and civil war in Sierra Leone of which only the last was part of the hand dealt us by history.

Our commercial interests might have been only a tiny fraction of total British exports and overseas investments; but they mattered to the companies concerned and there were some big hitters e.g. BP in Angola and RTZ in Mozambique, to name two to which I gave personal high-level support during my visits to those countries. Other household names I met on my travels and to which our Diplomatic Missions gave as much support as possible included Shell, Unilever, British American Tobacco, De Beers, Land Rover, Guinness, Taylor Woodrow, Plessey, Barclays and Standard Chartered Bank. The list was long.

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Wherever there was a British commercial presence, there were British citizens who required support and, on occasion, protection. Most of these were in South Africa, Zimbabwe and East Africa. But even a small country like Malawi had some 8,000 British residents.

On the other hand, British tourists were fairly few and far between. Only South Africa, Mauritius and the Gambia attracted significant numbers: 27,000 in Mauritius in 1992. The game parks of East Africa were popular but visitor numbers were relatively small and made few demands on our Missions.

I have written above of the modern tidal wave of migrants across the Mediterranean. But this is very different from the immigrants that have been coming to Britain over the last generation or so from the Commonwealth countries of West and East Africa. These have formed part of the fabric of our relations with those countries. The fact that so many people of Ghanaian, Nigerian and Kenyan origins were living in Britain and were British citizens gave Britain as a whole, and not just them, all the greater interest in those countries.

I wonder if the Ministry of Defence keeps records of exactly how many British servicemen and women have served in Africa over the years. The total number might surprise. In my time as AUSS, Britain's military interventions in Africa were limited to short-term logistical contributions to UN forces winding up the civil wars in Mozambique and Angola. We did not send front-line troops to intervene militarily anywhere in the continent, although I sometimes wished we had. We did so later under Blair in Sierra Leone to good effect. But Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa and the Seychelles, to name only four, provided refuelling and rest and recreation facilities for RN ships. The RAF had staged in Senegal on its way to the Falklands in 1982. Britain's possession of Diego Garcia provided a valuable base for US forces in the Indian Ocean during the 1991/2 Gulf War and subsequently. British army units trained in Kenya and Botswana. And Britain had a strong interest in the contributions of African U.N. peacekeeping troops both in Africa itself (e.g. Botswanan units in Mozambique and Somalia, Zimbabwean in Liberia and Ethiopian in Rwanda) and elsewhere.

Britain's defence interests in Africa also included the small British Military Advisory Teams in such countries as Ghana. They fall into a different category because they were more the means by which we protected our interests than a distinctive interest themselves. The same could be said of our training team in

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Nyanga, Zimbabwe, which helped integrate the opposing forces in Mozambique's civil war.

I very much doubt if anybody in Whitehall has ever tried to compile a list of British scientific and environmental interests in Africa. In an increasingly integrated world it is something that should be done. One of the most interesting visits I made as AUSS was to Madagascar where I learned that 80% of the flora and fauna was endemic i.e. unique to the island. Britain shared a wider international interest in the preservation of this treasure house of biodiversity, a fact that helped to explain the interest that British scientists took in the country. The same applied to the importance of preserving the rest of Africa's wild life, from the elephants and rhinos of East and Southern Africa, to the gorillas of Uganda and Zaire, and of protecting the environment throughout the continent. Britain's aid programme was right to give increasingly high priority to environmental objectives.

On the other hand, companies like RTZ, Shell and BP and the gold companies had compiled thorough inventories of the continents' mineral and oil resources. The FCO was in close enough contact with these companies to be able to take account of their interests in the formulation of British policies in Africa. I recall our decision to tip the balance of British support towards the Angolan Government and away from Savimbi's opposition partly in recognition of BP's interest in offshore oil exploration; and I also recall lobbying the Madagascan President in support of RTZ's interest in an ilmenite mine in the south of the island.

From Britain's earliest contacts with Africa, we have recognised the threat to travellers from disease. Even if our ancestors didn't at first know their names, malaria, yellow fever and other horrors have killed countless visitors to African shores. My own grandfather died of blackwater fever contracted in the Gold Coast. But it wasn't until fairly recently that we came to recognise the seriousness of the threat from disease to Britain's health at home. One of the milestones in this understanding came in 1986 when Kelvin White, British High Commissioner to Zambia, wrote a despatch to the Foreign Secretary warning of the growth of AIDS in Zambia and of the potential consequences for Britain. By the time I became AUSS from 1992 - 1996, the facts had become better known. And leaders like Rawlings in Ghana and Museveni in Uganda had begun in their public speeches to warn of the dangers of AIDS. They were brave and right to do so. And President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa was unaccountably foolish

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to deny the link between HIV and AIDS; and President Zuma equally foolish to claim that a shower after unprotected sex was enough to provide protection.

More recently the ebola outbreak in Guinea-Conakry, Sierra Leone and Liberia have provided a further terrifying example of the threat to the world's health from disease originating in a remote region. Zika is another example of the same thing. Now in 2020/21 there is corona virus. And, although this originated in China, it is alarmingly clear, in a way that it wasn't a generation ago, that one of Britain's most important interests in Africa is health.

Britain also had - and has - important political interests in Africa. We needed the support of Africans in the UN and through the Non-Aligned Movement and Organisation of African Unity. Our Diplomatic Missions in Africa, as elsewhere, regularly received instructions from London to lobby their local Governments on current international issues e.g. over Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Our permanent membership of the UN Security Council gave us a political interest in collaborating in international efforts to resolve the civil wars in Angola and Mozambique, Somalia and Rwanda (on which more later). We shared a common Western interest in blocking Islamist expansionism in East Africa and across the Sahara, although my time as AUSS preceded the worst of this development; and I did not have to wrestle with the rising tide of international terrorism (as opposed to the internal national kind). The bombing of the US Embassies in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam took place in 1998, two years after I had moved from London to Ottawa. More generally, our political activities in Africa helped to strengthen and sustain Britain's world-wide role as an essential member of the international community.

Finally, we had a vital interest in supporting Britain's national and multilateral aid programmes and ensuring that they were well aimed and spent. Again, like our military training programmes, this was less a distinctive interest in itself than part of the means by which we promoted our interests.

I end this section with a summary of British interests in Africa. The continent contained many of those countries which form part of the hand that history has dealt us and for which Britain therefore has a moral responsibility. By supporting them, we helped to avoid the potential costs of rescuing any that collapsed or of rescuing their neighbours who might suffer from the knock-on consequences from collapse next door. The problem posed by large numbers of refugees across the Mediterranean had not yet - in the 1990s - arisen. We had a general interest in promoting democracy and "good government" as a means of

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strengthening stability in the country concerned and, indirectly, in the rest of Africa. We had a clear humanitarian responsibility, largely recognised by British public opinion, to help the victims of natural and man-made disasters. We had commercial interests, mostly dwarfed by those in the developed world, but important to the companies concerned, which included some of the biggest British companies. Mineral resources, both potential and actual, were a big part of the picture. There were sizeable resident British expatriate communities in Southern and parts of Eastern Africa; and smaller but vocal ones in other parts of the continent. There were British tourists to protect, largely in Southern and East Africa. There were African immigrant communities in Britain itself which gave Britain as a whole a distinctive interest in their countries of origin. We had defence interests in parts of Africa, not enormous in comparative terms, but which were well worth preserving. We shared a global scientific and environmental interest in Africa's flora, fauna and geography. We had an increasingly apparent interest in the health of the continent. And we had political interests arising in particular from Britain's leading role in the world. But international terrorism in Africa had not yet emerged as a threat to our interests.

British objectives in Africa

From this assessment of British interests flowed our objectives in Africa, a list which we kept under regular review. They reflected of course Britain's world-wide objectives, namely: to safeguard Britain's national security; to build Britain's prosperity by helping to increase exports and investments; and to support British nationals. Our geographical priorities in 1992 were equally recognisable:

- peaceful transition to majority rule in South Africa;
- an end to the civil wars in Angola and Mozambique;
- the stability and prosperity of Nigeria, Kenya and Zimbabwe;
- ditto in the next most important tier of Britain's hand of history: Ghana, Zambia, Tanzania and Uganda; and in Ethiopia;
- ditto in the other 14 countries with resident British Missions;
- the rest of Africa: to a worrying extent largely *terra incognita* despite non-resident British representation.

Note: In 1992 neither Rwanda nor Somalia was receiving any priority in our work. Neither was Liberia despite the civil war raging and its effect on the stability of Sierra Leone.

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The tools of British Policy in Africa

What were the tools and resources available to us in pursuit of these objectives? Starting with Ministers, Lady Chalker, as Minister for Africa and for Overseas Development, enjoyed easy access throughout Africa. She knew all the key Heads of State and could be sure of a warm welcome wherever she went. Part of this was due to cupboard love: her interlocutors valued British aid. But it also owed much to the warmth of her personality and to her obvious liking and sympathy for Africa and its people. She was indeed the single most valuable instrument of British foreign policy in the continent. This was all the more important in countries like Ghana, Nigeria and Zimbabwe where our High Commissioners did not have easy access at the top.

Douglas Hurd, as Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, had all too little time to spare for Africa and its leaders. I accompanied him on brief visits to South Africa, Nigeria and Ghana; and he also included stops in Kenya and Somalia on his way back from South Africa in 1992. In addition he took advantage of the presence of many Commonwealth Foreign Ministers at CHOGM to meet them. All these provided rare opportunities to promote our objectives at the top level.

The Prime Minister, John Major, paid only one visit to Africa during my time as AUSS. He flew to South Africa in September 1994, six months after the elections which introduced majority rule, and addressed both South African Houses of Parliament. I was involved in preparations for the visit in London but did not accompany him to South Africa. David Wright went instead, as Deputy Under Secretary of State.

Even more valuable was The Queen's visit to South Africa in 1995, in demonstrating the importance we attached to our relationship with post-apartheid South Africa. I was disappointed not to be in the royal party, although my presence would have added nothing of value. I was also disappointed no longer to be involved in African affairs in 1999 when The Queen paid her second visit to Ghana (her first was in 1961).

Lady Chalker was always keen to see African leaders on their visits to London if she were not abroad. These meetings helped to strengthen our relations with individual leaders and their governments and to get across whatever our current line was. But it was much more difficult to secure access for senior Africans above Lady Chalker. A call on the Prime Minister was what African leaders most wanted, even if it were only a photo opportunity to shake the PM's hand on the

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steps of 10 Downing Street. But No. 10 took the line that this would have been phoney and, if the PM didn't have time for a proper talk, he couldn't see the leader concerned at all. We missed a trick there.

The ultimate weapon in our diplomatic armament was an invitation to a Head of State to pay a State visit or, one step down, an official Guest of Government visit to London. Such honours were accorded to only two African Heads of State in my time as AUSS. The first, incongruously, was Mugabe in 1994 who came on a full-blown State Visit. Now, that seems incredible. I can only plead as an excuse that, at the time, he seemed to have put behind him his anti-British hysteria. The second Head of State visit was by Rawlings of Ghana who was invited in 1995 as a Guest of Government in recognition of his restoration of constitutional government. This latter visit played a useful part in strengthening Britain's relations with Ghana.

I have already mentioned the African Departments in the FCO at home and our diplomatic missions in Africa. These provided the day-to-day means by which we maintained Britain's African interests. Lady Chalker used to chair regional conferences of Heads of Mission and the appropriate London based officials. These were invaluable in coordinating our work. I recall attending such meetings in Ghana, when I was High Commissioner and in Nigeria, Ethiopia and Zambia as AUSS.

Some of our Heads of Mission had exceptionally close relations with the local Head of State and were able to exert direct personal influence on him (there were no female African Heads of State in my time). I am thinking, for example, of the roles played by Tony Reeve in South Africa, particularly before majority rule in 1994; by Kieran Prendergast with Moi in Kenya; by first Maeve Fort and then Richard Edis with Chissano in Mozambique; by James Glaze with Meles Zenawi in Ethiopia; and by Charles Cullimore and Edward Clay with Museveni in Uganda. They all had easy, direct access at the top and could speak frankly as necessary.

Not all of our Heads of Mission enjoyed such easy access at the top even in Commonwealth countries. Neither Mugabe in Zimbabwe nor Babangida and Abacha in Nigeria nor Banda in Malawi were willing to see our High Commissioners regularly and on request. In Ghana, in his first few years as President, Rawlings saw Arthur Wyatt, my predecessor as High Commissioner, a good deal; but I and my successor had difficulty in getting access to him. This followed a pattern evident elsewhere. Early in the term of a President, he might

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be more interested in direct contact with a British diplomat. Later this might change. Moi in Kenya was the main exception. His door remained open to successive British High Commissioners. In most non-Commonwealth countries, where there was a resident British Mission, access was surprisingly easy. In addition to Ethiopia and Mozambique (see above), Meg Rothwell in Ivory Coast and Peter Smith in Madagascar enjoyed a good personal relationship with the President. The main exception was Zaire where Mobutu was not in the habit of receiving our Ambassador.

While on the subject of visits to and from Britain, I ought to mention here my own visits as AUSS. I made 42 visits to 27 countries, thus more than one visit to some countries. I undertook these as a way of learning about my parish and keeping abreast of developments. I also wanted to see our Ambassadors and High Commissioners at work so that I could write the annual personal appraisal of their performance that was required by the FCO's Personnel Departments.

But my visits also helped in promoting our objectives in Africa. Those of our Heads of Mission who themselves had easy access to the Head of State were usually able to introduce me to him as well as to key Ministers, including the Foreign and Finance Ministers. In this way and on other occasions I met most of the African Heads of State in countries with a resident British Missions, except for Babangida and Abacha of Nigeria, Mobutu of Zaire, Mugabe of Zimbabwe, Banda of Malawi and Nujoma of Namibia. Some of those who I did not call on in the course of my own visits, I met on other occasions, including Mandela, De Klerk and Rawlings. Most of these calls gave me an opportunity to press home at the top level British messages on the importance of democracy and good government (which I define below), domestic political reconciliation and the conditions we were attaching to our aid programmes (again see below). I gave the same messages to the many senior African ministers from all over the continent who I saw on their visits to London.

The most powerful tool available to us in furthering British aims was the aid programme. Even then, long before David Cameron raised our aid to the UN development target of 0.7% p.a. of gross national income, Britain was spending hundreds of million pounds in Africa, mostly in Commonwealth countries. In 1992/3 about 40% of our world-wide bilateral aid - more than £500 million - went to African countries. Some of this was direct balance of payments financial aid; and some was programme aid to specific projects or sectors especially health, education and communications. Increasingly we were linking the

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provision of this aid to the political and economic performance of the recipients. I shall say more of this below.

In addition, Britain was a major contributor to multilateral development organisations, which also treated Africa as a priority. The European Community's aid programme to sub-Saharan Africa for the period 1990–95 amounted to £7.6 billion. The British share was £1.25 billion. How best to ensure that this aid was spent wisely and in accordance with British objectives was a growing preoccupation.

Most of our bilateral aid was under the direct authority of the Overseas Development Administration headed by Lady Chalker. But a small proportion was delegated to Heads of Mission and me as AUSS to spend on projects and gifts in support of our political objectives. For example, my AUSS budget funded the purchase of computers for Nigerian political parties, thus demonstrating our support for multi-party rule. In Ghana, the High Commissioner's local gift scheme funded some desk-top publishing equipment for the production of Ghana's Hansard, in this small way illustrating our support for Parliament. Usually we were able to generate useful local publicity for our gifts and their political purpose.

The British Council was another valuable tool in our armoury. Its provision of libraries, UK scholarships, English language training and the administration of donor aid programmes (not only Britain's) were popular throughout Africa and helped promote British values and interests. Although the Council was autonomous and took its own decisions on what to do and where to do it, both the Diplomatic and Development wings of the FCO had opportunities in London to express views on the matter, as did our High Commissioners and Ambassadors in the field. For a small example, in Ethiopia, I seem to recall that it was on the recommendation of our Ambassador that the Council organised an Open University MBA course for President Meles Zenawi; and I also remember the President asking me if some of his Ministers could be included in the course. Here was an original way of encouraging good administration at the most senior level.

Even more important was the role of the Ministry of Defence and of Britain's armed forces. We avoided contributing troops to UN peacekeeping forces; but we sent a battalion to Angola in 1995 to provide logistical support to the UN peacekeeping forces. And we provided regular military training for the forces of Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone and the Gambia in West Africa; Botswana, Lesotho

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and Swaziland in the south; and Mauritius in the Indian Ocean. In some of these countries the training was provided by a resident British Military Advisory Team (BMAT) and in others by one-off training visits. Their value lay not only in providing specific military training but also in teaching African soldiers their functions as servants of the State and guardians, rather than rivals, of the civil power. And, incidentally, our trainers were able to provide Britain with useful information on the local armed forces and individual officers.

One of the most successful British military training operations was in Nyanga in eastern Zimbabwe. There we established a small camp where we provided training for 540 Mozambican army instructors from both sides in Mozambique's civil war: FRELIMO and RENAMO. The theory was that, if you put soldiers of any nationality in front of a British NCO, they would combine in united terror of his ferocity. In December 1993 I accompanied Lynda Chalker at her review of the men before they returned to Mozambique to train the new, integrated, Mozambican Army. The degree of integration that had been achieved after only ten weeks' training was remarkable. I asked the first soldier I met whether he was from FRELIMO or RENAMO. His answer was "I am a Mozambican soldier": text book stuff. Equally encouraging was the presence of a General each from the opposing sides who stood either side of Lynda Chalker on the saluting base. The effect was a little spoilt by the empty flag pole opposite them between the Union Jack and the Zimbabwean flag. RENAMO had vetoed the use of the Mozambican flag because it was associated in their minds with FRELIMO.

We also provided police training with similar objectives including in Nigeria, Ghana, Ethiopia, Namibia and Swaziland. I recall Rawlings's enthusiasm for this kind of practical help.

The BBC's overseas service was another very effective means of promoting Britain's voice. I hesitate to include it in a list of the tools of British foreign policy because that would encourage the belief that it was under the control of the British Government of the day, a strong belief particularly in authoritarian states. On the contrary the BBC was of course editorially independent, as I and my Diplomatic Service colleagues never tired of asserting. But its provision of reliable, trusted information, untinged by political bias, indirectly served British interests. For this reason, we believed that the BBC's budget should be expanded to provide stronger audibility and a service more tailor-made to its African audiences. One difficulty was that the FCO itself was responsible for negotiating the BBC's overseas budget with the Treasury who tended to argue that any increase should be funded from savings elsewhere in the FCO budget. Which

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would best serve British interests: another BBC transmitter in Southern Africa or the maintenance of a British Embassy in Antananarivo or Mbabane? Faced with such a choice, I would have chosen the maintenance of an Embassy. In truth, Britain needed both.

Another useful tool was the small budget which paid for our Missions to invite leading figures to Britain where each would be given a programme tailor-made to their interests. We hoped that, by getting suitable journalists, civil servants and others with local influence to Britain, we would be able to improve their understanding of British policy and even to turn them into our friends. I used to see some of these people in my FCO office.

British Policies in Africa

If I had to summarise our policy in Africa during my time as AUSS in a single phrase, it would be "Good Government". In June 1990, Douglas Hurd had made a speech affirming his belief that "good government" went hand in hand with successful economic development: "Economic success depends to a very large extent on effective and honest government, political pluralism and ... observance of the rule of law, freer and more open economies." In a sentence which was much quoted thereafter by British Heads of Mission to explain British policy to their local audiences, "Countries which tend towards pluralism, public accountability, respect for the rule of law, human rights, market principles, should be encouraged. Governments which persist with repressive policies, corrupt management, wasteful and discredited economic systems should not expect us to support their folly with scarce aid resources which could be used better elsewhere".

This theme was taken up subsequently by Lynda Chalker as Minister for Overseas Development. In June 1991, she listed four components of good government:

- sound economic and social policies, free markets and an enhanced role for the private sector, the provision of essential services and curbs on military expenditure;
- competence of government: the need for training to improve administrative capacity;
- pluralistic political systems that are open and accountable, to reduce political interference and corruption, and a free Press;
- respect for human rights and the rule of law.

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There were two aspects to British policy. First, Britain was linking the provision of its aid to a country's performance on "good government". Secondly, it was actively looking for areas in which its aid could make a specific contribution to better government. Help with training to improve administrative capacity and legal systems were two obvious examples of this second aspect.

One important question arose in our definition of "good government", which we never clearly answered. Did the phrase "political pluralism" include multi-party rule? Or did we accept that, in some African circumstances, single-party rule made more sense, particularly given the strong tribal structure of African society. I had never forgotten a remark made to me by P.V. Obeng, Ghana's Prime Minister equivalent in Rawlings's PNDC Government. "Anthony", he had said with a smile, "you must always remember that, when the elders of an African tribe are discussing a course of action, they are free to voice their opinion freely up until the moment when the decision is taken. Then, if they continue to express a view at variance with that decision, they are...**killed**" (said with emphasis). Such a tradition was incompatible with multi-partyism and the right of an Opposition, in a Westminster style system, to criticise the Government.

During my visit to Uganda in February 1995, a Constituent Assembly was discussing the country's new constitution. The most controversial unresolved issue was multi-partyism on which so far Government and Opposition had failed to agree. The most likely outcome was that it would reach consensus (i.e. a two-thirds majority) on postponing multi-partyism for another five years. If the Opposition were to accept such a consensus, Britain's position would be comfortable because it would have been absurd for us to insist on multi-partyism against the consensus. On the other hand, the Opposition might continue to insist on multi-partyism in defiance of a consensus against it. In that case, a confrontation could develop between Government and Opposition with a risk of violence. Britain's position would then be awkward. I did not see how, for example, given our declared position against repression and despite our support for the rule of law, we could condone a Government crack-down on a major Opposition rally, even if it were held in defiance of the law, if it led to police violence. We might then have found ourselves on a collision course with Museveni and his Government.

In the event Museveni stuck to single-party rule until much later; and we fudged our position. But the dilemma remained unresolved both in Uganda and

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elsewhere in Africa. We sometimes insisted on multi-partyism and sometimes not, depending on local circumstances and the general direction that a particular country was taking towards better government. In Kenya for example, in 1991, Britain and other western donors had resolved to withhold further assistance to Kenya for six months pending progress in social and economic reforms. Later that year, President Moi announced his willingness to institute a multi-party system with free and competitive elections in 1992. This suggested that the reforms were triggered or at least accelerated by donor pressure.

An essential part of our policy was to work closely with those of our main western partners with interests and aid programmes in Africa. This meant especially France, Germany and Portugal in the European Union; and the US, Japan and Russia. I held bilateral talks with my opposite numbers in the capitals of all these countries; and some of them came to London also. With the Russian I focussed particularly on Angola and Mozambique where the Soviet Union had developed close relations with many key figures during the civil wars which it had fuelled in the days of East/West confrontation. In addition to bilateral talks with the three EU members, I attended regular meetings of all my EU opposite numbers to concert our African policies.

Britain also worked with all those other international bodies which operated in their respective roles in the continent. These included those of which Britain was a member, especially the UN, the World Bank, the IMF and the Commonwealth; and those of which we were not, particularly the OAU and the various African regional bodies.

The UN became involved wherever there was significant risk of conflict and of course where conflict actually existed. Our UN Mission in New York was the principal means of aligning British and UN objectives and activities. It was at the centre of UN involvement in Rwanda and Somalia, Angola and Mozambique for example. But our local Heads of Mission kept in touch with UN military forces, the UN Secretary General's Special Representatives and other UN figures. And I recall discussions in Kinshasa which I had with Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Representative to Zaire, who was trying to negotiate the formation of an interim government as a way of ending the political stalemate between Mobutu and his opponents. In Maputo I met Aldo Ajello, the Special Representative in charge of UN forces in Mozambique.

In 1994, in the wake of the disasters first in Somalia and then in Rwanda, Britain developed proposals on conflict prevention and resolution. On a visit to Addis

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Ababa in September 1994 I briefed Salim Ahmed Salim, OAU Secretary General, on these ideas. I told him that the Prime Minister would be mentioning them in general terms in his speech in Capetown and the Foreign Secretary to the UN, both a week later. We wanted to cooperate with the OAU in developing our ideas and to ensure that they were consistent with OAU thinking and acceptable to Africa. We might for example, I told Salim, orientate our military training in Africa more towards peacekeeping and help train the OAU's own military secretariat. I told him about a joint UK/Zimbabwean military workshop planned for early 1995. I said another possibility was the creation of logistical bases where equipment could be stored and quickly deployed for peacekeeping operations. Salim welcomed our approach and raised no difficulty with any of our proposals. He was particularly enthusiastic about the idea of logistical bases. I later briefed Moi in Kenya on our ideas. He too reacted positively, welcoming personal consultation.

Our policies on conflict prevention were supported also by diplomatic mediation by our Heads of Mission where opportunity offered. For example, James Glaze's close relationship with Meles Zenawi in Ethiopia enabled him to help mediate between the Government and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) which had withdrawn its support from Meles's transitional government despite having previously collaborated with him in the overthrow of the Dergue. The task of mediation was being carried out by a Contact Group of Western Ambassadors, in which James played a leading part. In the event our attempts at reconciliation were to fail and later the OLF resorted to guerrilla war against the Government, a war they were to lose.

Richard Edis's mediation between the FRELIMO Mozambique government and the Opposition, RENAMO, during the 1994 elections was more successful. Richard was described by the UN's Aldo Ajello as "the principal architect of a real miracle, in keeping the peace process active in the run-up to the elections".

We aimed to work particularly closely with the Commonwealth Secretary General, Chief Emeka Anyaoku from Nigeria, who sometimes played an important role in Commonwealth Africa, particularly at Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings. Lady Chalker, supported by me, did her best to ensure that the Chief's actions accorded with British aims and that, wherever possible, we gave him our support. But he was a force to be reckoned with; and we occasionally found ourselves at cross-purposes, for example in Lesotho where we could not understand the Chief's support for the King.

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I shall have more to say, in chapter 19 below on the Commonwealth, about the Harare Declaration issued by Commonwealth Heads of Government in 1990. This landmark agreement set the Commonwealth on a new course: that of promoting democracy and good governance, human rights and the rule of law, gender equality and sustainable economic and social development. We were able to use this agreed commitment to press our case for good government throughout Commonwealth Africa.

From time to time, the question arose whether we should take sanctions against a particularly objectionable regime. We were careful to do so in the company of as many other western donors as possible. We introduced an arms embargo and visa restrictions against Zaire in protest at Mobutu's repressive and corrupt regime which provided a conspicuous example of bad government. We also banned arms sales, military training and British Ministerial visits to Nigeria in the wake of Abacha's coup; and took similar measures against Strasser's Sierra Leone.

To summarise our policy to Africa: our main agenda was "good government" to which we linked our aid programmes with increasing determination and in close collaboration with other western allies. Our aid gave us real clout and made a significant contribution to the achievement of our political and economic objectives. We focussed strongly on the leadership in each country through the Prime Minister (rarely), the Foreign Secretary (occasionally), Lady Chalker (fairly frequently) and our Heads of Mission in the field (systematically and continuously). I lent my support where I could. Our aim in these personal contacts was to persuade African Heads of State to adopt and support our 'good government' approach. We used our Commonwealth membership to support our objectives.

We encouraged our Heads of Mission to mediate in local conflicts where their intervention might make a difference and could be done without exposing us to charges of interference. We were ready to consider the provision of logistical military support to UN forces but not to take part in UN front-line operations. We provided military training throughout the continent; and we developed proposals to collaborate with the OAU in conflict prevention and resolution. Where it was unavoidable, we introduced economic and other sanctions against the worst regimes. We tailored our policies to give as much support as possible to British firms and citizens working in Africa, through advice, and personal interventions at a senior level.

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The highlights in my time as AUSS (1992 - 1995)

In the grand sweep of history, only two events may be remembered: majority rule in South Africa in April 1994; and the genocide in Rwanda the same month. I have included an assessment of both in my next chapter.

A third event had a big influence at the time: the battle of Mogadishu in October 1993 when 18 US troops were among other peacekeeping forces killed in a UN operation aimed at creating a secure-enough environment for the provision of humanitarian relief to be delivered to increasingly lawless and famine-stricken Somalia. This ended the US's (then) bloodiest overseas military intervention since the Vietnam war. It had the effect of discouraging further US and other outside military intervention in Africa at least during my time as AUSS.

Despite the disasters of Somalia and Rwanda, however, there was a mood of cautious optimism about Africa's fortunes. In many ways they were looking up during my 3 ½ years in London. The end of apartheid and the achievement of majority rule without serious bloodshed not only greatly strengthened British relations with the South African Government but also opened the prospect of South Africa playing a constructive part in the development of Southern Africa. It wasn't completely fanciful to imagine a tide of growing prosperity spreading northwards through the region over the coming decades. That was before President Mugabe in Zimbabwe turned his back on sensible economic and international policies and plunged his country into poverty and turmoil.

Not only were South African fortunes apparently improving; but the civil wars in Angola and Mozambique were drawing to a close as the Cold War ended and the super powers ceased to fight each other in the region by proxy. Meanwhile, throughout the continent, respect for market-based economics and more accountable government was growing. Rawlings in Ghana was not the only African leader to recognise the need to abandon the disastrous socialist policies, and worse, of the past. Museveni in Uganda and Meles Zenawi in Ethiopia were among others who seemed to be willing to follow a more capitalist and democratic path. Sadly these two changed their minds later and became as reluctant as their predecessors to hold free and fair elections and surrender power.

Sub-Saharan African countries fell into four main overlapping categories in the period 1992 - 95. At the top of the class were those countries which were more or less meeting the western donors' "good government" criteria: Botswana,

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Namibia, Gambia (until Lieutenant Jammeh ousted Jawara from office in 1994), Senegal and Mauritius.

In the second rank, were those who seemed to be moving, albeit slowly and hesitantly, in the right direction but who the donors were pressing to do better: Kenya, Zimbabwe and the Ivory Coast.

Thirdly were those who were in transition, and making progress, from authoritarian, repressive regimes and badly managed economies towards more representative governments, plural societies and sound economic policies. This list was longer and included Lesotho, Swaziland (perhaps), Malawi (after Banda's fall in 1994), Zambia, Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia and Eritrea, Cameroon, Ghana, Madagascar and the Seychelles. In all of these, the donors were also encouraging better performance.

Next came those countries emerging from civil war and political crisis: most important of all, South Africa, but also Angola and Mozambique.

Five countries were clearly going in the wrong direction: Sierra Leone, Zaire, Rwanda, Somalia and - most distressing of all given its size and importance - Nigeria. Of these Rwanda and Somalia suffered disaster.

It wasn't difficult to identify the main ingredients of success, although there might be room for discussion of the extent to which each factor was a cause or consequence of success. My own conclusion was that the single most important pre-condition of success was good leadership. It was this above all which led to 'good government', political stability based on accountable (preferably multi-party) rule, sound economic policies, successful reconciliation after civil war, donor support including debt forgiveness or re-scheduling. And, although good leadership could not of course take the credit for the material resources of their countries nor for fair world commodity prices, bad leadership was certainly to blame for the desperate plight of some countries richly endowed with material resources, for example Nigeria (with its oil) and Zaire (minerals). Equally, good leadership could help compensate for their lack, as in Mauritius and Malawi. Where good leadership and material wealth coincided, as in Botswana (diamonds), the results were impressive.

The main obstacles to success were equally obvious. To a large extent the main factors were simply the converse of the ingredients of success I have enumerated. Top of the list came bad leadership. This was usually accompanied

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by corruption and often followed domestic military intervention, as in Nigeria, although there were even more examples of civilian misrule for which the armed forces were not responsible. There were other obstacles, however, with which good leadership had a harder time in coping: excessive population growth, illiteracy and poor education, disease (malaria and AIDS to name only two), and strong tribal and racial tensions (as in Nigeria, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Kenya and South Africa). An important factor over which nobody had any control was the weather. Drought could wreak havoc with the best laid economic plan.

A further problem difficult to cope with was the existence of the wrong borders: Lesotho and Swaziland (which might have done better within South Africa); Gambia and Senegal (in a single entity); Togo (in Ghana); Ethiopia and Eritrea (whose borders had led to civil war followed by separation); Nigeria and Zaire (both of which owed much of their instability to their colonial borders).

The root cause of Africa's border problems lay in the Nineteenth Century with the rivalries of the colonial powers. But it was an open question what would have happened if the colonialists had never arrived. Would there have been perhaps literally thousands of independent tribes each within its own political borders? Or would those tribes have come together in three or four empires or federations? Or something in between? And, whatever the outcome, what would have been the effect on the quality of government, of economic management and of individual well being? Such intriguing questions lie well outside the scope of this memoir.

I have referred above to economic management and mismanagement. These were critical factors in determining the fortunes of all African countries, as elsewhere in the world. And, as elsewhere, the classic economic policy errors were well recognised. Corruption, excessive public expenditure, including a swollen civil service, monopolies, nationalisation and hostility to the private sector, an overvalued currency and state subsidies were all too familiar ills throughout the continent. The structural adjustment programmes of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, so strongly supported by the donors, were aimed at correcting these ills. Our diplomatic missions took every opportunity, in public speeches and private meetings, to press this agenda. And wherever I travelled, I found myself arguing the case for "adjustment", along with its accompaniment of "good government", with Presidents, Ministers, Opposition leaders, business communities and the media.

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Countries to which Britain paid little attention

Of the 45 Sub-Saharan Africa countries, for which I became responsible in 1992, Britain did not have resident diplomatic missions in 19 of them. With the opening of a small mission in Rwanda in 1994, this number fell to 18. Of the original 19, I had visited Liberia as a Private Secretary in 1971; visited Togo as non-resident Ambassador several times from 1989 to 1992; visited Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger as a tourist in 1990; spent a few hours in Somalia as AUSS in 1992 and visited Rwanda as AUSS in 1995. I never visited the remaining 12 countries: Burundi, Djibouti, Guinea-Conakry, Guinea-Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Cape Verde, Benin, Gabon, Sao Tome and Principe, the Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo (Brazzaville) and Chad. All these countries were visited from time to time by the non-resident British Ambassador responsible.

So it could be said that Britain was in touch with every African country; and could, if necessary, intervene diplomatically in their capitals. I therefore doubt very much if British interests suffered seriously from our incomplete coverage. But the fact is that we knew less about Africa in the 1990s than we had earlier when our network of resident missions included Somalia, Liberia, Mali, Burkina Faso (or Upper Volta as it used to be), Niger, Togo and Gabon. The list may not be complete. I don't know which other countries outside Africa had a more complete coverage and deeper knowledge in the 1990s: probably France, the US and conceivably Germany. We sometimes used to rely on their expertise and influence to make good our weaknesses.

General reflections on my time as AUSS Africa

At this point, I want to stand back and summarise my general reflections on my job as an AUSS.

In some ways it was the best job I had in the Diplomatic Service. It gave me an opportunity to make a difference, both in the region for which I was responsible and in the FCO itself. It wasn't an easy job. Indeed it was both professionally difficult and at times I found it very stressful, although nowhere near as stressful as the jobs of some of my AUSS colleagues. The run-up to majority rule in South Africa, the genocide in Rwanda, successive crises in Nigeria and elsewhere presented unexpected and formidable challenges for British policy and policymakers. I occasionally found myself near the centre of events which attracted close attention from Ministers, senior officials, the press and the public.

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I used to remember the words of a head of department in which I once worked: "Shaving in the morning I looked at my reflection in the mirror and wondered if today was the day when I would be found out".

It was important to keep in mind the wider context of British foreign policy in which Africa played only a small part. For this, my attendance at the Permanent Under Secretary's half-hour meeting, held daily at 10.30 a.m, was invaluable as well as fascinating. It provided a daily opportunity for each AUSS in turn to report anything of importance in his/her parish. Often I had nothing to report. But two or three times a week, there was something in one or other parts of Africa worth mentioning. I needed to make sure I was reasonably well-briefed and to keep my remarks short and pithy. But most of the interest for me lay in the reports made by my colleagues, particularly on such matters as the EU, the Balkans, China and Russia. The PUS, first David Gillmore and then John Coles, was always meticulous in allowing everyone to have a say if he judged it of enough interest to the rest of the room.

Winning the confidence of Ministers, senior officials, my Heads of Department in London, my opposite numbers in the Overseas Development Administration and British Heads of Mission and their staff in the field, was vital. For this, travel was essential, mainly in Africa but also to the capitals of our main international partners. It gradually built up my first hand knowledge of the continent and enabled me to speak with growing confidence as the months went by. And, as my own self confidence grew, so also did the confidence placed in me by others, and so also did my satisfaction in the job.

It was also essential to keep in touch with British business head offices in Britain and helpful to do so with outside experts, including in the university world and the Press. I needed to underpin these personal contacts with as much background reading on Africa as possible. In retrospect, I should have done more such reading and also spent more time talking to outside experts. But time was not always on my side. I would spend from 0830 to 1830 each day at my desk and take home work most evenings and at weekends. Often I would use the weekend to begin and/or end an overseas trip so as to maximise the time available in the field. If I returned home on a Saturday, I would use the Sunday to write my reports on each country visit. My 3 ½ years in the job were utterly absorbing and enormously rewarding. I could not have done it without Veronica's understanding and support.

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In 1994 I applied for appointment as High Commissioner to Nigeria in succession to Christopher MacRae who had been transferred to Pakistan. Given my African experience and as the AUSS, I was confident of success. The Number 1 Promotion Board's decision to appoint Thorold Masefield (then High Commissioner in Dar Es Salaam) to Nigeria therefore came as a surprise and disappointment, although I had a high opinion of Thorold himself. It meant that I would remain as AUSS for another 18 months and eventually be appointed elsewhere - to my later delight. I was told that the Secretary of State didn't want a change of AUSS (Africa) at such a critical moment in South Africa's approach to majority rule. The moral of this saga is either: "one shouldn't count chickens....."; or "It's an ill wind that blows no good". Perhaps both.

CHAPTER 12

MIRACLE IN SOUTH AFRICA, CATASTROPHE IN RWANDA AND AN AFRICA FUNERAL, 1992 - 1996

I have had difficulty in deciding which of the tours I made to Africa during my time as AUSS I should cover in this memoir. But here I limit myself to only two: to South Africa because of its importance to Britain's material interests; and to Rwanda because of the 'genocide.' I have also included a funeral.

South Africa 1814 to 1992

This is not the place for a history of South Africa, But some of the the major turning points are worth bearing in mind.

In 1814 the Dutch ceded the Cape to Britain at the end of the Napoleonic wars. It thus became part of the British Empire.

In 1910 Britain granted nominal independence to the Union of South Africa, incorporating the British colonies of Cape Province and Natal and the former Boer Republics of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal. Initially the Cape was permitted to keep a restricted version of its traditional voting franchise, under which mixed race ('coloured') and Black South Africans could vote if they met the same education and wealth criteria as whites. The Cape franchise was later abolished, leaving only whites able to vote.

In 1931 the Statute of Westminster abolished the last powers of the British Government and gave South Africa full sovereignty.

In 1948 the white National Party was elected to power and imposed apartheid.

In 1990, after increasing internal resistance and international condemnation, including economic and military sanctions, the National Government lifted its ban on the African National Congress, released Nelson Mandela from Robbin Island, where he had been imprisoned for 27 years, and began a process which was to end with the abolition of apartheid, and the introduction of majority rule.

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South Africa

March 1992

On leaving the High Commission in Ghana in March 1992, Veronica and I took the direct Ghana Airways flight from Accra to Harare so that I could learn something of South Africa at first hand before taking up my new job as AUSS.

This was my first proper visit to South Africa. In the 1970s, Britain's decision to avoid ministerial contact meant that Lord Lothian had done no more than transit the country on his way to Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. In 1992 I met a wide range of people of all colours in Pretoria, Johannesburg and Capetown. Discussion was dominated by the referendum campaign in which President de Klerk was asking whites (only) to vote on whether he should continue the constitutional reforms he was negotiating with the African National Congress (ANC) and other parties and which were ultimately to lead to the lifting of apartheid and, two years later, majority rule. Pessimism about the result seemed to be growing daily. I was later puzzled by this, given the 68% 'yes' win on 17 March. Veronica's stepmother Bunty later reported from Hermanus that the town was "in an uproar" on referendum day. She meant by this that there were long orderly queues of mostly elderly white South Africans snaking across the town square for each polling booth. Some uproar.

There was another feature of discussion which might have misled the observer: how to reconcile the political ambitions of the black majority with the whites' determination to remain in ultimate control. I recall vividly being told by de Klerk's chef-de-cabinet, Dr Jannie Roux, that de Klerk's intention was to **share** not **abdicate** power, a point repeatedly being made in London by the South African Ambassador and visiting South African Ministers. It was clear that, at that stage, the two sides remained far apart on that fundamental point. This helps to explain the agonies we went through in London over prospects for a peaceful transition to majority rule.

Visits to Alexandra township in Pretoria and to the black townships outside Capetown brought home to me the immense gulf between white rich and black poor. The races were living in different worlds; and the black world was largely unknown to the white. I remember the story of a British Embassy official telling white South Africans at a dinner party of a visit he had made that morning to the township of Khayelitsha, outside Capetown, and of their incredulity that he had been able to do so safely. His land rover with its Union Jack was well known in the township because of his regular visits to the Embassy's micro projects in

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boys clubs, health clinics and schools. Nobody could say how resources could be found to close the gap between rich and poor and meet rising aspirations in post apartheid South Africa. On the other hand the 'coloured' townships of Mitchell's Plain and Hanover Park outside Capetown were surprisingly affluent.

Like other visitors before me, I was greatly impressed by the depth and extent of the Embassy's contacts with black and white, government and opposition, alike. Relations with the ANC seemed particularly effective. Our aid programme in the black townships was giving Britain both access and credibility. I was also struck by the extent to which the Embassy was able actively to intervene in internal South African affairs. Had I tried to do the same in Ghana, Rawlings would have insisted on my withdrawal. I left wondering if we would be able to continue to intervene in the same way in future and concluded that this would depend on whether the various interests in South Africa continued to need our support. I have no doubt that the role we played during apartheid helped nudge the National Party towards the agonising (for them) decision to hold elections.

The contrasts were what struck one most, then as now: the manicured elegance of Stellenbosch compared to the corrugated iron hovels of Khayelitsha; the sophisticated, liberal attitudes of the Democratic Party against the Old Testament certainties of the Conservatives; the familiar (to me from Ghana) uninhibited African warmth and vitality of a man like "Terror" Lekota of the ANC compared to the cerebral detachment of white DFA officials.

I have a vivid memory of going with the Foreign Secretary, Douglas Hurd, in an RAF VC10 on a visit to South Africa and Kenya and by Hercules to Somalia, in September 1992, during the UK Presidency of the EC, barely six months after starting my new job as AUSS. Hurd was accompanied by the Danish and Portuguese Foreign Ministers. Together they formed the EC Troika i.e. from three succeeding Presidencies. The aim was to offer EC support for the South African political process. With my fellow Danish and Portuguese Directors of African affairs and other officials, the Troika needed its own Government plane. The Danish party joined us in England (Brize Norton, I seem to remember); and we picked up the Portuguese in Lisbon before a night flight to Johannesburg via Ascension Island to refuel. The RAF crew didn't bother to disturb us on landing there, as we slept higgledy-piggledy wherever we could stretch out including on the floor.

My chief memory of a crowded 24 hours or so in South Africa, meeting many of the main players, was of Hurd instructing his officials, as he was going to bed at

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about midnight, to devise a political initiative overnight to get Buthelezi to commit to participation in a transitional government. Unsurprisingly, we did not come up with anything worth while, any more than anyone else had so far succeeded in accommodating Buthelezi on acceptable terms.

My next visit to South Africa was in December 1993, just over four months before the elections. I wanted to bring myself up to date before the elections brought South Africa to the top of Ministers' agenda in Britain. Tony Reeve, the Ambassador, and his staff had organised calls for me on a fascinating cross section of political opinion in Pretoria, Johannesburg and Cape Town. I came away with a feeling of optimism that generally credible elections would be held on the due date of 27 April 1994, and that a Government of National Unity, headed by Mandela, would then successfully take power. I met nobody who believed that any of the likely threats to this happy outcome could abort the political process. But threats there obviously were. I thought that the worst ones came from five main directions.

One obvious threat came from Afrikaaner right wingers. Prospects for success in the talks that were taking place between them and the ANC on how to satisfy their political ambitions looked poor. So right wingers were going to have to choose between acquiescence in the new transitional constitution and violent opposition. Most of them would probably opt for a quiet life because they had an economic stake in peace. But some, perhaps only a few, might well resort to violence to try to disrupt the elections. This could include political killings, attempts to provoke further violence in the townships, attacks against economic installations like electricity supply stations and possibly even attempts to take over small towns. Although they might get some support from sympathisers within the police and the army, the bulk of these would obey their leaders who would remain loyal to the government. I concluded that there would not be a major insurrection. So the worst that the right wing could do would not be enough to derail the process. And the longer they delayed any challenge, the less likely one would become.

The threat from Chief Buthelezi of the Zulus and his Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) looked more serious. Buthelezi himself was behaving like a bear with a sore head, resisting all appeals to show flexibility in his attempt to win greater autonomy for the Zulu nation by making common cause with right wing Afrikaaners. Optimists believed that under him the IFP would reach agreement with the ANC and the Government on some compromise under which it would join the process and participate in elections. Gloomier observers thought that

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Buthelezi himself might resign and/or the IFP might split, with probably a majority taking part in elections and the minority resorting to further violence. The pessimists feared that agreement would prove impossible; the IFP would boycott the elections and try to invalidate them by provoking violence in Natal and in as much of the rest of the country as possible with the aim of winning better political terms or, at the extreme, forcing KwaZulu-Natal's secession. My own instinct was that secession itself seemed far-fetched; and that the worst that might happen was something to call in question the elections in Natal, where serious violence might break out. In that case a new Government of National Unity would presumably want to try to organise fresh elections in the region, perhaps after a further effort to reach a political accommodation with the IFP. But my conclusion was more optimistic. I found it hard to believe that a majority of the IFP would stand aside from the country's first multi-party elections; and that, in the last resort, Buthelezi would not cave in.

I met many who feared, most of all, the threat of political assassinations. There had already been some. But the worst nightmare was the murder of Mandela himself. If this were to happen, appalling violence would be unleashed. Neither he nor his principal lieutenants were adequately guarded. And even President de Klerk was not out of a fanatic's reach. I tried to persuade myself that even the assassination of a major figure was unlikely now to halt or divert the process and that it might even give fresh impulse to the present momentum. But nobody could be sure.

Theoretically the process could still be endangered by a breakdown in the relationship between the ANC and the Government. This had so far been the key to progress. For example, the two sides might collide in the Transitional Executive Council over control of the Defence Forces or the police. A clash of this kind in the run-up to the elections was more than likely. But it would probably not be serious enough to prejudice the elections themselves. The relationship between the two sides seemed now to be too firmly based. Whether it would last the full five years of the Government of National Unity (GNU) was another matter altogether.

Underlying each of these threats was the danger of violence. Everybody I spoke to expected an increase in the present level, even if they disagreed over its likely source. At the time, in 1993, it was concentrated in Natal and the East Rand and was less bad elsewhere than a year previously. The local community peace structures, supported by international peace observers, were much stronger than they had then been and had helped contain the violence. They would continue

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to play an essential part in keeping the peace as would the presence of international electoral observers. Alexandra was perhaps the best example of a township which had rolled back the violence. I visited it once again and saw some of the Embassy small-aid projects including a cricket ground (where I first met Thabo Mbeki, eventually to become Mandela's successor as President). I also attended a Sunday morning service in Soweto with John Doble, our Consul General in Johannesburg, who drove us there in his official Jaguar. He introduced me formally to the congregation. We were the only white people present.

At the end of my own December 1993 visit I joined Lady Chalker for two days as she called on more senior figures, including Buthelezi. My conclusions after reaching home were that, even if none of the likely threats to the elections and a successful transition to majority rule materialised, the dangers would not end with the elections. Violence and the threat of non-constitutional challenge to the GNU would remain serious hazards to stability in South Africa. Most people I spoke to expected a decisive but not landslide ANC victory, with de Klerk's National Party coming second. But, if the ANC were to achieve a landslide and were then to succumb to the temptation to ignore white minority concerns; or if the National Party were beaten into third or even fourth place by the unexpected success of the Afrikaner right wing or the Zulu IFP, the Government of National Unity would be more fragile, the risk of extra-parliamentary opposition worse and prospects for political stability darker.

Four months after my 1993 visit, elections were held, on 27 April 1994. The ANC won a decisive majority, power passed to a Government of National Unity under President Mandela and South Africa rejoined the Commonwealth. In September 1994, John Major visited the country, accompanied by David Wright, the Deputy Secretary for Africa and the Middle East. I was disappointed not to be in the party; but still more disappointed not to go when The Queen paid Her own visit in March 1995. But I was probably more useful in London keeping an eye on British interests in the rest of Africa.

The ANC won the 1999 general election and Thabo Mbeki succeeded Mandela who retired (dying in 2013). Mbeki was re-elected in 2004 but was ousted by his rival, Jacob Zuma, who won the elections of 2009 and 2014. He faced increasing criticisms from within and outside the ANC on grounds of corruption and incompetence. In 2017 he dismissed his widely respected Finance Minister. This led to South Africa's credit rating being cut to junk status. He was replaced as President by Cyril Ramaphosa in 2018.

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Rwanda 1916 to 1994

Rwanda and Burundi, known as Ruanda-Urundi, was under Belgium rule from 1916 until 1962 when Ruanda was separated from Burundi and gained independence. In 1963 some 20,000 Tutsis were killed following an incursion by Tutsi rebels based in Burundi. Fighting between the two ethnic groups continued intermittently over the next three decades. In 1973, the Hutu, Juvénal Habyarimana, took power in a military coup.

In 1990, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), a rebel group of nearly 500,000 Tutsi refugees, led by Paul Kagame, invaded northern Rwanda from their base in Uganda, initiating the Rwandan Civil War. A cease-fire ended on 6 April 1994 when Habyarimana and Burundi's President, Cyprien Ntaryamira, were killed in a rocket attack on their plane. Habyarimana's death triggered an organised campaign of violence, mainly by Hutus against Tutsis and moderate Hutus. About 800,000 people were killed. Hutu militia fled to Zaire, taking with them around 2 million Hutu refugees. France intervened militarily to protect the retreating Hutus.

The RPF took over the country. Kagame became Rwanda's de facto leader, initially as Vice President and Minister of Defence from 1994.

A UN Mission from 1993 to 1996, originally intended to aid the peace process between the Hutu-dominated Rwandan government and the RPF, was regarded as a major failure. In 2014, the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, said in a speech in Kigali that the UN was still ashamed over its failure to prevent the 1994 genocide.

Rwanda February 1995

The Rwandan so called 'genocide' of April 1994 has continued to haunt me. Should the UN have intervened more effectively? Why did Britain and other members of the international community, notably France and Belgium, not try to prevent the killing, either as part of a UN force or separately? I have been asked a couple of times in my retirement by journalists/writers if I would be willing to talk to them about that terrible time. But I have declined on the grounds that I considered myself still bound by the Official Secrets Act and that, in any case,

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without consulting the archives, I could not rely on my memory alone to comment.

What follows does not answer the key questions likely to interest enquirers. All it does is to provide some of the context to British policy on Rwanda at the time; give an account of my only visit to Kigali, in February 1995 i.e. nearly a year after the “genocide”; and record a few specific memories. I cannot be sure of their accuracy.

In April 1994 memories were fresh of the so-called Battle of Mogadishu in October 1993, in which 18 US soldiers and hundreds of local Somali militia had died. This disaster provided a bad precedent for UN/international intervention in African trouble spots; and above all would make further active US intervention politically impossible. This and other demands on our time and resources in Africa, above all the run up to majority rule in South Africa - to say nothing of other events in e.g. Bosnia - monopolised international attention. The South African elections took place on 27 April 1994, three weeks after the killing in Rwanda started. This all helps to explain, if not to excuse, the failure of the international community to act.

More importantly, at least as a reason for Britain’s decisions on Rwanda, was the simple fact that Britain had never had a historical interest in this ex-Belgian colony which had always, until then, been treated as part of francophone Africa. We had not had a resident embassy there and, at the time of the Rwandan Civil War, our interests in Kigali were looked after through non-resident representation from Kinshasa, nearly 1000 miles to the west. Unsurprisingly we knew very little of what was going on in Rwanda and were content to leave the place to others, notably the French and Belgians. We focussed our attention and limited resources on the countries of the Commonwealth, South Africa, a few of the more important francophone countries like Zaire, Ivory Coast and Senegal and, because of their proximity to South Africa, the lusophone countries of Angola and Mozambique.

There has been speculation how much the outside world knew of Hutu intentions to attack the Tutsis in Rwanda before the killings began. My own memory is that there were indeed indications of impending trouble, although I don’t think anyone knew of their likely scale and horror. I have a specific memory of sitting at my desk in the FCO one day, some time earlier, and receiving a telephone call from my French opposite number in the Quai d’Orsay. He said that he wanted to warn Britain of signs that the French Embassy in

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Kigali were picking up of serious impending violence. I cannot now recall the details of his call which I no doubt recorded at the time and which will therefore be available in the archives.

After the genocide and prior to my own visit in February 1995, Lady Chalker herself visited the country on two occasions, accompanied by David MacLennan, Head of African Department (Equitorial), and ODA officials. The Minister naturally saw all the key figures in the new (Tutsi) Government. A major part of her focus was on how Britain could best help the refugees. My own aim in February 1995 was more limited. Having never visited Rwanda, I wanted to get some first-hand understanding of the country, however late in the day this might be. And I needed to discuss future British representation in Kigali. I was met by Edward Clay who had flown down from Entebbe and Dr Lilian Wong, an expert on the region from the FCO's Research Department, who had set up a mini post in Kigali to provide local British representation and to support Edward, our non-resident Ambassador. We were lucky to have such a strong team who were doing a remarkably good job in very difficult circumstances.

Edward and Lilian took me to call on President Bizimungu, Prime Minister Twagiramungu, the all-important Vice President/Defence Minister (Paul Kagame) and a wide range of other senior political and security figures. They all paid handsome tribute to the aid Britain had given since the civil war and remembered Lady Chalker's visits warmly. I formed the following impressions.

The Government was claiming that they were firmly in control of Rwandan territory, but admitted some killings of Hutus by ill-disciplined government troops. At the end of the visit, we drove safely from Kigali via Ruhengeri, close to the Zaire border, to Kampala. The government was discounting any immediate Hutu threat from the external refugee camps in Zaire and anyway seemed confident of countering it. I believed them given Kagame's reputation as a resolute and effective general.

The government also seemed more confident than I had expected of being able to attract back the refugees. They said that 200,000 had already returned. We saw a good deal of fresh cultivation in the fields and a lot of people around Rugengeri, not far from Goma. The government also believed that many extremist Hutu leaders had left the camps and were in exile in France, Gabon, Kenya, South Africa etc. On the other hand Rwandan Ministers were

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contemptuous and suspicious of Zaire who they believed would not be able to control the refugee camps.

Inevitably I heard much criticism of the international community: chiefly of the UN withdrawal in 1994 and its refusal/inability to provide peace-keeping forces in the camps. There was a strong feeling that nobody understood the horror and scale of the “genocide”; and a tendency to argue that “he who is not for us is against us”. Ministers felt beleaguered, isolated, misunderstood. Having been fighting in the bush for five years, they had no experience of international diplomacy nor understanding of how, sadly, the world worked. These feelings could spell trouble for the future. I was asked if I would visit one of the sites of the worst killings; but declined because this would have meant missing my call on Kagame which I considered more important. I still think this was the right decision but it left me open to criticism for lack of interest in the killings. I found a strong wish to distance Rwanda from the francophone world and build closer relations with anglophone East Africa and Britain. The President regretted that Rwanda was not a member of the Commonwealth. I thought they might apply, particularly if Mozambique were to join. They were grateful for our aid so far but wanted more.

I encountered recognition of the importance of national reconciliation and evidence that some practical steps towards it were being taken. But the government resented being pushed by outsiders further than they were yet ready to go. There was very little understanding of the importance of establishing a political process and a dialogue between government and opposition. They said that, first, justice must be done. They had not yet accepted that it would be physically impossible, and self-defeating, to try all those who had helped implement the “genocide”. They were however satisfied with the work of the international tribunal under Judge Goldstone who had made a good impression during talks in Kigali the previous week.

Against this background, the policies of Britain and the international community seemed right to me. Our objectives should continue to be to rehabilitate the economy, encourage internal reconciliation, help deliver justice and encourage the refugees to return to their homes. Progress would be very slow. We would all have to settle down for a long haul and keep Rwanda high up the international agenda.

I saw three particular policy issues which Britain needed to address. They were all related.

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- (1) What position should Britain take on the Rwandan Government's wish to change its international francophone orientation towards the anglophone world?
- (2) How big a part should we play in promoting political stability and economic development in Rwanda?
- (3) How closely should we work with the Government itself?

I thought that our conclusions on these issues should largely determine our decision on future British representation in Kigali. My own preliminary views were as follows.

On (1) I doubted if a closer relationship between Rwanda and the anglophone world would do much for internal reconciliation. It would scare the Hutus. It would also expose Britain to further pressure for more bilateral aid. I argued that it would be better to stand back and leave the French, Belgians and Germans to carry the main burden, leaving us free to give priority to those countries in which, unlike Rwanda, we had direct material interests and experience. The same argument applied to (2). I saw no case for Britain to play a major role in Rwanda itself. But we should continue to take an active interest through the UN Security Council, EU and other multilateral bodies. We should maintain a small bilateral aid programme as had already, at that stage, been agreed by our Ministers. I therefore doubted on (3) if too close a relationship between the two governments would be in British interests. It would arouse expectations which we would not want to satisfy. Better to encourage the French and others to resume their former position as Rwanda's main partners.

On our representation in Kigali, I took the view that we should continue to rely on a non-Resident Ambassador in Kampala supported by an Honorary Consul with some Locally-Engaged staff support. Our High Commission in Kampala might also need reinforcement. Such an arrangement would be cheaper than replacing Lilian Wong with a resident mission of UK-based staff but would be more effective than when Kigali was covered by our Ambassador in Kinshasa, who was too far away to visit regularly.

My negative attitude towards opening new embassies e.g. in Kigali and Asmara was partly justified by a realistic view of British interests but were also a reflexion of the low priority given to Africa as a whole at the time and our other world commitments e.g. the Balkans.

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My advice was not followed. Ministers subsequently decided to set up a resident UK-based mission in Kigali and to build up our aid programme. In due course the Rwanda Government largely succeeded in its aim of gradually joining anglophone Africa. In 2008 Rwanda was admitted to the Commonwealth. I have since asked myself if I was too negative over recommending the opening of new diplomatic missions in Africa. I was influenced by two factors. First I believe my caution was justified by a realistic view of Britain's interests. But, secondly, it was a reflection of the low priority given in British foreign policy at the time - in my view rightly - to Africa as a whole given our other global commitments.

In 2000, Paul Kagame won the first presidential elections since the 1994 genocide. He has won all subsequent Presidential elections, but is increasingly criticised by observers for his repressive rule.

President Houphouet-Boigny's funeral, Yammasoukro, 7 February 1994

My first visit to Sub-Saharan Africa had been to Liberia in 1971 for the funeral of President Tubman. Towards the end of my time as AUSS I attended another funeral in West Africa. Five months after I had visited Abidjan in 1993, President Houphouet-Boigny died. He had been President of the Ivory Coast since independence in 1960. It was decided that the Duchess of Kent should represent The Queen and Lady Chalker the Government at the President's funeral at his ancestral home in Yammasoukro in February 1994. I accompanied the two ladies in an aircraft of The Queen's flight.

The service was held in the Basilica at Yammasoukro, built by the President and reputed to be a few inches shorter than St Peter's in Rome. Its marble and stained glass had been brought from Europe. It accommodated 7,000 guests; but there were seats for many thousands more outside. Meg Rothwell, the Ambassador, escorted us to our seats a full two hours before the service began. We arrived early to ensure we got seats but also because so many Heads of State were due to arrive at the last minute. The most important of these was President Mitterand and a very senior delegation from Paris, including former President Giscard D'Estaing. They came by Concorde. We were told that the supersonic aircraft could hold just enough fuel to reach Yammasoukro and land there without circling the airport. This meant that the French did not want to take off from Paris until everyone else had arrived, to ensure that Concorde was not held up by other VIPs trying to land at the same time. The flight from Paris would take just two hours.

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Each seat inside the Cathedral had its own air-conditioning vent. But they had to be turned on full blast because all the side windows were open to allow those sitting outside to hear the service. The temperature was therefore hot but bearable as we waited interminably for everyone to arrive and the service to begin. The music, including of Handel and Gounod, helped to compensate for our relative discomfort; but in truth I wouldn't have wanted to miss the occasion.

CHAPTER 13

THE COMMONWEALTH: BRITAIN'S HAND OF HISTORY, 1992 – 1995

My AUSS responsibilities included not only Africa but also the Commonwealth. Another AUSS could equally well have looked after the Commonwealth. But the number of its African members and the importance of the South African issue over many years and, to a lesser extent, of Nigeria and other major African countries, had made sense of brigading both Africa and the Commonwealth in the same AUSS command. This meant not that I had any responsibility for Britain's bilateral relations with non-African Commonwealth members; only for the institution itself and questions which affected the whole membership.

For most of the time, I left the Commonwealth Coordination Department to get on with whatever needed doing. The Head of this for most of my time as AUSS was David Broad, an agreeable man with whom I got on well. He wasn't afraid to criticise me if he thought I had got things wrong. One of the few issues in which he was obliged to involve me was the review of the Commonwealth Institute which led to HMG announcing its intention to withdraw funding under the FCO's remorseless budgetary constraints. David and I both thought this a short-sighted decision but were powerless to prevent it.

My own views on the Commonwealth had I suppose been influenced by Grandfather Slater's colonial career. It seemed to me to be a useful but not essential organisation which could help to bridge the gap between the developed and developing world. It could make a contribution to multi-cultural and multi-ethnic cooperation, for example through the Commonwealth Games and the annual Commonwealth Day. I recall attending the annual Commonwealth service in Westminster Abbey and Archbishop Tutu dancing on the pavement outside afterwards in joy at the readmission of South Africa to the Commonwealth.

It could play a helpful political role by bringing pressure to bear on those of its member governments which were, in our view, misbehaving, for example through abuses of human rights or refusal to hold elections. There were also a number of Commonwealth organisations of value to the whole membership. I am thinking particularly of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association which brought MPs together; the Commonwealth of Learning, based in Vancouver which promoted distance learning; the Commonwealth Foundation,

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based in London, charged with promoting closer contact between professional associations throughout the Commonwealth. There were quite close legal contacts which could be useful in strengthening the rule of law where it was weak. And it was valued by some Commonwealth leaders, particularly in Africa, as a channel through which they might make their voices heard.

I doubted if any of these links made a great deal of difference to our bilateral relations with the developed Commonwealth e.g. Australia, Canada and New Zealand because contact would have flourished without the Commonwealth. But they probably helped strengthen our relations with India and the bigger African countries; and they also helped in maintaining British interest in the poorer and smaller Commonwealth members.

Some of my colleagues tended to dismiss the Commonwealth as more trouble than it was worth. For me the main point was that it existed as part of the hand which history had dealt Britain and we might as well make the most of it. Commonwealth membership was not an alternative to the other organisations of which we were members, but added something to our international reach and influence. I had no doubt that, in our place, France would have taken the organisation very seriously indeed, as they did La Francophonie.

Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, Limasoll October 1993

Every second year the Commonwealth took over my life for an unpleasant week or so. As AUSS I attended two of the biennial Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGMs) which were the Commonwealth's most formal political activity. The first lasted four days and took place in Limassol, Cyprus, in October 1993. The second lasted three days in Auckland, New Zealand, in November 1995. Both were unforgettable and disagreeable experiences, although I suppose I must now admit that I am glad to have gone if only to be able to boast about having survived. I should add in all fairness that many of my Diplomatic Service colleagues had even more intensive conference experiences, for example at EC meetings and in the UN, and may even have enjoyed them. But they weren't my scene.

The Queen, as Head of the Commonwealth, attended both CHOGMs in her ceremonial role. In Limassol she stayed on the Royal Yacht, *Britannia*, on which she gave a reception for delegations, including me: one of the two occasions I saw for myself the value of the Yacht in promoting Britain (the second was to be

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in Canada - see chapter 14 below). The Prime Minister, John Major, led the British delegations on both occasions. Douglas Hurd accompanied him to Limassol; but, in the absence of a specific role, wisely made a side trip to the Middle East during the conference. He also had the happy idea of inviting African Foreign Ministers for a round table dinner discussion of African issues while Heads of Government were otherwise socially engaged. I attended this and joined in the discussion, all the more so having met many of the guests on my country tours of Africa. I wished John Major had been able to pay similar informal attention to some of the Heads of Government. By November 1995, Hurd had just been replaced as Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary by Malcolm Rifkind; and so Lynda Chalker went to Auckland to provide the PM with ministerial back-up.

The Permanent Under Secretary (PUS) led the official delegation: David Gillmore in Limassol and John Coles in Auckland. The delegation included two or three other senior FCO and ODA officials to cope with whatever the specific agenda was that year. So it was a high-powered team on both occasions.

The mechanics of the meetings were always much the same. The Heads of Government met formally to discuss their agenda and then spent a day or so in informal meetings at a retreat somewhere out of town. They were not accompanied by any of their delegations. This gave them an opportunity to get to know each other. Officials retired to something called the Committee of the Whole, familiarly known as the Committee of the Black Hole, to discuss what became the communiqué of the meeting.

Theoretically, the communiqué recorded the conclusions of Heads of Government; and so to some extent we relied on reports reaching us from Heads via the Commonwealth Secretariat to compile the communiqué. But many of the subjects in the communiqué were never discussed by Heads. They were included only so that it could be said that they had been addressed by the Commonwealth. So far as I know, nine tenths of both the Limassol and Auckland communiqués were read only by a tiny group of experts in our respective Foreign Ministries and then consigned to the archives never to be consulted again. I shall have more to say about the other tenth below.

Picture a small conference room with some 50 officials seated at an oblong table, each representing a Commonwealth member state. In a second row sat the supporting officials of the larger states. The representatives of the smaller states might have only one or even no supporters. The meeting was chaired by one of

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the two Commonwealth Deputy Secretaries General, either Sir Humphrey Maud, seconded to the Secretariat after a distinguished career in the FCO, or Sir Anthony Siaguru of Papua New Guinea. We worked our way through long drafts circulated by the Secretariat. The process could take all night. The record was held by our final session in Limassol which lasted nearly 24 hours non-stop. Sandwiches were supplied in the conference room. The smell of humanity enriched the atmosphere. The protocol was that the representative of any member state was entitled to speak for as long as he (I recall the presence of no she's, luckily for them) chose on any subject he chose. Thus, at 3 a.m. we listened on one occasion for some 45 minutes to the views on the Middle East of the representative of one small Commonwealth Pacific island. Eventually we emerged bleary eyed with a final draft for submission to Heads of Government for their approval. We then sent our reporting telegrams to our capitals and left for the airport.

David Gillmore attended the entire meeting of the Committee of the Black Hole in Limassol. In London afterwards, the Prime Minister wrote to thank David for the work of the delegation. He included this sentence: "Your own performance in sitting up night after night to negotiate a 74-paragraph communiqué plus a 52-paragraph annex, culminating in a 22-hour session into the final day, was an epic performance which will find its place in the annals of the Diplomatic Service". Wisely John Coles left me in the British seat for much of the meeting in Auckland, supported by the rest of the delegation, while he went off to the gym. He sent me a generous letter afterwards saying "Just a line to say how admirable I thought your performance in Auckland was. Your advice to the Prime Minister was always cool, clear and well-judged. You put in tremendously long hours. I should have felt lost without you. Many thanks. " Handsome words indeed, if not fully deserved.

I now come to substance. The Cyprus CHOGM was not one of the best. It was inevitably dominated by discussion of the Cyprus problem because the Cyprus delegation tried to enlist the Commonwealth on its side in its quarrel with Turkey. After mind-numbing discussions in the Committee of the Black Hole, in which David Gillmore exhibited exemplary patience with the Cyprus delegate, the communiqué reiterated the organisation's "support for the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and non-aligned status of the Republic of Cyprus" and the need for Turkish forces and settlers to withdraw from Northern Cyprus. It urged compliance with United Nations Resolutions on Cyprus. This all sank without trace, leaving the fundamental issues unchanged. But the Cyprus Government was able to boast to its Greek public opinion that it had

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successfully championed their cause against Turkey. More helpfully, the meeting also agreed to lift economic sanctions against South Africa (still outside the Commonwealth) in the light of moves by the South African government to end apartheid and grant voting rights to the non-white majority. But it also agreed to continue its arms embargo until a new multi-racial government was elected. This was fine as far as it went; but probably had little effect on events in South Africa as De Klerk's government inched towards accepting majority rule a year later.

To my personal satisfaction, the meeting agreed to accept Cameroon as a member due to improvements in its human rights situation, but on condition that it fully comply with the Commonwealth Harare Declaration on pluralism and human rights by 1995. This was more or less in line with the recommendations I had made to British ministers after a recent visit to Cameroon and it paved the way for Cameroon's attendance at CHOGM in 1995.

Nothing useful was achieved to encourage Sierra Leone's return to democracy after its recent coup. And all that could be done on the Secretariat's ambitions to develop a declaration on a 'global humanitarian order' was agreement to appoint a group to study how best to promote conflict resolution and human rights. Nor did much of value come out of the meeting's discussions on trade and social issues, except possibly a statement on the latest round of multilateral trade negotiations known as the Uruguay Round.

Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, Auckland October 1995

The 1993 meeting left me with a feeling of mild dread at the thought that I might still be AUSS for the 1995 meeting. And so it proved. But, in practice, although the Auckland CHOGM was as disagreeable an experience personally as Limassol, it was more eventful and achieved much more than I had expected.

In 1993, I had flown out to Cyprus on the PM's RAF plane and recall a briefing meeting with him on the flight when he was his usual friendly self. Otherwise I saw virtually nothing of him. In 1995 I flew out to New Zealand commercially via Tokyo, breaking my journey there for talks on Africa with my Japanese opposite number. But once in Auckland events conspired to bring me in closer contact with John Major.

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The meeting unfortunately coincided with France's decision to conduct a series of six nuclear tests in the Pacific between September 1995 and January 1996. This provoked an angry debate at CHOGM. The PM was obliged to disassociate Britain from his colleagues' condemnation of French nuclear testing. Britain's own nuclear status and its friendship with France took precedence.

The rancour that this difference of opinion might have created was however blown aside during the Heads of Government private retreat weekend by the news of the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight others in Nigeria. A writer and human rights activist, Saro-Wiwa had been condemned to death for four alleged murders. He claimed he was framed by Abacha's Government because of his opposition and that of his Ogoni tribe to the oil industry in the Niger Delta region of southern Nigeria. He said the case against him and his friends was designed to prevent the Ogoni from stopping pollution of their homeland and getting a fair share of oil profits.

This bad news reached me at around 6 a.m. in a call from the BBC in London asking for a comment. Having gone to bed in the early hours in my hotel room, I was woken by the call. I disengaged myself from the BBC and, having failed to make telephone contact, I sped upstairs in my pyjamas to find a private secretary, who had already heard the news. It was agreed that the PM would hold a breakfast meeting to decide on a course of action before he had to leave for the private meeting of Heads of Government. I was invited to attend and spent most of the meal answering questions from the PM as best as I could. I thanked my lucky stars that I had decided to visit Nigeria in October, less than a month earlier, in case Nigeria featured at CHOGM. I was therefore adequately briefed, although had to chase around afterwards to find answers to some detailed questions on the level of British investments in Nigeria. Following the breakfast, the PM described the executions to the press as "judicial murders" and said that he did not see how Nigeria could remain in the Commonwealth. Simultaneously, President Mandela, appearing at CHOGM for the first time, South Africa having been re-admitted to the Commonwealth at the coming of majority rule in 1994, said his delegation would recommend Nigeria's suspension until a democratic government was elected.

That same morning, at the retreat, emotional appeals by, in particular, Mandela and Mugabe and John Major's own backing persuaded Heads of Government to suspend Nigeria from Commonwealth membership despite concerns by some that to do so would infringe Nigerian sovereignty. Heads also decided that, unless Nigeria made progress on fulfilling the Commonwealth Harare principles

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on democracy etc (including the release of political prisoners), within a timetable not yet decided but likely to be two years, Nigeria would be expelled from the Commonwealth.

The dramatic timing of the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and his eight co-defendants during CHOGM itself provoked a much tougher reaction than would otherwise have been obtainable. Not only did it secure the suspension of Nigeria, but it had a similar effect on CHOGM's discussion of the further implementation of the Harare Declaration of 1990 (which had committed the Commonwealth to uphold democracy and good governance). Heads agreed a Commonwealth Action Programme, known as the 'Millbrook Programme' from where the retreat was held. This included a ladder of measures, from technical assistance to punitive action, to support the Harare principles and encourage the restoration of democracy if an elected government was overthrown. It also established a standing Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group to deal with violations of Harare. Its task would be to recommend measures for collective Commonwealth action aimed at the speedy restoration of democracy and constitutional rule. It was agreed that it should comprise the Foreign Ministers of South Africa, Zimbabwe, Ghana, New Zealand, Canada, Britain, Malaysia and Jamaica.

The British delegation expected the Secretary General to convene the Ministerial Group shortly to deal with Nigeria. We should need to consider whether to propose that it should deal also with the Gambia, following the military coup there, which largely escaped CHOGM's attention. Sierra Leone received friendly encouragement for its elections announced for February 1996.

The Secretary General proposed this action programme at the retreat. He had been consulting widely but sporadically for many months and had played his cards close. The outcome owed much to British insistence on the need for a mechanism to ensure more systematic implementation of the Harare Declaration. But for the coincidence of the Nigerian executions, the action programme might not have received endorsement. It had clear potential as a way of promoting Britain's 'good government' agenda, although its details would need working out and the proof of its usefulness would only be in the eating. My successor would have the job of pressing forward at official level, as I ceased to be AUSS shortly after my return from Auckland.

South Africa's return to CHOGM was of course excellent news. This was Cameroon's first appearance. On future membership, Heads requested the

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Secretary General to set up an intergovernmental group to advise on the criteria for assessing future applications for membership of the Commonwealth. We had hoped to get agreement on postponing consideration of Mozambique's membership application until after the group had reported. But neither we nor anyone else was willing to stand up to Mandela and the Heads of other Southern African members who argued strongly for making Mozambique an exception to the more rigorous process we favoured. It was therefore warmly welcomed as the 53rd member of the association. This broke new ground because, unlike all other Commonwealth members, Mozambique, a former Portuguese colony, had no historic connection with the old British Empire. Cameroon, on the other hand, was partly made up of the former British Cameroon. Rwanda was later to become another exception to the general rule.

Otherwise, the Auckland CHOGM included discussion on the usual wide range of subjects. They included British ideas for tackling multilateral debt, money laundering, financial crime and reform of the UN; aid and development; Cyprus, Hong Kong, Fiji, Bosnia and other international issues. As in Limassol, little of value was achieved on much of the agenda. But the British delegation came away feeling that our main objective had been achieved: namely to capitalise on South Africa's return to give the Commonwealth renewed impetus, particularly through promoting 'good government'. And many delegates, in the euphoria habitually induced at CHOGMs by surviving endless discussion and sleepless nights, probably believed that this CHOGM had given the Commonwealth fresh vigour. They could point to the Millbrook Action Programme and the accession of Cameroon and Mozambique. Who, they said, would want to join a moribund club? There might be some truth in this. It was too soon to judge. But at least we now had a better opportunity than for many years to turn the Commonwealth to British advantage.

CHOGM's last action was to accept with much pleasure John Major's offer for Britain to host their next meeting in 1997. In the event it was held in Edinburgh in October 1997 and chaired by Britain's newly elected Prime Minister, Tony Blair. I am glad to say that, by that time, I was High Commissioner to Canada living in Ottawa.

CHAPTER 14

WHAT CAN BRITAIN AND CANADA LEARN FROM EACH OTHER, 1996 - 2000

My appointment as High Commissioner to Canada in March 1996 came as a surprise, to me at least. There would only be time for one full posting before I reached normal retirement age of 60 in 2001. So Ottawa would be my final post. If I had won Lagos in 1994, there would have been time afterwards for another three year posting somewhere else. But where?

One unusual option, which might have become available after Lagos and indeed presented itself after I had spent over a year in Ottawa, was appointment as one of the two Deputy Secretary Generals of the Commonwealth. By tradition, one of these posts was occupied by a British diplomat. One day in 1997 I was telephoned at my desk in Ottawa by the FCO to ask if I should like my name to go forward to Chief Anyaoku, the Nigerian Commonwealth Secretary General, as a possible candidate. The post, based in London, had its attractions. It would have been professionally interesting and demanding. I should have enjoyed working with the Chief with whom I had often dealt in London (assuming he selected me, which could not be taken for granted). The post was not subject to the retirement-at-60 rule. It was probably, although I never asked, well paid. But I had seen enough of the Commonwealth Secretariat from my time as AUSS to be wary. I dreaded the prospect of taking part in any more Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings. And I didn't relish the prospect of the enormous amount of international travel involved. Above all, I was looking forward to the rest of my time in Canada. So I declined. In the event, Veronica Sutherland, an old friend from my time in the Administration in the 1980s, was appointed. She might well, in any case, have got the job even if I had agreed to run for it.

In 1996, I had the option of spending another year as AUSS Africa and then bidding for South Africa when it became vacant in 1997. Given my solid African credentials, I would have had a good chance of being appointed, despite relatively strong competition. But, if I hadn't got Pretoria, it wasn't clear where else I might expect to go in a narrow range of other available jobs. In any case, by 1996, for a mixture of professional and personal reasons, I wanted a change from Africa. Later, particularly after Robert and Raegan moved to live in Johannesburg in 2010, I came to regret my decision not to run for Pretoria. The

more I have seen of South Africa on our visits to the family, the more fascinated I have become.

So, instead of waiting for Pretoria, I threw my hat into the ring for posts available in 1996: specifically Athens, New Delhi and Ottawa. I was told I came close to winning New Delhi; but, unsurprisingly, David Gore-Booth fulfilled his ambition of following in his father's footsteps there and my friend, Michael Llewellyn Smith, rightly won Athens with his more recent and stronger Greek credentials. I was flattered to beat the competition for Ottawa, although my qualifications were not obvious: no experience of the transatlantic agenda, including defence and multilateral trade; and most of my predecessors, as well as my successor, as High Commissioner were senior to me in strict diplomatic rank. I would have big shoes to fill.

My only previous experience of living in Canada was during an Oxford vacation in 1961, when I had got a job for seven weeks as a dining-car waiter on Canadian National Railways. I had been based in Montreal and used to travel between there and Toronto, Ottawa, Winnipeg and Senneterre, a logging town in northern Quebec. I can't claim that this helped much in my new incarnation. But it introduced me to Canada's vastness, to francophone Canada and to the friendliness of all its people. It also amused some of the people I met as High Commissioner.

Africa prepared me poorly for Ottawa. Beginning a new post overseas after working in London was always a shock. On this occasion, the contrast between an Under Secretary's role at the centre of British foreign policy making, with a close-up view of great events as they unfolded, and the job of High Commissioner to Canada, however interesting, would clearly need me to adjust my sights. Indeed the contrast was magnified hugely by the obvious differences in Britain's interests and objectives in democratic Canada, a member of NATO and the G7, and the developing countries of Africa, most of which were authoritarian and many corrupt. Another difference, less obvious but unsurprising, was the ease of access I had enjoyed to most African heads of government and their foreign ministers compared to the difficulty I was to discover in meeting Canada's Prime Minister and Foreign Minister (although not the majority of other Canadian Ministers). Against this background, how best to make a difference in Canada would require techniques and strategies unfamiliar in many ways from my African experience. On top of all these contrasts, my comparative lack of directly relevant experience, noted above, would compound the problems facing me.

Britain and Canada

One thing Canada was not, was dull. I never fully understood why it sometimes suffered among my colleagues from a reputation for dullness. True, there were no coups, rebellions, violent demonstrations or other excitements of the kind. It was prosperous, stable and comfortable: in short, in Prime Minister Chrétien's oft repeated boast, "the best country in the world". But, as this chapter will show, it was far more than all that. Not only had it just suffered, shortly before I arrived, a near fatal political accident in the narrowly avoided separation of Quebec. But it was full of interesting, intelligent, friendly and hospitable people, of diverse origin, not just anglophone and francophone. There were many aspects of its society and government that were worth studying as possible models for application in Britain. Its industries and advanced sciences offered potential partnerships with our own. Its diplomatic and defence resources made it a valuable ally for Britain around the world; but there were enough policy differences between us to keep a diplomat on his toes. And Canada offered of course incomparable opportunities for travel throughout its vast extent. 'Dull' never.

There was another aspect which particularly appealed to both Veronica and me. Veronica's maternal aunt had married a Canadian on secondment to the RAF before World War II. Judd and Elissa Kennedy had brought up four sons at their home in Toronto, where by a happy accident Veronica had lived for two years as a young woman before we met each other. She had remained in close touch with her Toronto family ever since. Elissa had died before we arrived in Ottawa. But Judd and some of Veronica's four cousins visited us in Ottawa. We for our part used to visit all four of them at the lovely island Judd had bought in Georgian Bay after the War; and in their respective homes: in Toronto itself, Oakville and London (Ontario) and in Vancouver Island. These family connexions greatly enriched our lives.

Our children, Eleanor, Nicholas and Robert all visited us in Canada from time to time as they made their way in the world.

Historical Background

Canada's history continues to give Britain a special place in Canadian affections and in modern Canadian life. But this is gradually fading with time, the diminishing proportion of Canadian citizens of British origin and - it should be admitted - Britain's own apparent loss of interest.

To over-simplify, four basic historical facts do much to define modern Canada.

Britain and Canada

First, Britain had prevailed in its rivalry with France during the 16th, 17th and 18th Centuries for dominance in what is now Ontario and Quebec. Remember Wolfe's capture of Quebec in 1760.

But, second, the Quebec Act of 1774 had given special status to the province of Quebec, recognising special French rights of law and religion. Quebec's unique status within modern Canada is the result.

Third, Canada as a whole is a recent creation, achieving full independence from Britain only in the 20th Century. Thus, the Dominion of Canada was formed in 1867. Its first Prime Minister, John A. Macdonald, used to say: "An Englishman I was born - an Englishman I shall die". Incidentally he lived in Earnscliffe, now the residence in Ottawa of the British High Commissioner to Canada. The Statute of Westminster of 1931 made Canada a fully independent state and launched the modern Commonwealth. Some eight million (28%) Canadians are of British stock, with more than half a million eligible for UK passports. Even today, Britain and Canada share a Head of State, on whom I shall have more to say later.

Fourth, Canada fought alongside Britain in two World Wars. Indeed, both in 1914 and 1939 Canada was the first of Britain's allies to come to its support. Canadian troops, including Newfoundland (which did not join the Canadian Confederation until 1949), shared fully in the tragedies and triumphs of both wars - Beaumont Hamel and the Dieppe Raid, Vimy Ridge and the D-day landings. Canadian Army officers served in British regiments in World War II. Canadians provided a quarter of the men for the Royal Flying Corps and RAF Bomber Command (including Veronica's Uncle Judd). The Royal Canadian Navy helped escort the Atlantic convoys. War memorials in Canada, Britain, France and all over the world testify to Canadian sacrifices. The 48,000 British war brides who had met their Canadian husbands in the War kept alive a family connection with Britain for at least two more generations.

The Politics of Canada

I arrived in Canada in the third year of Prime Minister Jean Chrétien's Liberal Government. It had been preceded by the Conservative Governments of, first, Brian Mulroney and then, very briefly, Kim Campbell before her defeat by Chrétien in 1993. The Liberals were to rule throughout my time in Ottawa. They won re-election with a majority of only four seats in June 1997. The Liberals won again under Chrétien in 2000 after I had left Ottawa; and again under Paul Martin in 2004. Martin had been the rather inaccessible Finance Minister while I

was High Commissioner. Thus, Canadian party political rule in my time was in many ways relatively stable at the Federal level; and many of the Ministers I dealt with stayed in their same jobs, including the Foreign Minister, Lloyd Axworthy, but not the Defence Minister who changed after the 1997 election. That election did however see one change with potential implications for federal politics, namely the replacement as the main Opposition party of the Bloc Quebecois (BQ) by the Western based Reform Party.

In provincial politics also, the scene was fairly stable. Throughout my time, the Progressive Conservatives (PC) remained in local power in Ontario and Alberta, the National Democratic Party (NDP) in British Columbia and Saskatchewan, the Liberals in Newfoundland and, most importantly, the Parti Quebecois in Quebec. In only four provinces was there a change of party in power: in Manitoba (from PC to NDP); and in the three Atlantic provinces of New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia (all from Liberal to PC). The territory of the Yukon saw a double change, from Conservative to NDP and then to Liberal, all in less than four years. In the North West Territory and the new territory of Nunavut, created in 1999, non-party rule was familiar to me from my African experience.

I shall have more to say later about Lucien Bouchard, leader of the Parti Quebecois (PQ), who remained as Premier of Quebec from 1996 to 2001. But there was one other change that would have future significance. In 1998 Jean Charest, rather unexpectedly, switched from being leader of the federal Progressive Conservative Party to the leadership of the Quebec Liberal Party in the hope that he would be able to defeat Bouchard in the Quebec provincial elections that year. He failed but went on to lead the Liberals to victory over the PQ in the 2003 elections. His replacement of Bouchard as Quebec Premier would ensure the safety of Canadian unity from the threat of a referendum for the next decade at least. The PQ had lost two referenda in 1980 and 1995. They would only need to win one to change Canada for ever. This single political fact was never far from my mind, as I shall explain later.

British politics, on the other hand, were more exciting. Labour under Tony Blair achieved a large majority over John Major's Conservatives in May 1997 (the month before the Canadian election). Like all our colleagues in the Diplomatic Service, the High Commission in Ottawa had to adjust immediately to the changes in policy of our new political masters. For example, Labour placed a new emphasis on international work on the environment and on the promotion of British values of human rights, civil liberties and democracy. We also had to be sensitive to changes of personality. The impish figure of Robin Cook was a

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notable contrast as Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to his more friendly predecessor, Malcolm Rifkind, one of Britain's most attractive politicians.

Economic Background

In addition to the Quebec issue, the other matter that dominated Canadian political life during my time was the economy. The Liberals had won the 1993 election on a platform of economic retrenchment and recovery. They had inherited from their Conservative predecessors a huge public debt of over 100% of GDP which left Canada at the back of the G7 pack. Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin introduced policies of rigid budget discipline. Unlike David Cameron's Tory Government in 2010, they allowed no departmental exceptions. And by the time I left Ottawa in 2000, they had much to boast about: over 4% annual growth, falling unemployment, low inflation, strong exports, a budget surplus. Despite these successes, Canada's public debt remained dangerously high at over 90% of GDP when my term ended.

British Interests in Canada

As Veronica and I flew to Ottawa in March 1996, I remembered Douglas Hurd's description of Britain's Commonwealth partners: "the hand that history had dealt us". Canada was one of the highest cards in that hand, as an inventory of our interests there shows.

Canada was a firm, reliable and important ally through our shared membership not only of the Commonwealth but, more importantly, of the G7, NATO, the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). We cooperated closely in these organisations and in the United Nations. We had similar global objectives throughout a wide international agenda, including on development issues, climate change, terrorism, drugs, international crime and money laundering. The list was endless. And, if we didn't always agree, our shared membership of these organisations gave Britain all the more opportunity to try to persuade Canada of the merits of our case.

One vital interest was Canada's help over Northern Ireland which was entering a critical phase in the search for peace.

Precisely because of Canada's importance to us, the preservation of Canadian unity was another distinctive and vital British interest.

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British commercial interests in Canada were enormous and came high in my list of priorities.

I shall have more to say later on many of the British interests I have described so far.

Canada was also a key ally in the intelligence field. On this sensitive aspect, I don't intend to say more, except that it gave me a privileged view of Canada's capacities and of the closeness of our relationship.

British Objectives in Canada

By the time I reached Canada, the setting of formal annual objectives by each overseas mission and home department of the Diplomatic Service had become routine. The High Commission's objectives and therefore my own flowed seamlessly from an analysis of British interests. Summarised, they were:

- to reinvigorate bilateral relations;
- to help keep Canada united;
- to encourage Canada to maintain its defence strength and committed to NATO;
- to stimulate trade and investment, including sales of defence equipment;
- to strengthen transatlantic links, especially Canada's relations with the European Union;
- to encourage Canadian support on international issues and on Northern Ireland.

Many of my Diplomatic Service colleagues found the annual exercise of objective setting unnecessary and tedious. Personally I thought it was quite a helpful discipline in helping to keep one's eye on the ball, provided everyone recognised that, when something unexpected and obviously important cropped up, common sense dictated that it might need to be given priority. The exercise could also be helpful in supporting a case for increased resources. For example, the High Commission was able to open a small new office in Alberta to take advantage of new commercial opportunities.

I naturally didn't show these objectives to Canadian Ministers or officials. Some of them may have seemed presumptuous. Most of them were obvious. None would have come as a surprise. I have no doubt that the Canadian High Commission in London had a similar list, either tacit or explicit, of their

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objectives in Britain. Theirs probably included strengthening the Canada/Britain relationship as a bridge to the European Union.

Obstacles?

The High Commission's role in maintaining the bilateral relationship between the two governments was clear. But contacts between families, individuals and organisations were so numerous and close that it was not always obvious how diplomats could best add value outside trade and investment. As I shall explain later, the solution we found to this dilemma was to prove unexpectedly fruitful, at both the governmental and non-governmental levels.

Another potential hurdle was the fact that Canada was heavily overshadowed both geographically in North America and intellectually in the minds of policy makers in London by the proximity of the US. As one looked west from London, Canada was all too easily obscured in the bright glare of its US neighbour. The High Commission and North American Department of the FCO needed to work closely together to ensure that Ministers and senior officials were not so preoccupied by the US/British agenda that they lost sight of the importance of Canada for British interests.

There was in fact a risk that each Government might take the other for granted.

Apart from these general potential obstacles in our relations and occasional policy differences, including on matters affecting trade, there were only a few minor long term irritants. They might be minor in the grand scheme of things; but they mattered greatly to individuals affected. For example, the Canadian government occasionally complained that Britain did not update the pensions of British pensioners living in Canada. And the British Government used to complain that Canada deported British criminals who were long-term resident in Canada without regard to their family circumstances. None of these disagreements was serious enough to affect the atmosphere in which we conducted our overall relationship. But I wish we had been able to find solutions for the sake of the unfortunate people affected.

British advantages and assets in Canada

The formidable advantages and assets which Britain enjoyed in Canada were the envy of other countries.

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The foundation of our strong position were the ties of blood, common values and language that were the legacy of our common history. A shared Head of State also reflected that history and formed a valuable symbolic bond. Canadian interest in Britain was further enhanced both by our global importance and as a gateway to the European Union. For example, in 1998 Britain attracted as much Canadian investment as the whole of the rest of the EU. Other advantages included our shared membership of international organisations, close defence ties and Canadian interest in British arts, music, drama and sport, on which we were able to capitalise with great success.

Practical assets matched these advantages and added to them. There were frequent meetings between Ministers and senior officials, both in London and Ottawa. Our people often called at Ottawa on their way to Washington. No doubt theirs would go on to other EU capitals after visiting London. Only at the top was there an uncomfortable imbalance: in the failure of the British PM to visit Ottawa during my term, while Jean Chrétien went to London more than once. The two PMs did however see each other in the margins of international meetings.

The High Commission in Ottawa was well staffed. My deputies, first Linda Duffield and then Peter Codrington, were senior counsellors who gave me strong support, as did Boyd McCleary and Martin Uden, successively the economic counsellor. A political and information section was ably led first by Patrick Holdich and then Syd Maddicott. There were also, economic, consular and management sections and a Defence Liaison staff led by a Brigadier as Defence Adviser, first Adrian Naughten and then Philip Springfield. Although what follows does not mention everyone individually, nothing that was accomplished could have been achieved without them all. We were very much a team. We were given ready access at every level except, as I have said above, to the Prime Minister, Foreign and Finance Ministers. But their relative inaccessibility did not affect the ease with which intergovernmental business could be done. And otherwise all doors were open to our representatives throughout Canada. We had Consulates General, staffed by Diplomatic Service officers, in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver and, by the time I left Canada, we also had Honorary Representatives in Nova Scotia and Quebec and a trade office in Alberta. The British Council was a powerful asset, particularly in Ottawa itself, as I shall explain later. The BBC was a respected voice throughout the country. There were close military and intelligence contacts; and numerous professional, commercial, non-governmental and personal links.

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A year after my return to Britain, I was invited to speak to the Maple Leaf Club at the Royal Overseas League in London. I talked about the breadth and depth of the bilateral relationship and gave two examples of non-governmental bodies which are so much an integral part of each society that there is confusion over where each body was founded.

Until I had lived in Ottawa I thought that the Woman's Institute had been founded in Britain. In fact it was founded in Stoney Creek, Ontario, in 1897, by Adelaide Hoodless whose fourth child had died at 18 months from contaminated milk. Adelaide had recognised the need to educate families in child health and for an organised way for women to support women. From Canada the WI spread during the First World War first to Wales and later to England. I was invited in 1997 to attend the centenary celebrations of the foundation, held at the theatre in Hamilton near Stoney Creek in Ontario; and to bring greetings from Britain. I had expected a small local gathering and had prepared a short speech which I hoped would suit the occasion, including a mention of my grandmother's chairmanship of her local branch of the WI near Salisbury. I discovered only on arrival that the whole theatre, stalls, dress and upper circles were packed with representatives from around the world: tier upon tier of formidable grey-haired ladies, among whom my grandmother would not have been out of place. I kept my speech short, not least because the guest of honour and main speaker proved to be Roberta Bondar, Canada's first woman in space.

St John Ambulance was another organisation so well-known in both countries that its origins were sometimes mistaken. I had met Canadians convinced that it had been started in Canada and who were surprised to be told that it began in its modern form in Victorian Britain. After I retired from the Diplomatic Service, I became Secretary General of the world-wide Order of St John, of which the Ambulance was one charitable arm. As such I served under first a British and then a Canadian head of the Order, known as the Lord Prior, and used to visit some of the many branches of the Ambulance both in Canada and Britain. The Order, the Ambulance and the Woman's Institute were typical of the many organisations forming part of a common heritage binding us together.

The Monarchy

Canada is one of 16 independent sovereign nations in the Commonwealth, known as Realms, of which The Queen is Monarch and Head of State. Britain is another. Uniquely among the nations of the world, Britain, Canada and the other fourteen Realms therefore share a Head of State.

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In illustration of this shared allegiance, our respective High Commissioners were accredited not to The Queen but to the respective Prime Ministers. I therefore arrived in Ottawa bearing a letter of accreditation from John Major which I delivered to Jean Chrétien at an informal meeting rather than with the sort of elaborate ceremonial which usually accompanied presentation of credentials around the world. I also paid a courtesy call on the Governor General of Canada, who was The Queen's representative in Canada. He represented The Queen. I represented the British Prime Minister. If the more usual diplomatic practice had prevailed, I would have been in the curious position of presenting letters of accreditation from The Queen of Britain to The Queen of Canada: two Queens, one person.

These arrangements illustrated the business-like relationship between the two Governments. Britain and Canada were saying as it were: "We don't need ceremonies. We know each other well enough and are close enough to be able to work together effectively without flummery and formality."

Perhaps the most significant consequence of my diplomatic status was that the High Commission was not involved in the organisation of Royal visits to Canada. These were a matter for Canada. Earlier Canadian Governments had kept British High Commissioners well away from Royal visitors so as to underline The Queen's identity as Queen of Canada. Jean Chrétien's Government was more relaxed. Although we were given no special treatment among the Diplomatic Corps during The Queen's attendance of Canada Day ceremonies in Ottawa in 1997, soon after our arrival Veronica and I had been included in a small tea party given by Chrétien in Ottawa for the Prince of Wales. I was also invited on later occasions to meet both the Duke of Edinburgh and the Duke of York in Toronto.

I persuaded the Canadian authorities to include us in the celebrations to mark the 500th anniversary of John Cabot's 'discovery' of Newfoundland in 1497. The highlight of these festivities was a visit by The Queen. Seated beneath a canopy by the water's edge, She watched a replica of the *Matthew* sail out of a curtain of rain into Bonavista harbour after its Atlantic crossing from Bristol. Initially I had been told that there was no reason for the British High Commissioner to attend given the presence of The Queen who would be representing Britain. The Canadians were kind enough to change their minds when I pointed out that The Queen would be coming as Queen of Canada. Who would represent Britain? Surely, as the British representative in Canada, my presence could be justified in view of the *Matthew's* port of origin. We therefore joined the crowd of Canadian

dignitaries shivering on the shore and later at a lunch where we were given excellent seats close to the Royal table.

The Queen's 1997 visit to Canada attracted large and affectionate crowds. But Canadian interest in the Monarchy was far surpassed in the extraordinary outpouring of popular grief at the death of Princess Diana in Paris. I was telephoned at about 11 p.m, a short time after our return from holiday in the Atlantic provinces, by a High Commission colleague who had heard the news on the radio. The next morning, a Sunday, I set the Residence flag at half mast, to be followed by the lowering of nearby Canadian flags on public buildings. I attended the morning service in the Anglican church when no mention was made of the tragedy. I was invited to sign a book of condolence in, if I remember rightly, the PM's official residence, signing immediately after the PM. Throughout the next week, mourners left flowers outside the Residence, the High Commission office downtown and Deputy High Commission offices in provincial capitals. The pile of flowers in Ottawa was so large that entrance through the office main door became impossible; and, when the Reception staff tried to re-arrange some of the flowers to allow access, one Canadian lady objected out of respect for the Princess. Only the quick wit of the Receptionist resolved the impasse: by offering the lady plenty of hot sweet tea to encourage her occasionally to visit our inside loo, when a passage could be cleared through the flowers and normal entrance resumed. In Vancouver, a huge pile of flowers on the pavement outside the Deputy High Commission grew so great that Brian Austin, the imaginative Consul General, suggested on a radio phone-in programme that citizens might care to remove bunches of flowers as a memento of the Princess. The flowers quickly disappeared as if by magic. The following Sunday I was asked to read one of the lessons at the Anglican morning service. The other was read by the Prime Minister.

After the Princess's funeral, two federal Ministers suggested opening up a public debate on the Monarchy in Canada. This was quickly scotched by the Prime Minister. Although the majority of Canadian public opinion might be apathetic, sections of Canadian society strongly supported the Crown. In any case, constitutional change would have been, and remains, extremely difficult, requiring a majority in each house of the Federal Parliament and in each of the provincial legislatures, including tiny Prince Edward Island where support for the Monarch was strong.

The following year, 1998, Veronica and I were unexpectedly included in a small lunch party at Buckingham Palace given by The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh for M. and Mme. Chrétien on the occasion of their official visit to

London. This was unusual. The Palace had I think cleared our inclusion with the Canadians. I assume that one argument deployed had been that, if the Canadian High Commissioner, Roy Maclaren and his wife were to be invited, so should Veronica and I be. We were therefore present at an occasion greatly enlivened by Roy's reaction to a Royal joke. Sitting on The Queen's left, he leaned back to laugh vigorously when She cracked a joke. His frail gilt chair was not strong enough to bear his weight and began to collapse. Luckily a footman standing behind him was able to whisk the chair away and replace it with another before Roy reached the ground. Nobody blinked an eyelid and the conversation continued seamlessly. Veronica was sitting next to Roy and overheard a lady-in-waiting asking Mme Chrétien what was the language in which she was talking to her daughter who had also been invited. Happily Mme Chrétien's sense of humour did not desert her as she replied "French", in stark contrast to the occasion in 1961 when I had incautiously told a French Canadian customer on Canadian National Railways that I was having difficulty understanding her Canadian French having learned my French in Paris. She had demanded my instant dismissal for my rudeness and I had been obliged to take refuge ignominiously in the galley.

I used to reflect privately on the effect on British interests of sharing a Monarch with Canada. There were certainly downsides. From time to time, inevitably, the Monarchy passed through moments of comparative unpopularity. This could rub off on Britain's own reputation. One such occasion was the immediate aftermath of Princess Diana's death when, just as in Britain itself, public criticism of both The Queen and the Prince of Wales became vocal and even strident. But most of the time, the opposite was true: Britain benefitted from the Monarchy's popularity. Another disadvantage of a shared Monarchy was that the British Government could not use a Royal visit for its own national purposes. Think of the way in which visits by The Queen and other members of the Royal Family were carefully planned and harnessed in the service of British commercial and other objectives in the United States. This was not possible in Canada where Royal visits were very properly designed to support Canadian objectives. So, in this rather narrow sense, it might I supposed be argued that a separate Monarchy would have given us advantages which a shared Monarchy could not. On the other hand, these narrow calculations paled into insignificance when set against the advantages of a sense of shared identity which a single Head of State personified.

The Monarchy, whether shared or not, was inseparable from another powerful tool in Britain's diplomatic armoury: The Royal Yacht *Britannia*. One of her last voyages was up the St Lawrence River to Toronto where potential investors from

all over North America were invited to dinners on the Royal Yacht so as to encourage their interest in investing in Britain. I remember attending one of these dinners and being utterly convinced of the value of the ship in the service of British interests. Even though no member of the Royal Family was present on that occasion, one can't have such a ship without a Monarchy. Sadly the reverse is not true. What perversity to de-commission her shortly after that visit.

Reinvigoration of bilateral relations: The Joint Declaration of June 1997

Against this background, my time in Canada was therefore to be spent in finding the best ways of protecting British interests, achieving our objectives, overcoming the obstacles and making the most of our advantages. Here follow some highlights.

Prior to the General Elections in both countries in 1997, there was a sense of marking time. The Liberal Government of Jean Chrétien could expect re-election; but a Labour victory in Britain was widely expected. Indeed I got the strong impression that Tory Ministers were making the most of travel opportunities before it was too late. We enjoyed visits from Michael Portillo, Malcolm Rifkind, Michael Forsyth and Lynda Chalker to name only a few. (Lynda Chalker was our first visitor. Looking around magnificent Earnscliffe and remembering her visits to our concrete villa in Ghana, she commented, "This is a bit better isn't it, Veronica!" .)

The change of Government in Britain provided a strong impulse to the bilateral relationship. Immediately on taking office, the new British Prime Minister called for a modern, dynamic relationship between Britain and Canada for the next millennium. This went down well in Ottawa and paved the way for the two Prime Ministers to issue a Joint Declaration when they met in the margins of a meeting of the G7 in Denver, Colorado, in June 1997. The Declaration committed both sides to broaden and modernise the range and depth of bilateral ties. I can't pretend that the language was inspiring or even memorable. Unsurprisingly it attracted little public notice either at the time or subsequently. Such things rarely do. But it provided the High Commission with a lever to use both in Ottawa and in London. I could show it to my Canadian interlocutors - Ministers, officials, MPs, leading figures in the private sector - and urge them to devise ways of translating the resolve of the two Prime Ministers into specific action. Similarly in London, the Foreign Office and I could encourage other Whitehall Departments to work more closely with their Canadian opposite numbers and to look for things worth doing together.

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The 1997 Declaration did indeed help galvanise both the public and private sectors in both countries to strengthen bilateral cooperation. By the end of 1998 I could report that formal understandings had been reached on working more closely together in the fields of education, aerospace, science and technology, prison services and law enforcement. The British Council and the National Research Council of Canada had set up a Canada/Britain Science and Technology Fund to support joint projects. Furthermore, unbelievably for the first time, Canada established a Canada/UK Parliamentary Association to organise closer contact with the Westminster Parliament.

Education seemed typical of the kind of cooperation which might be possible. We had a vision of establishing a direct internet link between every British and Canadian school. Year 12 geography classes in Bristol, for example, might be given by a Canadian teacher from Flin Flon Manitoba. School exchange visits should be encouraged in both directions in even greater numbers.

Ministers were getting to know each other and finding value in their discussions: Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defence, Finance, Trade, Development, Environment, Transport, Culture, Education and Public Service. Jean Chrétien paid an official visit to London in May 1998 and invited Tony Blair to visit Canada in 1999.

Throughout 1999, the Joint Declaration continued to provide a valuable framework in which to modernise the bilateral relationship. There were useful contacts between Ministers, MPs, officials and many others which served our objectives across the board. But Ministerial visitors to Ottawa were fewer than in 1998 and included only two Cabinet Ministers, compared to at least six Canadian Ministers to Britain. In June 1999 Chrétien went to Belfast, his third visit to Britain since 1997 to highlight Canada's contribution to the peace process (of which more later). His Chief of Staff commented sourly to me that Mr Blair seemed not to attach much importance to Canada: otherwise he would surely want to visit soon. Blair's absence contrasted starkly with visits to Ottawa by both Presidents Clinton and Chirac.

To magnify the impact of bilateral activities, the High Commission badged our public relations work (known more grandly as 'public diplomacy') under the heading of "New Accents". This included an Ottawa-based, year-long Festival of British music, art (including "Destroy", an exhibition of punk graphic design), dance, film, literature, food and fashion focussed on the 18 - 30 age-group and known as "UK Accents". The title had little merit, but the content was outstanding, thanks largely to the British Council and its excellent Canada

director, Sean Lewis. The Festival attracted much local interest and won high praise. I gave regular opening speeches for the latest show. The main local daily, the Ottawa Citizen declared "Britain ... is a zap-and-zoom, high-tech outfit on the cutting edge of art". We had fun with one sculpture: a small tree-shaped figure known as "stump girl" which we placed outside the office building in the centre of Ottawa. When it first appeared, Laura Markle, the High Commission Information Officer, ensured it received suitable local publicity. Then it disappeared, apparently stolen. More publicity ensued: for the search, possible sightings, its replacement later by a replica and then, miraculously, by the reappearance of the original alongside its twin. I couldn't help wondering if Laura had engineered the whole saga to stoke her publicity campaign; but she pleaded innocence. Either way, both stump girls earned their place in local myth.

Keeping Canada united: Quebec

I was in no doubt that the unity of Canada was greatly in British interests. Not only would Quebec secession diminish Canada's international weight and therefore its value as one of Britain's key allies; but, as the Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, pointed out to me before I left London, it would have implications for Britain's debate on its own future. Put more starkly, Quebec secession would give comfort to Scottish nationalists.

I remember turning on the radio to listen to the 7 a.m. news on 1 November 1995 wondering if I was going to hear that I would be representing Britain in two separate states, Canada and Quebec, rather than one. The result of the 30 October referendum was close. The Parti Quebecois lost by a narrow margin: 49.42% to 50.58% i.e. 54,288 votes on a 93.52% turn-out of the 5,087,009 registered Quebecers.

The Question on the ballot papers had been obscure:

"Do you agree that Quebec should become sovereign, after having made a formal offer to Canada for a new economic and political partnership, within the scope of the Bill Respecting the Future of Quebec, and of the agreement signed on June 12, 1995?"

The 'no' campaign held a huge rally in Montreal on the eve of the vote. Bus companies volunteered hundreds of vehicles to take Canadians from outside of Quebec province to Montreal. The rally, which became known as the "Unity Rally", was said to have been attended by between 50,000 and 125,000 people,

with estimates varying wildly as the crowd grew and shrank throughout the day. Images of the large crowd with an oversized Canadian flag became iconic. At the very least the rally helped to keep momentum for the 'no' campaign moving.

What had caused this near disaster? I came to believe during my time in Canada that the coincidence of five main factors had been largely responsible and that, were they to coincide again, Canadian unity might again be imperilled. The first factor was the natural swing of the political pendulum between the parties in the province of Quebec. No party could expect to enjoy permanent rule. The Liberals or Conservatives might win a provincial election but eventually the electorate would tire of them and transfer their loyalty to the Parti Québécois either in spite of or because of their support for secession. That is what happened in 1994 when the PQ won under the leadership of Jacques Parizeau. The first pre-condition was in place.

The second factor was the right leadership in Quebec. Parizeau himself lacked charisma. But Lucien Bouchard played an important role in the 'yes' campaign and, unlike Parizeau, was a powerful and charismatic figure. He was to replace Parizeau as Party leader on the latter's resignation after the referendum. Bouchard owed his charisma partly to his attractive personality and gifts as a speaker; but also to his almost miraculous survival from necrotising fasciitis and the loss of a leg to the disease in 1994. I used to wonder whether the 'yes' campaign might have gathered a decisive few tens of thousand more votes had Bouchard led the Parti Québécois from the outset of the referendum campaign.

I thought a third factor was economic recession. In hard times, it was easy for a provincial government to persuade people that recession was the fault of the federal government; and that independence would cure their economic ills. At a time when the federal Liberal Government of Jean Chrétien was insisting on policies of such austerity, this argument seemed to have unusual force, however specious it might be in reality.

Fourth was a Federal Government mistake. Many Canadians believed that Chrétien's Government did not take seriously enough, early enough, the risk of secession; and that it could and should have done more to counter the threat.

My final factor was the identity of the federal Prime Minister. Although Jean Chretien was francophone and had been born, raised and educated in Quebec, he did not enjoy enough political popularity in the province to out weigh the

forces in favour of secession. A more popular figure might have attracted more 'no' votes in the referendum.

These five factors did indeed coincide in 1995: a separatist provincial government in power, with the charismatic figure of Bouchard playing a leading role even if not himself the Premier, hard economic times, mishandling by the Federal Government and the relative unpopularity in Quebec of the federal PM. It is easy to imagine that these five factors might coincide again at some point in the future.

I reported to London my thoughts on Quebec and the risk of secession in the customary First Impressions despatch that Heads of Mission used to send soon after their arrival in post. I said that, in a nutshell, the threat of secession remained real. Opinion among the hundreds of Canadians with whom I had discussed the question in Ottawa and London was divided pretty equally between those who believed a united Canada would continue somehow to muddle through and those who feared the worst.

I found that Chrétien himself was an optimist. He had told Malcolm Rifkind in May 1996 that he expected an eventual solution. He did not believe that a majority of his fellow Quebecers really wanted to separate, but to negotiate a better deal for themselves. He made it clear in public that he would not accept a Quebec unilateral declaration of independence. If the separatists were to win another referendum, Quebec would have to negotiate its independence with Ottawa.

Many Canadians believed Chrétien was over optimistic and criticised the Federal Government for inactivity. I shared their concern. I saw a risk that Lucien Bouchard, who had taken over as Quebec's Premier in January 1996, would call a provincial election unexpectedly early and that, catching the Liberal opposition off guard, he would win and use the momentum to hold another referendum in which the result this time would be 'yes' to secession. I thought that events could still go either way. But we should not exclude the possibility of secession. This could happen before 2000.

Events were to prove that I was over pessimistic. Looking back with the benefit of hindsight, the secessionist movement may have reached its high water mark at the 1995 referendum. By the end of 1996, the immediate danger of secession seemed to have receded. Bouchard had left the separatist engine idling and was giving priority to the economy: investment, job creation and fiscal discipline. In wooing the private sector, he was losing the trust of his social democratic Parti

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Quebecois, whose core supporters were being hard hit by his cuts in health care, education and social services and by nearly 13% unemployment in the province.

Meanwhile the Federal Government had recovered its balance after the near disaster of 1995. It was slowly putting in place a long-term strategy to counter secession. It was seeking to devolve greater responsibility to provincial governments, for example on manpower training and social programmes. It also set out to clarify the conditions under which secession might take place. It referred to the Federal Supreme Court of Canada the question whether a unilateral secession by Quebec would be legal. It campaigned within Quebec for a united Canada. It had not abandoned hope of assembling a broader coalition of support in the rest of Canada for amending the constitution to accommodate some at least of Quebec's concerns.

These developments helped gradually to swing Quebec opinion further against secession for the time being. But I still did not believe that Canada's survival was yet secure. Bouchard's political skills, the determination of the hard-line separatists, Chrétien's own unpopularity in Quebec, the exasperation with Quebec felt by many English-speaking Canadians, particularly in the West of the country, and the profound cultural differences between Quebec and the rest of Canada, continued to pose a formidable threat to Canadian unity. A visitor to Quebec City, and still more to the rural parts of the province, found startling contrasts in outlook, behaviour, culture and of course language there compared to anglophone Canada, even if in Montreal the two peoples were showing increasing signs of fusion. I found Hugh MacLennan's novel, 'Two Solitudes', about two peoples within a single nation, as good an introduction to the basic problem facing the country as any political analysis, even though it had been written in 1945.

During the course of 1997 the Federal Government's strategy to protect national unity became more effective. It comprised a Plan A, to show that the federation worked and to make Quebecers feel more at ease within it; and a Plan B to draw attention to the risks of separation and to ensure that, if it were to happen, it would be put in place fairly and legally. Plan A involved the anglophone provinces through the Calgary Declaration which acknowledged Quebec's "unique character" but affirmed the equality of all provinces.

The Quebec issue continued to dominate the domestic political agenda in 1998. Federal hopes that the Quebec Liberal Party would oust Bouchard in the November provincial elections were disappointed. Although the Liberals won the highest share of the popular vote, Bouchard was returned to power with a

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comfortable majority of seats. He declared that he did not rule out another referendum on Quebec sovereignty during his coming mandate but recognised that Quebec public opinion seemed firmly against one for the time being.

In September 1998, the Federal Supreme Court published its opinion that Quebec could not secede unilaterally but that, if a clear majority of Quebecers voted for secession on a clear question, the rest of Canada should negotiate the terms of secession in good faith. Both Ottawa and Quebec welcomed the Court's opinion, the effect of which would make secession less likely and ensure that, if it ever happened, it would do so in a more orderly manner than once feared.

In April 1998 the Quebec Liberal Party found in its new leader, Jean Charest, someone who would prove a stronger match for Lucien Bouchard, let alone Jacques Parizeau and Bouchard's successor, Bernard Landry. Charest would defeat Landry in the 2003 Quebec Provincial election. And in November 1999, Chrétien introduced legislation in the Federal Parliament insisting on a clear question and a clear majority in any future referendum, as recommended by the Supreme Court.

Throughout my time in Canada, I gave a high priority to looking for ways in which the British Government could help strengthen Canadian unity without crossing the line into interference in Canada's internal affairs. Encouraged by Canadian officials who hoped that HMG would be more active in publicly supporting the case for a united Canada, I discussed with Baroness Symons, the Foreign Office Minister of State responsible for British/Canada relations, and senior officials how we could best help. In due course we worked out a formula for use in public speeches by British Ministers and myself. I carried it around in my pocket for use whenever opportunity offered:

“What Canadians do on a matter of this kind is for them to determine in keeping with their deep respect for democracy and the rule of law. So far as Britain is concerned, we attach great importance to our excellent relations with a strong and united Canada. We value Canada's important contribution to the international community, and will continue to build up the dynamic relationship which has been established between our two countries in recent years.”

I remember using this formula on an occasion somewhere in the west of Canada, attended also by the friendly Russian Ambassador, Vitaly Churkin, who went on to a distinguished ten years as Ambassador to the UN in New York before his sudden death in 2017. Churkin commented wryly “One is always safe using the words of one's Ministers”.

In making our support for unity clear, we needed to avoid as far as possible offending Bouchard and his Quebec Government. This could sometimes be tricky. I remember being invited to give a speech at the unveiling in Quebec City of statues of Churchill and Roosevelt without offending either the Federal or Quebec Government in their row over the omission of a statue to Mackenzie King, the Federal Prime Minister who had hosted Churchill and Roosevelt at the time of their 1943 Quebec conference. I was relieved to learn afterwards that both Chrétien and Bouchard had expressed satisfaction with what I had said.

My main official-level Canadian contact on questions affecting Canadian unity was George Anderson, the Federal Deputy Minister for Intergovernmental affairs, who with his wife Charlotte Gray had been one of the first Canadians to welcome Veronica and me to Ottawa. Charlotte was a cousin of Veronica's brother-in-law, Ian Laing, and was making a name for herself as a winner of literary prizes for her works on Canadian Nineteenth Century history. I found George professionally helpful and his door always open; but he was careful never to stray into undiplomatic indiscretion. George's Minister, Stéphane Dion, who played a key role in formulating the Federal strategy towards Quebec, was also a helpful and friendly contact.

I doubt if anything Britain said in public about the merits of Canadian unity made much practical difference. But the Federal Government was grateful; and our support helped to strengthen the bilateral relationship. The language we used was rather warmer than the French formula of "Non indifference et non ingerence" (non-indifference and non-interference). On the other hand, and unsurprisingly, American support for Canadian unity may well have been of real value to Chrétien and the cause of unity.

In an address to the Canadian Federal Parliament in the run-up to the referendum of 1995, President Clinton had sent an unambiguous signal that the United States would prefer that Canada remain intact:

"In a world darkened by ethnic conflicts that tear nations apart, Canada stands as a model of how people of different cultures can live and work together in peace, prosperity and mutual respect."

He went on, to loud applause from all MPs except for the separatist Bloc Québécois, to quote from a speech that President Truman had delivered to the Parliament 48 years before:

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"Canada's notable achievement of national unity and progress through accommodation, moderation and forbearance can be studied with profit by sister nations."

"Those words ring every bit as true today as they did then."

To cushion the effect of his remarks, the President took pains to repeat that Canada's political future was "for Canadians to decide," which members of the Bloc Quebecois quickly greeted with their own loud round of applause.

Again in 1999 Clinton lent his support to Chrétien. At the opening of the new American embassy in Ottawa, he voiced support for a "strong, united and democratic Canada." Then, in an address to a Canadian government-sponsored symposium on federalism held in Quebec, he described the Canadian federal state as an example to the world:

"For two centuries you have shown the world how people of different cultures can live together in peace, prosperity and mutual respect, in a country where human differences are democratically expressed, not forcefully repressed."

Clinton closed with an appeal:

"I think if we will keep this in mind - what is most likely to advance our common humanity in a smaller world; and what is the arrangement of government most likely to give us the best of all worlds - the integrity we need, the self-government we need, the self-advancement we need - without pretending that we can cut all the cords that bind us to the rest of humanity - I think more and more people will say, this federalism, it's not such a bad idea."

Much of what Clinton said on this, in 1999 at least, was his own language. The American Ambassador told me later that he had supplied the President with a draft speech; and that his heart had sunk when, as he was about to mount the platform, Clinton had handed him back the draft, saying that he thought he knew what he wanted to say. His remarks had therefore been extempore but had been far more eloquent than the Embassy draft.

Throughout my Ottawa time, I was very conscious of the implications for the United Kingdom's own unity of possible Quebec secession. When I had called on the Foreign Secretary, prior to taking up my post as High Commissioner,

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Malcolm Rifkind had told me that “Secession would have implications for the UK’s debate on its own future”. I initiated a visit to Ottawa in 1998 by Sir Quentin Thomas, Head of the Constitution Unit in the Cabinet Office, to discuss with George Anderson and others Canadian unity and UK Devolution and to enhance mutual understanding of the issues involved. The Canadians made no secret of their fear that Britain’s devolution plans might lead inexorably down a slippery slope towards separation in the longer term. I subsequently encouraged Whitehall to continue to study the Canadian experience of the difficulties of keeping Canada together. I was surprised to learn that North American Department in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office thought that I had been pushing the Quebec/Scotland parallel a little too hard. This was not the only time that I found myself at odds with the Department.

I still believe that Britain has paid too little attention to the Quebec/Scotland parallel. Think back to the five pre-conditions which I believed had brought Canada so close to separation. Each of them applied in both countries: a separatist party in power (the Parti Quebecois in Quebec and the SNP in Scotland), a charismatic leader (Bouchard in Quebec and first Salmon and then Sturgeon in Scotland), economic recession (requiring the austerity programmes of Chrétien in Canada and Cameron in Britain), the mistakes made by Ottawa and Westminster, both of which paid too little attention to the risks involved in a referendum until the eleventh hour, and the relative unpopularity in Quebec/Scotland of the Prime Ministers in Ottawa and London.

Now, it seems to me that the Government in Westminster might do well to consider whether some of the policies adopted by Chrétien after the 1995 Quebec referendum could be relevant to the United Kingdom today, including a Plan A to show that the Union works in favour of both Scotland and the rest of the UK; a Plan B to draw attention to the consequences of separation; insistence that the whole Kingdom should be consulted on the terms of separation if it were to happen; and a Clarity Act on the process to be followed. Above all, Canadian experience demonstrated the value of using plenty of carrot and not just stick. One of the weaknesses of Cameron’s campaign for rejection of separation in 2015 was his over-emphasis on the penalties that Scotland would suffer from it. Cameron’s successors and their colleagues need to persuade Scotland of the advantages of the Union, not just the penalties of separation. Theresa May’s references to “this precious Union” were a good start. But Johnson’s personal unpopularity in Scotland is only one of several current obstacles to the preservation of the Union.

Encouraging Canada to maintain its defence strength and commitment to NATO

Canada's commitment to NATO and its UN peacekeeping role were major British foreign and defence interests. Another was Canada's provision of training facilities: Goose Bay in Labrador where Britain's Air Force practised very low flying; Wainwright and Suffield in Alberta where the Army trained its infantry and armoured battle groups. I visited all three early in my term. Until I had seen for myself the activities of the British Army Training Unit at Suffield (BATUS), I had no understanding of its immense scale. The Ministry of Defence's directive to the Commander of BATUS described it as "our most important and expensive training facility which has a unique role" in preparing our forces for war. I remember particularly being driven close to the target and hearing tank fire just overhead shortly before impact close in front of me. In addition Canada was an important potential market for our defence equipment.

Worryingly, Canada's commitment to NATO, particularly among younger people, was weakening. The previous Government had decided in 1992 to withdraw Canadian ground troops from Europe. Canadian participation in NATO training exercises was falling. We had been having difficulty in persuading Canada to maintain a sizeable force in Bosnia. Moreover the morale of the Canadian army and its public credibility had been badly damaged by revelations of the misbehaviour of Canadian peacekeeping troops in both Somalia and Bosnia. In addition, public expenditure cuts in Canada's austerity programme had reduced their defence budget as a percentage of GNP to below the NATO average. Numbers were therefore shrinking and army equipment was becoming increasingly outdated. Canada's Chief of Defence Staff had said recently: "If the Government asked me to go into a high intensity theatre of operations, with the equipment that I have today, I would have to say that I cannot do it." Against this sombre background, prospects for selling major items of defence equipment - Upholder submarines, Cormorant helicopters - looked formidable.

Canada's Foreign Minister throughout my term was Lloyd Axworthy who gave to Canada's foreign policy a distinctive flavour with a strong emphasis on what he called human security. This translated into the Ottawa Treaty of 1997 banning land mines, for which Axworthy deserved great credit; and promoting international action against the illegal trade in small arms, human rights abuses and the use of child soldiers. Robin Cook, as Labour's Foreign Secretary, found him a useful ally in this field. Personally I found much of what Axworthy said about human security so much rhetoric which, except for his work on land

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mines, did little practical good on the ground. It sometimes seemed designed to distract attention away from Canada's unwillingness to maintain more effective defence forces. But he had the sort of potential nuisance value which made the effort to keep him on side worthwhile. And I thought that Chrétien would rein him in when necessary.

Some of my most interesting and rewarding work was to promote sales of defence equipment. Operating in close cooperation with the private companies concerned and with the Ministry of Defence in London, I led a successful campaign to persuade the Canadian Government to buy 15 Westland/Augusta's Cormorant Air Sea Rescue helicopters and 18 BAE's Hawk Jet Trainers, as well as to lease four second hand Upholder Submarines. This involved carefully-judged diplomatic interventions to ensure that our bids were given fair consideration against the international, mainly US and French, competition. I intervened personally with the Prime Minister, his Foreign Policy adviser, the Defence Minister, Minister of Public Works, senior officials and Liberal Party MPs; and I supplied Whitehall with running advice on our tactics. All of these contracts were worth hundreds of millions of pounds. The helicopter sale was particularly gratifying because, on entering office, the Liberal Government had cancelled the original contract with Britain on the grounds that it was too expensive.

Despite my doubts about the quality of Canada's defence forces and the value of Axworthy's human security agenda, I recognised that Canada's military contributions in NATO, the Balkans and virtually every UN peacekeeping operation were valuable assets to the Western Alliance. And, by the time I left Ottawa, the morale and performance of her Defence Forces had recovered from the shameful incident in 1993 when two Canadian soldiers, participating in humanitarian efforts in Somalia, had beaten to death a Somali teenager.

Trade and investment

Two-way trade and investment between Britain and Canada were vast. Canada was the sixth largest foreign investor in Britain. We were the second largest investor in Canada. Taking all earnings together - visible exports, services and investment income - Britain earned over £7 billion from Canada in 1995, an increase of 40% since 1990. Our trade balance - goods and services - showed a surplus of just under £1 billion. Our best guess was that over 600 British companies had subsidiaries in Canada; and over 200 Canadian companies had subsidiaries in Britain. These figures were impressive. But I was struck on my arrival in Ottawa by the fact that Britain's 2.4% share of Canada's import market

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in goods had fallen in recent years and in 1995 was only half our 4.8% share of world trade. Other European Union partners had also lost share as the Far Eastern tigers and China gained ground. There was surely scope for Britain to do better. Here seemed a promising opportunity for the High Commission to make a difference and I was instructed by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London to give the work high personal priority. But finding the best way to make a personal difference was not as straightforward as it might sound.

Most of the High Commission's commercial work was focussed in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver where our three Consuls General, led and coordinated by Toronto, devoted almost all their efforts and those of their staff to promoting British exports and encouraging two way investment. They were well placed to do so because so much of the Canadian business world was concentrated in Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia. And the Consuls General were themselves senior Diplomatic Service officers: Paul Davies followed by Terry Curran in Toronto; Ivor Rawlinson/Marcus Hope in Montreal; and Brian Austin/Ian Kydd in Vancouver. Each of them was qualified for an independent diplomatic mission of their own, and had been appointed as a Consul General in Canada precisely because of their capacity for independent action as well as the importance of the work. It would not therefore have been surprising if sometimes they felt visits by the High Commissioner to their patch to be intrusive. Much to their credit and to the traditions of loyalty and discipline in the Diplomatic Service, if they had such feelings, they kept them to themselves. I trod warily and was grateful for all they did to make the most of my visits.

I tried to visit Toronto at least once a month, Montreal every two months and Vancouver, in view of the distance, twice a year. Most of these visits were focussed on commercial and investment work. The Consul Generals would organise a programme of visits, including calls on major companies which might be considering investing in Britain. They would often invite senior Canadians to meet me over a meal. In addition, but less often, I visited Quebec City and the other provincial capitals. Throughout the country I preached the message of Britain's openness to investment and its interest in encouraging trade.

Ottawa itself became an increasingly important centre of business activity, particularly in the high tech field. I enjoyed getting to know some of the senior figures in this community, including, as one example, Jozef Strauss of JDS Uniphase which was considering investments in Britain in the field of fibre optics. Veronica and I invited him and his wife, Vera, to dinner in Earnscliffe. Because they were Orthodox Jews, Veronica arranged for them to be served kosher food, cooked in accordance with Jewish rituals and served to them on

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new china which she bought for the occasion. They invited us in return to dine with them one evening in an Ottawa hotel which served a weekly Jewish menu. We noticed as we were shown to our table that most of the other diners greeted Jozef and Vera to whom they were clearly well known. This was the restaurant favoured by the Ottawa Orthodox Jewish community. I was delighted to hear later that JDS Uniphase had indeed invested in Britain through its purchase of a British manufacturer of components used in optical fibres.

In 1998 the British Overseas Trade Board recommended that Canada should be given priority status as a market for British exporters. This paved the way for the opening of a small British Trade office in Calgary, headed by a Canadian. In 1999 a campaign was launched in Britain to encourage inexperienced and new British exporters to Canada. At one point a plan was hatched for me to tour parts of Britain to spread the message that the Department of Trade were preaching to British companies. I was not surprised when this came to nothing through lack of local interest.

Where I was able to make the most difference in the commercial field was to contracts in which the Government of Canada itself was involved. They were primarily the defence contracts which I have described already. Otherwise I left Canada with the disappointing feeling that my own activities had not made a major difference to the success of the British Government's efforts to promote trade and investment. The Consuls General and their staff deserved most of whatever credit was due.

Strengthening transatlantic relations, especially between Canada and the European Union; and promoting Britain as Canada's gateway to Europe

Viewed from London, it is all too easy to think that Canada's main preoccupation is and should be her relations with her friends across the Atlantic. I used to joke in speeches that British diplomats were famous for believing that the centre of the world was in London. I would add that "this is of course true". But viewed from Ottawa the world looked different. Like the United States, Canada was a Pacific as well as an Atlantic power. During my term I saw plenty of signs that the Canadian centre of gravity was shifting westwards. Although links with Europe remained strong, ties with Asia and Latin America were growing in importance; and Canada's trade negotiators were more preoccupied with her partners in NAFTA - the US and Mexico - than they were with the European Union.

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There was plenty of trade and investment in both directions between Canada and Europe; and Britain was very much seen as a gateway to the European market. But when I arrived in Ottawa in 1996 the formal relationship seemed stuck. This was largely due to the lingering effects of the turbot war of 1995, with which my predecessor, Nicholas Bayne had had to wrestle. The Canadians had stopped a Spanish fishing trawler and arrested its crew for alleged illegal fishing on the Grand Banks just outside Canada's 220 mile Exclusive Economic Zone. Britain had sided with Canada whereas Spain had been supported by the EU. Although resolved before my arrival, the dispute had left a legacy of mutual suspicion between the EU and Canada. It was not therefore surprising - and indeed would probably have happened in any case - that since then the EU had been giving priority to developing a Transatlantic Economic Partnership with the US, leaving both sides - EU and Canada - with difficulty in finding the human resources and the political will to tackling the various trade irritants of the day. There were several of these, notably in policies on genetically modified organisms, wine labelling, veterinary standards, and crop diseases. The High Commission found itself grappling with these and other esoteric subjects like the threat to Europe from pinewood nematode, a disease affecting pine trees, as well as disagreements over Canada's annual commercial seal hunt and its use of leg-hold traps in hunting wild animals in the North. Both these last two subjects attracted the particular wrath of the animal rights lobbies.

Looking back on those years, I can't claim that much progress was made. The highlights for the High Commission both came in the first half of 1998 during the British six months Presidency of the EU. We persuaded the Canadians to let us organise an EU seminar in the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the vast building which overlooked Earscliffe, to coincide with Robin Cook's first visit to Ottawa as Foreign Secretary in January 1998. We had hoped that he would agree to address the assembled company of officials, diplomats, academics and journalists, thinking that this might be a good platform for him to talk about the transatlantic relationship. We were told that he did not want to give a formal speech because he would not have time to write it himself. On the day he made only a few off-the cuff remarks. I reflected privately that Robin Cook's Conservative predecessors as Foreign Secretary, Douglas Hurd or Malcolm Rifkind, would have willingly agreed to make a short speech, embellishing with their own additions a draft text prepared by officials.

In May 1998, later that year, Chrétien paid an official visit to London. I returned home for this visit, with Veronica because Mme Chrétien came too. We enjoyed following in the slip-stream of the Chrétiens' car as it raced into central London in record time, escorted by Police outriders to clear the way ahead.

In addition to bilateral talks with Tony Blair, the visit provided the occasion for a so-called summit between the EU and Canada to try to give some much needed impetus to the relationship. Britain was in the lead for the EU because we held the six-month rotating EU Presidency. The main visible result was a technical agreement between the EU and Canada to allow product testing and certification to be undertaken in the exporting country instead of at destination. A photograph of the signing ceremony taken in Number Ten, rather surprisingly to the uninitiated, shows me signing a fat book flanked by Leon Brittan, Vice President of the European Commission and Sergio Marchi, the Canadian Minister for International Trade. Standing behind us are Tony Blair, Jean Chrétien and Gaston Thorn, President of the Commission. One might have expected that these latter three could have signed the book themselves. But no: none had been equipped with 'Full Powers', the formal diplomatic document which would have authorised them to sign an international treaty. I, as a High Commissioner, had such full plenipotential powers by virtue of my appointment. Likewise, I assume, Leon Brittan and Sergio Marchi by virtue of their official positions.

Encouraging Canadian Support on International Issues and Northern Ireland

I had been surprised to be told that, before starting my job in Ottawa, I should visit Northern Ireland to familiarise myself with the political situation and the progress of the peace process. I had not realised how interested the Canadian Government was in the Province and how closely it was to be involved in Irish affairs during my time in Ottawa. Its interest sprang mainly from the large Irish communities in Canada, particularly in Toronto, both Protestant and Catholic. We arrived shortly before St Patrick's Day, celebrated by marches of Irish Canadians, including in both Ottawa and Toronto. While Veronica enjoyed watching a colourful march in Ottawa, I attended a huge lunch in a central Toronto hotel in the company of the Irish Ambassador, Paul Dempsey, who introduced me to many of the leading members of the local Irish community. Veronica and I were to get to know Paul and his wife, Jan, well and much enjoyed their friendship. I hope that the sight of Paul and me cooperating closely together on Irish matters helped in a small way to show Canadians that our two Governments wholeheartedly shared the aim of bringing peace to Northern Ireland.

Canada made a valuable contribution to the peace process. Most visibly, General John de Chastelain, a former Chief of Canada's Defence Staff and Ambassador to the United States, served for fourteen years, from 1997 to 2011, as Chairman of

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the Independent International Commission, responsible for ensuring the decommissioning of arms by paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland. His obvious independence and authority convinced both sides that they could trust him in this vital work. Although I was careful not to discuss his work with him for fear of compromising his neutrality, I got to know him socially in Ottawa and much enjoyed his company.

Another significant Canadian contribution was the participation of William Hoyt, former Chief Justice of New Brunswick in the Bloody Sunday enquiry. Little could either he or John de Chastelain have known, when they started their work on Northern Ireland, how long it would take. The Bloody Sunday Enquiry did not report until 2010.

A third Canadian participant in the peace process was Professor Clifford Shearing, Director of the Centre of Criminology at the University of Toronto. He was appointed to the Independent Commission on Policing in Northern Ireland, under Chris Patten, set up to recommend ways of making the Northern Ireland police better serve the interests of the community as a whole and to be seen to do so.

In addition to these important individual appointments, the Canadian Government gave financial support to some of the Non-Governmental Organisations operating in Belfast to bridge the gaps between the Protestant and Catholic communities.

The Canadian interest in the peace process was well illustrated by a visit to Belfast and Dublin in 1999 by Jean Chrétien. I travelled to Belfast to be present for his talks with David Trimble, First Minister of North Ireland, and Seamus Mallon, Deputy First Minister. I remember urging Chrétien and his hosts to arrange for him to visit the peace walls separating the two communities to help him understand realities on the ground. Otherwise, it was all too easy for a visitor who saw only the rest of the city to leave with the impression that Belfast was little different from any other peaceful British city.

Occasionally I was invited to speak on the peace process in public. I used to make much of a story I had heard about Tony Blair's visit to Washington while still leader of the Opposition before the 1997 election. He had been asked by a member of the local Press corps what was wrong with John Major's policies on Northern Ireland and what would he, Blair, do to put them right. He replied, to his great credit, that there was nothing wrong with Major's policies and that he would try to do half as well. I used to tell my Canadian audiences that this

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illustrated neatly the essential continuity of policy on Northern Ireland between Major's and Blair's Governments. It went down well with Canadians.

One unusual occasion at which I was guest of honour was a dinner given by the Apostles in Toronto. 12 in number - hence their name - half Protestant and half Catholic Irish Canadians, they used to dine together from time to time with the sole object of demonstrating that people of both faiths could break bread peacefully together. Paul Dempsey, my Irish colleague, was guest of honour at another of their dinners.

On another occasion I was invited by a college in British Columbia to give a full length lecture on the peace process and British/Irish history. Preparing this took me the best part of a weekend and I was careful to clear my draft text with the Northern Ireland Office in London with which I maintained regular contact. I wish now I had kept the text but have long since lost it, unless it turns up one day buried in other papers.

One of the international issues to which I devoted most attention, partly because of its intrinsic importance and partly because I thought we might be able to change Canadian thinking, was climate change. The Canadian Government had signed the Kyoto Protocol of 1997 which committed states to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, based on the premise that (a) global warming exists and (b) human-made CO₂ emissions have caused it. But Canada did not ratify the Protocol until 2002 and later repudiated it largely on the grounds that the Protocol would be meaningless without the agreement of the US and China. I saw an opportunity to try to influence Canadian thinking by engaging opinion formers, in Government, the scientific community and the Press in the technical arguments. I persuaded Sir Robert May, Chief Scientific Adviser to HMG (and later President of the Royal Society) to visit Ottawa and make a speech on climate change to the scientific community in the National Research Council headquarters next door to Earncliffe. I also introduced him to leading members of Ottawa's scientific establishment. As in Britain, few questioned the existence of climate change; but some of the Press were vociferous in arguing that it was not caused by human activity. I did my best to challenge some of the more strident articles they published. I have no proof that our efforts were successful in changing local opinion; but the attempt seemed to me an essential part of a diplomat's functions.

Provincial Tours

I have described above those of my travels outside Ottawa intended to promote our commercial and investment objectives. They were not only trade related, but were also intended to further Britain's wider objectives. They included opportunities for speech-making about Britain, contacts with the local Press and television and visits to universities, as well as simply getting to know Canada. We invariably called on the provincial Lieutenant Governors and were usually formally introduced to the provincial legislative assemblies, along with visiting school groups and other visitors.

I discovered early on that my activities were sometimes noticed by senior figures in Ottawa. For example the Governor General, Romeo LeBlanc, a New Brunswicker, told me that he had enjoyed reading an article in the local New Brunswick Telegraph Journal reporting my first visit to New Brunswick in October 1996. It gave a full account of an interview in which I had described all the various parts of the bilateral relationship: political, defence, trade, investment, cultural and personal. The article had been given the resounding heading: " 'It's easy to work well together.' British High Commissioner says Canada-Britain relationship remains strong." I was glad to learn that the Governor General had read what I had said and that he had noticed that I had been visiting his home province.

I once added up the total number of my provincial visits during my 4 ½ years in Canada and reached a figure of about 120. I was out of Ottawa on these official tours for an average of about two months a year.

Speeches, media work and entertainment

I spent a lot of time, both in Ottawa and on tour, in delivering speeches to all manner of audiences. In my first year I was invited to address a joint session of the Empire Club and the British Canadian Chamber of Trade and Commerce in Toronto and chose as my theme 'Britain in Europe'. Why should Europe matter to Canada? What was happening in Europe and where was the European Union heading? And why should Canada regard Britain as its gateway to Europe? My choice of subject reflected my own interest in the subject and my belief in its importance for Britain's relations with Canada. My speech was broadcast live in the presence of a large audience. I had put a lot of work into it and had shown a draft to Harvey Thomas in London. Harvey had served as a Press and PR adviser to Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister. He had coached me on speech-

making while I was preparing for Ottawa and gave me some helpful comments for my Toronto speech.

In November 1997 Veronica and I were invited as guests-of-honour to a St Andrew's Day Ball in Montreal. This was a grand affair in The Queen Elizabeth Hotel where we were accommodated for the night by the organisers. Larry Hills, my High Commission driver, delivered us in the official Jaguar to the front door where we were gratified to find a red carpet lined by two rows of smartly dressed people to greet us. We thought nothing of their oriental appearance as we knew Montreal to be a cosmopolitan sort of place. We walked along the carpet, smiling graciously and shaking hands, to find just inside the hotel doors a small group of Anglo-Saxon-looking Canadians who introduced themselves as the St Andrew's Ball Committee. Just at that moment we heard a band strike up a resounding march. We turned to see a large black limo draw up, out of which emerged a small dignified oriental figure for whom we then realised that the reception committee and the red carpet had been intended. The Thai Prime Minister had arrived on an official visit.

Recovering quickly from our discomposure, we were escorted by the Ball Committee to our room which was alleged to be the very one - 1742 - where John Lennon and Yoko Ono had held their second 'bed-in for peace' in 1969. We dressed and went down to the Ball. I delivered my carefully prepared speech, to which Veronica had contributed major parts, embellished with appropriate jokes. I included the hallowed lines about the importance Britain attached to its relationship with a strong and united Canada (qv). This went down well with the large and noisy audience. After dinner Veronica and I were installed in thrones in the middle of the dance floor. White-clad debutantes, with kilt-clad escorts, queued to be presented to us one by one. After a formal Cotillion to open the ball, the debutantes then disappeared to be replaced in a few minutes by girls wearing skimpy black dresses ready for the dance. They had shot upstairs to change from white to their preferred black.

The next day we were invited as guests-of-honour by the Montreal Curling Club (the first sporting club to be founded in North America) to their annual St Andrew's Day lunch. To our hosts' delight, my speech, again owing much to Veronica, included a description - illustrated with mementoes - of a visit that Veronica's grandfather had paid to Montreal as a member of the first-ever Scottish Curling Team to visit North America almost exactly a century earlier. One memento was a 500-page book on the tour, including a photograph of her grandfather and the rest of the Scottish team in Montreal. A copy of the same photograph hung in the Clubhouse.

As time went by and I became better known, I found myself making more and more speeches, long and short. In 1998 for example, I made 26 platform speeches, of which one was in French to a Quebec City audience which included Jaques Parizeau the former Quebec Premier who had launched the 1995 referendum for Quebec independence. In addition that year I made some 20 shorter five-to-ten minute speeches and gave eight TV, Radio and Press interviews and five editorial briefings. The speeches took a good deal of preparation to which my High Commission colleagues contributed. But I drafted two-thirds of them myself. As I toiled away at my desk at weekends, I used to reflect on the advantages that my more remote predecessors had enjoyed in the services of a private secretary.

I used to speak regularly to the London Goodenough Association of Canada. This eponymous Canadian organisation provided its 900 alumni of what would later come to be called Goodenough College, in London, with a way of staying in touch with each other and with the College. It had been founded by my grandfather in 1931 to provide accommodation for Dominion postgraduate students during their studies in London and had since developed into a centre for Commonwealth and other overseas postgraduates. I shall have more to say about it in chapter 21. In Canada it provided me with a wonderful way of meeting a variety of interesting and friendly Canadians, some of whom occupied positions of influence, throughout the country. Veronica and I tried to repay their hospitality with an annual reception at Earnscliffe.

Once a year, Ron and Marge Southern invited me to give the opening speech at British Day of their international Masters Show-jumping Tournament at Spruce Meadows in Calgary attended by top show-jumpers from around the world. This was an opportunity to address a Union Flag-waving audience of some 50,000 in a four-minute speech on the importance of Britain's relations with Canada. I quickly learned that a very few words go a long way on such an occasion.

We used Earnscliffe and its household staff fairly intensively to entertain Canadians and British visitors. This placed a heavy burden on Veronica who ran the house and the catering with effortless enthusiasm and skill. Together we hosted countless social events. We were helped by a Social Secretary without whom it would have been impossible to operate. On average we probably entertained a total of some 3,000 guests each year to a variety of dinners, lunches and receptions. The meals ranged from formal dinners for up to 24 people in the big dining-room, overlooking the Ottawa river, to a tête-à-tête lunch at which I

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could have a serious private talk with a Minister or senior official. I discovered early on that a good way to enable a senior visitor from London to meet Canadians was to hold a 'discussion meal' at which I would aim to chair a round table discussion of all those present. I remember, for example, lunches attended by Malcolm Rifkind, Chris Smith (Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport), Sir Robert May (Chief Scientific Officer), the Intelligence and Security (Oversight) Committee and the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology. And in Toronto in 1999 I hosted an unforgettable lunch in a hotel at which Stephen Hawking took part through his voice synthesiser in a discussion of the future with a dozen or so lively Canadians.

The Canadian Arctic

In June 1998, two years into my time in Ottawa, I was one of twenty Ambassadors and High Commissioners to Canada to tour Canada's Northern Territories as guests of the Federal Government. These tours, organised annually, were much prized by the Diplomatic Corps who eagerly looked forward to their turn for an invitation.

We travelled some 9,000 miles in a spartanly-fitted Canadian National Defence Hercules C-130, visiting in the course of a week Iqaluit, Resolute, Polaris, Pond Inlet, Cambridge Bay, Inuvik, and Yellowknife in the North West Territories (NWT); Old Crow, Dawson City and Whitehorse in the Yukon; and Churchill in Manitoba on Hudson Bay. We also flew over the Magnetic North Pole and Axel Heiburg Island with its petrified fossil forests from its wetland past. Officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development accompanied us throughout. We met local elected representatives, officials and other notables.

Some of the diplomats knew each other from Ottawa, others had scarcely met. One of the charming features of the trip was the way in which personalities changed during the week we were away. We all began slightly stuffily, a little on our dignity as befitted Heads of Diplomatic Mission, and gradually relaxed, ending up more like a party of cheerful schoolboys on an outing. Some nights we had to share a room with a colleague. I was paired with Loic Hennekiné, the formidable French Ambassador, who I had known in Paris in the 1970s. His frequent mobile telephone calls to his office in Ottawa, which was clearly under instructions to consult him on current business, contrasted starkly with my own habit of leaving my colleagues in the High Commission to get on with things without me unless some emergency arose.

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I made a note of some striking statistics which we were given. The NWT and Yukon are together roughly the size of Europe, west of the Urals, plus Turkey. But their combined population was then about 98,000 of whom just over 50% were aboriginal (compared to 4% in Canada as a whole). GDP in the North in 1998 was C\$3.5 billion which was less than 5% of total national output. Federal Government expenditure amounted to about C\$2 billion or C\$20,000 per head, compared to the figure for Newfoundland of C\$1,700. So the North is vast. Scarcely anybody lives there. And it is expensive.

We were told that the North's importance for Canada was threefold. First and most importantly, it was a valuable strategic asset. During the Cold War it had provided a buffer zone and therefore early warning of any Soviet attack over the Pole. That threat had diminished but could not be altogether discounted in the future. Secondly and thirdly, the North was rich in mineral resources and might have as much as 40% of the country's total resources of oil and natural gas. But I suspected that the North might also have a further importance for Canada: psychological. Canadians were proud of the size, wildness and splendour of its north, which they saw as an integral part of their identity as the "best country in the world". It was sad that so few Canadians were ever able to visit the area due to the cost of travel and accommodation. How lucky we diplomats were.

In consequence of all this, the Federal Government took seriously its responsibilities to the North. No-one more so than Prime Minister Chrétien, who had once spent six years as Minister for Indian and Northern Affairs.

Federal Government policy at the time of our visit had four main objectives. The first of these was to advance political development. On 1 April 1999, the NWT was due to be divided into two, each with the same status as the existing NWT and the Yukon. A new Territory, Nunavut, would be formed in the east with its capital in Iqaluit on Baffin Island. Inuit people - the Esquimo - would form 84% of its population of 24,000 spread across a land mass nearly twice the size of Ontario. John Amagoalik, regarded as the chief architect of the new Territory, told us that Nunavut's main benefits would be to enable its people for the first time to decide their own priorities, use their own language in administration and establish their own education curriculum. "We think we can do at least as good a job as the present administration in distant Yellowknife." But the problems facing Nunavut would be formidable. Social difficulties, high unemployment, few resources, lack of administrative experience among the Inuit, a high birth rate, high expectations which could not be met by Nunavut's creation, all spelt trouble ahead.

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Government in both the NWT and in Nunavut was and would continue to be on a non-party basis. I was told that the aboriginal peoples preferred to operate by consensus. President Museveni of Uganda and others in Africa would have sympathised.

A second Federal Government objective was to settle outstanding aboriginal land claims. Negotiations were proceeding at differing speeds throughout the North. Settlement seemed obviously desirable. But it would not solve the underlying problems facing the indigenous peoples of Canada and would probably arouse expectations that it would produce economic benefits that could not be met.

The third Federal objective - sustainable development - might also be difficult to achieve. The North would continue to be heavily dependent for the foreseeable future on Federal subsidies. Mining, however important, was currently depressed; tourism would have only a marginal effect; the fur industry was shrinking thanks to public hostility especially in Europe; there was no commercial fishing. In short, the economic outlook was bleak.

We learned that the final Federal policy objective was that Canada should play a leading role in promoting cooperation between polar nations, including Russia, in tackling common problems. For example Canada had helped to establish an Arctic Council to facilitate international cooperation in tackling the problem of chemicals transported to the Arctic in the atmosphere.

I was surprised at the absence of a fifth formal policy objective: to protect the environment and fight global warming. It was true that, from the air as we flew in our Hercules over the vast expanse of tundra, snow and ice, the Canadian North looked as unsullied as the 19th-Century explorers described it. But the experts we met were concerned by the impact of military and mining activity and by the presence of contaminants. Work was in progress to clean up the worst of the sites suffering from physical or chemical hazards. But over C\$100 million would be needed to meet legal, health and safety obligations at waste sites. And the area was affected also by pollutants transported by air and water.

During our visit to the Polar Continental Shelf Programme at Resolute, we were told of preliminary results of recent research in the high Arctic which had found temperatures of -40 degrees instead of an expected -55 or -60. The Resolute experts believed global warming to be a real danger.

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I asked the accompanying Canadian officials how the Government was able to justify the considerable cost of this annual diplomatic tour. They said that its purpose was to show diplomats, particularly from the developing world, that Canada too had its poor regions and social problems and was not just Vancouver or Toronto; to inform us about Government policies to advance the political development of the North i.e. plans to create Nunavut; to show that the Government was not afraid to expose diplomats to criticism of itself and that local people were not afraid to voice such criticisms to foreigners; and to demonstrate, for strategic and resource reasons, Canada's sovereignty over the North. The last of these aims sounded the most important. I could well believe that the Federal Government remained fearful that the US for one was not fully reconciled to Canada's claim that the waters of the Canadian Arctic archipelago were "internal" and that, for example, the Northwest Passage was not an international strait.

One conclusion several Ambassadors from the developing world drew as they gazed through the Hercules windows on the empty wastes below was the amount of space available for immigration. Another was the abundance of fresh water. If you lived in the countries bordering on the Sahara, you might well think that the Canadian North was no more inhospitable, and a great deal better supplied with water, than much of the land in their own countries. Whatever the reasons, we all concluded that Canada's North was an enviable asset.

Alert

The Canadians also invited me to visit their military base at Alert, the northernmost permanently inhabited place in the world. On this occasion I went alone, unaccompanied by other diplomats. During the Cold War, Alert was strategically important because of its proximity to the Soviet Union; Alert is the closest point in North America to the northwestern area of the Soviet Union. It remains important as a communications, and weather-monitoring and air-sea-rescue centre and as a visible demonstration of Canada's sovereignty in the North.

Some personal impressions of Canada

As I gradually got to know the country and its people, firmer impressions began to take shape. When I arrived, I could easily understand why it deserved its title as 'the best country in the world' about which Canadians were so proud. For the fourth time since 1990 it had just been placed first in the Human Development Index. A relatively small population of some 30 million was supported by a vast territory. The people were mostly well-educated, healthy with an enviable life

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expectancy and high standard of living. The country was rich in natural resources, including oil, gas, minerals and timber. Canada's democracy was healthy. Human rights were respected. Social relations were harmonious, despite growing ethnic diversity. The only land neighbour - the USA - was strong, friendly and rich. Was this happy picture accurate and reliable?

I reported my initial thoughts on this question in the customary first impressions despatch that new Heads of Mission used to send to the Foreign Secretary. I said that Canada was faced with three significant internal political problems of which one, the Quebec issue, threatened Canada's survival as a nation. The other two, the growing alienation of the Western provinces and the aboriginal issue, were less serious. Underlying all three issues was the broader question of the balance between federal and provincial powers and how to make confederation work. In what was a highly decentralised system of government, Ottawa was under pressure to devolve further responsibilities to the provinces. At best this debate diverted political attention from other more pressing concerns - at home and abroad. At worst, it threatened national cohesion.

I have written enough about the Quebec issue above. It was and is central to Canada's future as Scotland is central to Britain's. The threat of secession may have receded but it could return.

Western alienation was even less of an immediate threat to Canadian unity. But both in Alberta and British Columbia, I encountered resentment against Quebec and frustration with the Federal Government for its failure to deal firmly with Quebec and its alleged insensitivity to Western concerns. Calgary had a distinctly American feel about its admirable enthusiasm for free enterprise and individual initiative. And the strong Chinese immigrant influence in British Columbia, where for example half the primary school children in the Vancouver area were said to have English as their second rather than their mother tongue, was weakening its links with Canada east of the Rockies. If Quebec stayed in the federation, these tensions would probably grumble on and could get worse. If it seceded, the immediate effect might be to bring the rest of Canada, including the West, closer together. But, in the longer term, say over a generation, the emotional ties binding the West to Ontario and the other provinces might gradually weaken.

Over a million aboriginals, say 3% of Canada's population, mostly suffer a standard of living well below the Canadian average. In 1996 a Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples reported that aboriginals endured living conditions found more often in developing countries. It recommended major

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increases in Government assistance over the next 20 years and self-government for the native peoples within a united Canada. I never fully understood why the international human rights lobby did not make more of a fuss about the aboriginals' condition, which included high rates of suicide, alcoholism and child abuse. Perhaps one reason was that the Canadian Government was recognised to be doing its best to address what was clearly an intractable problem. Indeed, by the time I left Canada in 2000, the Government had taken some concrete steps to improve the lot of the aboriginals. As I had heard on the Arctic tour, the Inuit were given their own self-governing Territory, Nunavut, carved out of the old North West Territory. And the Nisga'a people in British Columbia were to be given cash and rights over their ancestral lands in a Treaty which might serve as an expensive model for other such claims in the West. But neither measure would help urban aboriginals out of their often dismal living conditions. I foresaw trouble ahead.

The economy was fundamentally strong and, as I say above, was beginning to recover from past mismanagement. But it remained overdependent on raw materials and therefore vulnerable to fluctuations in commodity prices. Furthermore, Canada's heavy dependence on the US made it vulnerable to changes in US economic fortunes. If the US economy were to catch cold, Canada risked pneumonia. There was something of a brain drain to the US: 35,000 Canadian professionals moved to the US between 1989 and 1996 and this trend was accelerating. The 1,000 nurses who left represented 40% of their graduating class. Productivity was lower than in the US. And the economy seemed better at creating wealth for many than jobs for all.

Some social issues were beginning to emerge. As in Britain, there was a growing disparity of wealth between young and old. The old were doing very well, whereas the young were having to adjust their expectations. This could lead to intergenerational tensions. There was also a growing disparity between the high wages of the new high-tech industrial workers and the low wages paid in some of the traditional industries like the mines of Nova Scotia.

Politically, a process of balkanisation seemed to be taking place. Two thirds of the Liberal governing party were to be found in only one province: Ontario. In 1997, the main opposition party, Reform, won no constituency east of Manitoba. The next largest party, the Bloc Quebecois, had MPs in only one province: Quebec. Only the Conservative Party was widely scattered. Inevitably this meant that the main parties were inclined to give priority to the provinces where they were concentrated rather than to Canada as a whole, whatever they might say to the contrary.

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Was Canada's whole structure of government in the country's best long term interests? Were there too many layers: federal, provincial and municipal? Were there too many provinces, each with its own proud Parliament building much valued by the locals, and their sizes too disparate? Compare tiny Prince Edward Island with the large founding provinces of Ontario and Quebec. Was the federal Parliament too large? Compare California, with a slightly bigger population and economy, which sent 54 members of Congress to Washington, with the whole of Canada which sent 399 representatives to Ottawa. The result was an expensive, burdensome bureaucracy and overlapping, sometimes confusing, responsibilities. Another source of tension was the disparity of population living in the towns compared to the countryside. 70% of Canadians lived in only eight cities. 80% lived in towns of over 10,000. The effects of none of this should be exaggerated.

More important was the healthy and admirable determination of both Government and people to face up to these and the other issues they faced. And none of this fundamentally changed the picture of a stable, prosperous, healthy, fully functioning democracy.

The Canadian identity

Many Canadians I met worried that they lacked a recognisable national identity and that this too, along with the Quebec issue, Western alienation and aboriginal dissatisfaction, would gradually weaken the ties binding the nation together. I had heard so much about Canada's mosaic of peoples, compared with the American melting pot, that I expected to find greater identity differences between the Canadians I met in my travels across the country. Instead I found that even Canadians of widely different ethnic origins shared common characteristics: civic mindedness, tolerance, lack of stridency, seriousness of purpose, a certain political earnestness. I found myself in personal harmony with this apparent social consensus and feared that it would come under strain as government was forced to reduce the generous social spending programmes which Canadians had grown used to.

During my time in Canada I came across various attempts to define the Canadian identity. On the one hand there were those who saw difficulty in the very notion of a separate identity. For example:

- A newspaper readers' quiz was won by the following entry:
Question: "Define the Canadian identity."

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Answer: "As Canadian as possible under the circumstances".

- Paul Trudeau himself had once said that Canada was a country, not a nation.
- Canadians feared that Americans tended to regard Canada as the US's "attic". They would not have been surprised by the American I met in Williamsburg who, asked what he thought about Canada, replied "I don't."
- On 27 October 1998, the *Globe* and *Mail's* 'Thought du jour' read: "Canadians are generally indistinguishable from Americans and the surest way of telling the two apart is to make this observation to a Canadian".

Others found it easier to tell the difference between Canadians and other nationalities. They were proud of the phrase in the Constitution Act of 1867: "peace, order and good government" and saw it as encapsulating distinctive Canadian values. They contrasted it with the emphasis in the US Declaration of Independence on "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" and with France's attachment to "*liberté, égalité, fraternité.*"

I remember asking the (Canadian) Mayor of Kingston, Ontario, who had been meeting the Mayor of Syracuse, New York State, what was the main difference in the attitudes of their respective electorates. His answer was that, whereas American citizens regarded Government as a threat to their rights. Canadians regarded their own Government as providing protection for their rights. Canada's restrictions on private health care illustrated this difference of attitudes in the two countries.

Shortly before the 1995 Quebec referendum, that incomparable word-smith, Jan Morris, wrote: "The end of Canada would mean the end of Canadian-ness: the general Canadian sense of public kindness and concern would be overwhelmed by the general American sense of dog-eat-dog." I leave the last word to Laura Markle, the High Commission PR officer, a Canadian. She went on a training visit to London. On being asked, when she got back to Ottawa, how she had got on, she replied that it had been a great experience and everyone she met had been very kind; but she had been puzzled by one thing. As she got into the tube each morning on her way to work and said 'good morning' to the carriage, nobody had replied.

Valedictory

Retiring Ambassadors and High Commissioners used to send to the Foreign Secretary a final despatch with their valedictory impressions. It is a great pity that the tradition ended. My own valedictory covered the usual sort of ground. I included a plea for Tony Blair to pay Canada a long overdue visit. I was glad to learn that he did indeed visit Canada soon after I had left and disappointed that I was not still High Commissioner.

On the main subject that had so preoccupied me, I reported in my valedictory that the risk of Quebec's separation had receded since the 1995 referendum had nearly split Canada. Prosperity, globalisation, changing attitudes among young people, boredom with the issue and quite clever federal policies had all helped. But I added that the danger could return at short notice, for example if Ottawa put a foot wrong, particularly in an economic recession. I urged London not to underestimate the damage that secession would do to British interests; and, although we could not match American influence, we should be prepared to exert our own more vigorously in support of Canadian unity.

I repeated my warnings that other threats to the federation were growing. The political parties were becoming increasingly regionalised. Trade and other links across the border with the United States were growing faster than Canadian East/West ones. The big urban centres of Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver and Calgary were acting more and more independently of the federal and provincial governments. These developments were fragmenting the country. The case for constitutional reform of federal institutions, especially the Senate, and of federal/provincial relations was strengthening. But the consensus needed for reform was out of reach.

This constitutional stasis would help to preserve Canada's Monarchy, even though public support seemed gradually to be ebbing. This was not surprising given immigration patterns and the changing ethnic composition of Canada's population. But, in my view, British interests would suffer greatly if Canada were to become a Republic.

None of these political and constitutional strains might matter much while Canada's economy continued to prosper. But an economy which was so heavily dependent on the US economy and so burdened with debt could quickly turn down. When it did, current problems over aboriginals and in the health and education sectors would become even harder to solve. The proud slogan of "Canada is the best country in the world" might come to sound hollow.

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Probably the inevitable gloom I felt as I prepared to retire made me too pessimistic.

I concluded my valedictory despatch by airing three personal bees in my bonnet. First I said that the revolutionary and obviously sensible policy of combining responsibility in the FCO for policy with resources should be maintained and refined. I had helped design and pilot it as an Under Secretary in London from 1992 to 1995, having failed to launch it from within the Administration in the 1980s.

Secondly, I was uneasy at the progressive undermining of the principle of a unified Foreign Service and integrated foreign policy under the Foreign Secretary. The latter now shared his authority directly with a number of his Cabinet colleagues, including the Secretary of State for Trade, the Home Secretary and the Ministers of the devolved administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This change might be too late to reverse. But, with my earlier experience of the Cabinet Office in mind, I wondered whether the Whitehall machinery for coordinating the overseas interest of the various Ministers involved should not therefore be strengthened.

Thirdly I argued for the abolition of performance pay for individual officers, the system introduced in the 1980s for linking pay to performance. It did little to motivate the strong who worked hard and diligently because it was in their nature to do so. But it did something to demotivate the weak who became discouraged if they were not awarded a bonus. It also risked weakening team cohesion and strengthening the play of self-interest. It undermined the principle of service which was a more effective driving force than an ambiguous promise of a bit more cash. Instead the Government should offer fair salaries to everyone and, if the country could afford it, give it to teams not individuals.

Thus Veronica and I said goodbye to Canada. I would not have missed the diplomatic career for anything: its diversity, self-discipline, intellectual and physical demands, companionship, unique opportunities to observe and sometimes to influence world events. I had had a succession of fascinating jobs, culminating with four and a half years in "the best country in the world". Or the best but one.

APPENDIX 1

VOLUNTARY SERVICE OVERSEAS IN SARAWAK, 1963/1964

The following account is based on letters I wrote home at the time and which my mother saved. I have published separately a fuller version under the title 'Adventure in Sarawak'.

"You've got a new head, Sir."

The comment came from an Iban boy in a middle row of the classroom I was teaching Chinese history to. He may well have been the grandson of a headhunter responsible for some of the heads - shrivelled but not shrunk - I had seen hung in clusters in the boy's longhouse in the Ulu, that mysterious up-river country I had visited in the previous holidays. But he was not referring to a replacement head but to the haircut I had had in the Chinese bazaar, sitting quietly under a refreshing fan in the damp heat of a Sarawak afternoon.

I had first heard of VSO - Voluntary Service Overseas - at Oxford from a contemporary who had spent a year as a school leaver volunteer on community development work in a village on the banks of one of British Guiana's rivers in South America. He had enjoyed it so much that he was having difficulty adjusting to life as an undergraduate reading modern History at New College. I heard also that my cousin, David, was having an interesting time as an itinerant VSO teacher at remote farms in the Falklands. When therefore VSO started recruiting graduates, I applied, was accepted and sent to Sarawak, then on the eve of independence from British rule and federation as part of Malaysia. It had earlier been the private kingdom of the Brooke family from Cornwall before being taken over by the British Government following the Japanese occupation in the Second World War. I found a country at an early stage of development and therefore both materially poor and, in Western terms, unsophisticated. As I was to discover, its way of life enjoyed some advantages that ours in the West had lost.

The Foreign Office had agreed that, if I were successful in the Civil Service exam which I had taken from Oxford, they would allow me to defer my entry to spend a year as a volunteer abroad. The news of my exam success reached me soon after my arrival in Sarawak via a telegram from my mother handed to me across the table in a Chinese restaurant in Simanggang, from which I then travelled by

VSO in Sarawak 1963/1964

boat and land rover to Betong on the Saribas river. Betong was my home throughout my time in Sarawak.

I taught at St Augustine's, a combined Government Junior Secondary and Primary school run by the Anglican church. Nigel Heyward, the friendly Australian Headmaster, and his nice English wife, Pam, led a small local and expatriate staff, including a school leaver VSO and me. The 240 students in the secondary school were divided into six classes of 40 each. Their seven teachers were therefore hard worked; and occasionally, when a colleague was absent, I even found myself trying to manage two classes at a time.

The majority of the children were Ibans from the longhouses up river. Most of them boarded because they lived too far away to travel daily to and from school. The day students were mainly Chinese from the bazaar, living in their parents shophouses, and Malays from the kampong close to the river. Boys greatly outnumbered girls. Some 65 of the Ibans, whose parents could not afford the boarding fees, lived in simple leaf-roofed huts (known as 'langkaus') made by their families, on a hill above a swamp about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from the school. Nigel Heyward asked me to take a particular interest in these children and initially I used to walk out to them most days, after I had finished supervising and participating in Manual Work which ended at 3.45 p.m. Later I was to spend more and more time there, as we were able to introduce a feeding scheme for them and eventually had to get them to move to another site to make room for a new secondary school building.

My teaching curriculum varied through the year. To begin with, Nigel asked me to take on art and health science, for which I was entirely unqualified, as well as English literature, history and geography. Later, as more staff joined the team, I was able to shed art and health science and concentrate on English, history and geography. This involved swatting up Chinese and Indian history and Asian geography. What with preparation, teaching and marking, my classroom load was heavy. Outside the classroom, the langkaus, manual work, restoring the school library, socialising with the boarders, helping the students to produce a school magazine and to start a student council, and producing a short play in my final term left me with no time for much else. But at weekends I visited local longhouses as guests of some of the students; and during the school holidays I went further afield including a memorable 10-day trip up the Paku river into country so remote that the local people could not remember a previous visit by a white man.

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I spent Christmas in Brunei where my uncle, Jack Slater, was the Sultan's Chief of Police. My aunt Rosemary later visited Betong and joined a trip back to the Paku to experience longhouse life. We both wished that my cousin, Jan, had been able to come too.

In Betong I lived in an abandoned Government bungalow, in the company of John Curtis, an American Peace Corps volunteer who was introducing English language teaching in river Primary schools. The house occupied a jungle clearing on the edge of the town on a hill known by the locals as Ghost Hill or some times Snake Hill. We never saw ghosts but there were plenty of snakes, most of them relatively harmless tree snakes but occasionally more venomous kinds appeared: cobras and kraits. At the suggestion of Nigel Heyward, two Iban boys, Gilbert Lunsa and Jonathon Biju, who couldn't afford boarding fees, shared the house with us and gave us help with the chores. They were also good at dealing with snakes. Their English profited and so did our understanding of Iban culture. John and I became good friends and have remained in touch ever since. He and his wife, Julia, visit Britain regularly; and we have been to stay with them both in New York and in Williamsburg, Virginia.

I only half realised it at the time; but Sarawak was on the threshold of enormous change. Most visible was the start made on the new Secondary school classrooms and boarding house and the construction of a new road linking Betong to the national network. When I arrived, access was either the way I had come - via river and land rover from Simanggang - or by Chinese launch from Kuching, along the coast and then up the river Saribas. I used both routes; but, by the time I left, the road had reached Betong and I was able to take the bus all the way to the capital, Kuching.

Naturally the road heralded even greater changes, for example to the size of Betong, to local attitudes and aspirations, particularly among younger people, to the number of visitors to the town, to the local economy and to the magnificent jungle which would be cleared in the coming years. Gradually Betong was to join the main currents of national life. And with these changes, the old separate lives of bazaar, kampong and longhouse were gradually to give way to a more homogeneous society. I left well before this happened. But I could see that the new Federal Government of Malaysia was trying to bind Sarawak firmly into the federation by a programme of public works and that this would eventually lead to more profound changes of a kind hard then to predict. In doing so it was reacting to the threat from Indonesia across the Borneo border. President Soekarno had launched his military confrontation against Sarawak shortly

before I arrived to try to prevent federation and a contest ensued therefore for the hearts and minds of the local people. I never felt threatened by Indonesian incursions across the border; but whispers about them reached us in Betong. And when I visited Gilbert Lunsá's longhouse on the road between Kuching and Simanggang which ran close to the frontier, he couldn't show me his pepper garden for fear of running into an Indonesian patrol.

Most of the time, the outside world seemed very remote. But occasionally its news reached us fast. One terrible day, the 22 November 1963, I was stopped on my bicycle outside the school by another teacher who had just heard on his portable radio of President Kennedy's assassination in Dallas. I can still remember the shock we all felt, local people and westerners alike. The overriding feeling in Betong was one of shared grief and horror at this outrage on the opposite side of the world.

Nearly all their parents, regardless of race, brought their children up strictly and to respect their elders. Internal family loyalties were strong. Classroom discipline was therefore never a problem, particularly because the medium of instruction was English, my mother tongue but not my pupils'. So I had an important verbal advantage. Above all, they shared a common view of the importance of protecting 'face.' They were proud people and it was essential to avoid putting them in a position where they felt shamed or inadequate in front of their peers. Even-handedness and fairness to each individual, regardless of race, ability and gender were essential in what one said to them and how one said it.

No doubt an older and more experienced teacher would - or should - have found all this straight forward and obvious. But I was 22, had had no professional training, and had been brought up in a very different culture, in which a teacher's criticism of a pupil could be very robust indeed. So I made mistakes in what I said and the tone I used. But, every now and again, my pupils' response to one of my lessons was so enthusiastic and positive that I emerged feeling on top of the world. Lessons didn't always go 100% well; but when they did, it was obvious. And the reason seemed obvious too. The more carefully I had prepared the lesson, the more interested I myself was in the subject and, I admit, the better I had slept the night before, the greater the chance of success. Teaching the day after a late-night longhouse party, for example, could all too easily lead to tactlessness and impatience. I sometimes thought that tact and patience were the most important virtues a teacher needed; and that I did not have enough patience to take up teaching as a career. On the other hand, the same might be said of diplomacy.

John and I spent quite a lot of time, some might say 'too much', partying. One weekend in February we were persuaded by some local teachers to organise a 'dance' in, if memory serves me right, the District Council offices which had a large room with a wooden floor more suitable for dancing than the tiles of Bungalow No. 2. I sent my Oxford friend, Bobby, an account of the evening's intimacies:

"We had an odd sort of party last night. Some of the young teachers want western-style dances. The difficulty always is finding enough females. Last night there must have been about 20 or 30 men as against 2 American Peace Corps women, the bossy Chinese wife of a district official and three local teachers (2 honeys and I b....) But it is funny how inhibited one feels. You know that it's a big thing for them to dance like this and slightly risqué to dance in the finger tips (I can't pretend it's arms) of a man - so for you too it seems rather daring and I found myself sitting around like a male wall flower, not daring to queue up for the duty of dancing with one of the girls. You swapped partners in the most decorous 19th Century manner possible."

I confided in another Oxford friend, a woman, that one also had to be careful not to show too much interest in a girl for fear of finding oneself, before one knew it, committed to matrimony.

We were not the only people to hold parties. Chinese New Year and the Malay Hari Raya Puasa celebrations, marking the end of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, were popular opportunities for entertaining one's friends and acquaintances. Every 31 years the two annual feasts coincided. 1964 was one such year. John and I spent two whole long days in the bazaar and kampong, going from house to house, accepting in each a glass of beer, lemonade, brandy, arak .. whatever we were offered. Another important social duty was to attend the festivals held from time to time in a local longhouse from which I would walk home in the moonlight through the jungle and fall tipsy and exhausted into bed, to wake a few short hours later for early morning school. Just before I left Betong at the end of my third term, I attended a Gawai Antu, an important spirit festival of a kind held once in a generation to mark the passage to the spirit world of those who had died in the previous thirty years or so. It lasted all night. I went straight from the party to the bus which took me to Kuching whence I flew to Singapore and home: a physical and cultural transition which left me confused and troubled.

Shortly before leaving I met Jo, who had just started as a VSO teacher in Simanggang. We had friends in Britain in common and exchanged letters after my departure. She summed up my own feelings very well when she wrote:

“..The longer I stay out here the more of an impact the whole experience makes on me - chiefly of course the people - the wonderful generosity and spontaneity and natural sincerity - it is all quite overwhelming - and it makes one realise what we have lost, with our industrialisation - literacy - universities, in fact much vaunted ‘progress’. I can’t bear the thought of leaving, but if I were to prolong it, it would be so much more difficult to re-adapt oneself.”

I too couldn’t bear the thought of leaving and, had I stayed longer, would certainly have found re-adaption even more difficult than it proved. I have often wondered what I would have done if I hadn’t entered the Foreign Office and so had had no job waiting for me in London. I might well have asked VSO to extend my time in Betong; and, if I had stayed another year in Sarawak, I had vague ideas of then doing some kind of Master’s degree at an Australian university, perhaps in Pacific studies (inspired by Meredith, an Australian friend at Lady Margaret Hall). Or I might have taken up an offer I had received of an interview for a possible job overseas with a publisher like Longman’s or Macmillan’s. In which case, my career and life would have been very different. I shall never know.

When I left Sarawak, I was fairly sure that I didn’t want to teach as a career. However worthwhile I had found the job at St Augustine’s - and I was lucky that Nigel Heyward gave me a full, indeed a very full, load - I feared I didn’t have the patience for a lifetime of teaching. And, only much later, after I had retired from the Foreign Office and seen at close hand the work of a Headmaster of a major school, did I come to understand its rewards and to wonder immodestly if I might have been suitable for the role.

It wasn’t the teaching as such that I would miss, but the people: their charm, sincerity, friendliness, dignity and pride, their sense of humour and fun. It was also of course the exotic quality of the people and places which left such vivid memories that would remain with me for ever. Those memories seemed to occupy a private compartment in my mind which I could open and take delight in whenever life got difficult in the future. I could hear again the thunder of rain on the classroom roof as I gazed across the Chinese gardens at the District Officer’s house on its hill beyond; and the early morning sounds of cocks crowing and children laughing as I awoke on the floor of a longhouse. I could remember the children crowding around me, holding my hand as they practised

their English. I could taste the Chinese rice and soup as the light faded in the bazaar and I ate my evening meal before bicycling home. I could hear the mysterious and alarming night noises in the bushes as I got back to the bungalow at night.

Inevitably I suffered from occasional homesickness, both relieved and made worse by letters from home and from Oxford friends. The father of one friend died under tragic circumstances and I wished I could have been with him. Two girls I had known wrote to say they were getting married, leaving twinges in my own heart. Would I ever find the girl of my dreams?

I had a few minor regrets. I wished that time had allowed me to learn one of the local languages or I had at least taken lessons in Chinese or Iban. I wished I had made time to accept the invitation of some Chinese teachers to help with their English lessons in the Chinese Middle School which I used to pass every day on my way from the bungalow to the school. I sometimes wished also that I had lived on the school campus rather than the other side of town in such an isolated bungalow or at least had lived more in the company of local teachers. On the other hand, my friendship with John would last a life time.

I remember being asked by a local expatriate why I had decided to work for VSO rather than take up my Foreign Office appointment immediately after leaving Oxford. The only answer I had been able to come up with at the time was "because I didn't want to go straight from an Oxford lecture room to a Foreign Office drawing room". There was some truth in that, although quite why I thought that FO life was to be in a drawing room I don't now remember. Whatever the explanation, that private compartment in my mind retains its power to soothe and distract.

Appendix 2

THE UTTERMOST CORNERS OF GREECE

Note

This account of two journeys in Greece, undertaken in 1969 and 1970, while I was working in the Embassy in Athens, is based on a diary I wrote at the time.

One afternoon, the Ambassador summoned me to his office. "I want you, Anthony," he said, "to go where none of the rest of us can go. Take a train, then a bus and when the bus gives up, take a mule and when the mule gives up, go on foot, but go to the uttermost corners of Greece and come back and tell me what you've found." In October 1969 I duly set out for the Pindus mountains in Northern Greece with a knapsack on my back. I took the train from Athens to Karditsa from which I planned to find a bus into the mountains and then go by foot to Agrafa. From there I hoped to find my way to Karpenission and thence to the Gulf of Corinth. My aim was to gain a first hand impression of Greek village life, of the attitude of the villagers to the Revolutionary Government and of the Government's impact on the countryside. I would explain my presence so far off the tourist trail by saying I was on leave from the Embassy and wanted to see the little known Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Byzantine churches of Evrytania and Aetolia.

The Pindus Mountains: Evrytania and Aetolia, 1-8 October 1969

Wednesday 1 October

The train from Athens north was full. Not having booked a seat, I stood for the first few hours, or sat on the carriage step in company with a soldier, a sailor and a leather worker from Volos. Shortly after Lamia, I changed trains - from the modern Salonika express to a slow shabby country train for Karditsa. There I was lucky to find a 'lorry bus' for Neraida, south of the artificial lake of Tavropos, which I had decided to make my first night's destination. It had been market day in Karditsa and there were 30 people in the lorry bus apart from rolls of barbed wire, ironmongery of all kinds, a cot, oil for the lamps and an almost infinite number of indeterminate bundles of what looked like dirty washing. I had some difficulty in persuading the driver that I really did want to go to Neraida. He seemed to think it improbable that any foreigner should want to go there. I was told later that evening that I was the first foreigner that anybody could remember having visited Neraida. By the time that we reached the village

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everybody in the bus knew that I was an Englishman, that I worked for the British Embassy in Athens, that I was on leave and that I had come to Evrytania to study old Byzantine churches and monasteries. Fortunately there are a lot of such monuments in the province. As I sat in the local *cafeneion* that evening and it gradually filled with people, I watched surprise, or perhaps suspicion, turn to acceptance and then enthusiasm for my mission on the faces of the villagers. It was to be the same everywhere throughout my journey. I know Athenian Greeks who have been taken to the village police station or, if none, the *cafeneion* by the *Tagma Ethnikis Asfalias* (home guard) because they have been unable to give any other explanation for their presence in remote areas than that they are on a walking tour, and who have escaped only after an hour's hard argument. They have even openly been accused of spying. I never met serious trouble of this kind. The worst that happened was on the following day in Karoplesi when I met the local policeman as I passed through on my way to Saika. I deliberately went up to him as he was standing talking in a nearby garden, intending to spend no more than 2 or 3 minutes with him.

"*Kalymera sas*," I said.

"*Kalymera*. Who are you?" he asked suspiciously.

I introduced myself.

"Come. Let's go to the police station" he said.

I explained the purpose of my journey: leave from the Embassy, Byzantine churches etc.

"Have you got written permission from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs? May I see it?"

"No. This isn't necessary in non-border areas."

"May I see your written authority from the Embassy for taking leave?"

"I don't need it".

"Did you inform the police authorities in Karditsa of your presence before you left for Neraida yesterday", he pressed me.

"No. I didn't know that this was necessary", I replied.

"It is advisable", he said, "for diplomats. and indeed, all foreigners, to keep the police informed of their movements, especially when they are planning to visit remote areas. Then we can find you if you get into difficulties in the mountains."

"Do you mean it isn't safe for foreigners to travel in some areas of Greece?," I asked.

"Of course not. But you can never tell what might happen in the mountains without roads. I'll let other police units know that you are on your way."

And with that he offered me some *loukoumi* (Greek Turkish Delight) and let me free.

The next day I went immediately to the police station on arrival in Agrafa. They were expecting me and no fresh explanation of my interest in the local churches was necessary. Only one of the other villages I subsequently visited was large enough to merit a police station but I did not meet any more police throughout my journey.

That first evening in Neraida, I stayed with the village priest. He was 63 and had been a priest for only 18 years. So he wouldn't qualify for a pension until he was 80. Like other priests I was to meet, he came from the immediate area. He lived with his wife, having married before becoming a priest - you may not marry after ordination. He seemed to enjoy the respect of the villagers and to have achieved a position of authority, more as a result of his personality than his priesthood. But he was treated with complete familiarity in the village. He expressed enthusiasm for the Colonels' 'Revolution'. This probably wasn't surprising given that his son was the village clerk. But Neraida did seem to have benefited from the Colonels' rule in the last two years. Retaining walls had been built along the village street to prevent the earth above from falling into the road. A small square was being laid out. Large concrete pipes were being laid to protect the village from flooding off the mountains above. There was talk of house loans.

Thursday 2 October

I had decided after discussion with the priest and indeed the entire *cafeneion* to go to Karoplesi via the little church of Spinassas built about 1600; and then to Saika where there is a ruined 17th Century monastery. The café proprietor hired me his mule and I was also accompanied by the priest. We rode along the sides of valleys and over the shoulders of mountains, much of the time through wooded country. We talked about Protestantism. The priest was surprised to hear how like Orthodoxism Anglicanism was.

In Saika, after changing mules in Karoplesi, I sat for a while in the *cafeneion* where I discovered that a few of the villagers knew one or two words of *boliatica*, the language described by Patrick Leigh Fermor in his book *Romeli*, spoken by the Zitianos in the villages north of Nafpaktos. We talked of sheep and trees. The village's flocks here and everywhere I went in Evrytania were much diminished from even 10 years ago because the Government was insisting on converting much of the land to forest, which provided little employment but did at least bring roads to get the timber out. I met the village schoolmaster who

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invited me to his house for supper. A young man of 26, he was expecting a new posting shortly and hoped for somewhere nearer a town but would have no choice where. I spent the night in the churchwarden's house. He was a little hunchback with a kind face who insisted I have the only bedroom to myself. In the morning he gave me half a cold chicken to take with me on my journey - a princely meal. Most meals I had during the trip consisted of beans, tomatoes, bread and goat cheese. Occasionally someone opened a tin of sardines or meat, exceptionally, to honour a guest. Breakfast was always a cup of Turkish coffee (then always called *tourkiko* rather than *ellinico*), sometimes bread. The only place where meat was available as a matter of course was a remote inn which catered for road workers. Otherwise I saw practically no meat, even for sale. Pasta, green beans, lentils, occasionally grapes and apples completed the local diet. Wine was a treat. I saw no obvious signs of malnutrition; the villagers were tough and healthy. When I stayed in private houses, which was four out of the seven nights I was away, I was never allowed to pay. The most I could do was to give a present of biscuits and cigarettes or, in a priest's house, a donation to the church.

Friday 3 and Saturday 4 October

I was lucky next morning. I had decided to go to Agrafa in the heart of the mountains, where no road led, seven hours walk away. I couldn't find a mule nor a guide. But at 7 in the morning two brothers from Karditsa suddenly turned up by car, intending to walk on to Agrafa that morning. I went with them.

Vasili and Apostolos Thomas had been born in Agrafa but had left before the war and now had a building business in Karditsa. Once a year they went to Agrafa to visit their father, still alive but an old man of over 80 who lived with their eldest brother in the family home. There was no doubt what the opinion of these two men about the Revolution was. It had brought peace and quiet, the famous *isihia*, and everybody could get on with their work without interruption. Things were much better in Greece now that the pre-revolutionary political chaos was over.

For the first hour I shared my rucksack with the churchwarden's brother who came with us as far as his sheep. We climbed steeply for the first four hours. For the last three our way led downhill on a narrow stony path along the sides of enormous valleys. We passed a Vlach village, now abandoned for the winter except for a single family who had not yet followed their fellows down to the lowlands for winter pasture. Occasionally we passed a laden mule but mostly

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the country was deserted and we were alone in an immense mountain silence. Apostolos had some difficulty keeping up: he was even shorter of breath than me. At one o'clock our paths separated. Their father's house was the other side of the river from the village itself and I had to do a detour up to the head of the valley and back again.

The first glimpse I caught of Agrafa itself was from far above. The 'unwritten' village. Tradition says it is called Agrafa because it had never appeared in the tax records of the Byzantine Empire. It, and the whole mountain area named after it, is and has always been remote from the main centres of authority, and allowed a large measure of autonomy from Byzantine emperors and Turkish sultans. Today the villagers boast of the part their ancestors played in maintaining 'Greek civilisation', uncontaminated by foreign influence, and in driving out the Turks; and in the part they themselves played during the German occupation in resisting the conqueror.

I climbed down the mountain side to a new concrete bridge built very recently and then up the side of the bluff towards the village. Rounding a corner I saw a gaunt figure in black waiting for me on the skyline. We sat down and smoked a cigarette together, watching his goats spread across opposite sides of the valley. For him Agrafa was a fine place but there was no communication with the world. The main thing was that the whole country enjoyed complete peace and quiet now that the demonstrations had been stopped in the towns. He wandered off to get a goat out of difficulties.

I entered Agrafa down a cobbled path with white-washed cottages on the right covered with red roses in bloom. The local gendarmerie were asleep but the *horofilikas* (village policeman) on duty emerged. He had heard that I was studying the local churches. I would want to go to Marathos and perhaps Epiniana. We set off to find *zoa*, animals for the journey, and a guide. First stop - the *cafeneion*, a well stocked shop with two figures dozing over a game of cards. I ate my bread and chicken and drank a cup of coffee. There were no animals to be had and nobody wanted to go to Marathos that day. The afternoon prolonged itself. I discovered that the village had its own kiosk next to the slaughter tree. The *horofilikas* accompanied me on my conscientious visit to one of the local churches. Once there had been five or six. Now this was the last of the old ones: cracked by earthquake, blistered by damp, almost abandoned. The wall paintings were crude and faded. Marathos would be more interesting. But I never got to Marathos. I had to visit the same church a second time, with the priest, Constantine Papagiorgou: a thin mournful figure, determined to succeed

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in finding a mule for me where the policeman had failed. They set off in opposite directions in competition and I was left to myself and the *cafeneion* which was now filling with villagers. Not many visitors came; perhaps no foreigner had been for four or five years. The mountains were very beautiful but there was no road. The village was remote, isolated; it had nothing to offer tourists. They had to sell their produce in Karditsa; and as I knew that meant a seven-hour walk and then a lorry. We listened to a long story, told for my benefit, about an ikon of immense value stolen from a local church and later recovered in Athens, with a ritual attention that betrayed long familiarity with both the story and the teller. Conversation fragmented. One of the villagers had received two instalments on a house loan but could not get a third until he had completed at least one room. The priest reappeared with a list in triplicate, which he had received from the ecclesiastical authorities, of all the families in the village. He had to bring it up to date. Should he include all members of a family including those who lived in Larissa, Karditsa, Athens or only those actually living in the village? He disappeared again.

The Chief of Police strutted in, fresh from his afternoon sleep, rubber lipped, too conscious of his position to be able to join in the conversation. There were three gendarmes under him. There had been four but one had been detached to guard the communists on Leros. They had arrested a man for growing opium in the hills last year. He was now serving a four year prison sentence.

Finally the priest reappeared triumphant. Did I wish to go to Marathos? If so I would not be able to reach Karpenission until Monday because no bus ran on Sunday from the station on the road. If not, then he had found a man willing to take me that night down the river by mule to catch the bus which left at 4.30 a.m. for Karpenission. I decided to go that night. The priest was flushed with his success. He invited me to his house for a meal and we listened to the Prime Minister's speech on the radio. He turned it off with a gesture of dismissal and took out a letter received that day from his son in Athens. We sat in silence as he read. Tears welled up in his eyes. His son had decided to stay in Athens to finish his education. The priest was overwhelmed with self-pity and pride, pride for it was his son's success in his exams that had made the decision possible. It was then, as we embraced in mutual sympathy, that I realised the source of at least some of his emotion. The ouzo that we had drunk together earlier in the *cafeneion* had for him been only one of many.

We were joined for the meal by a formidable matron - presumably his wife, possibly his sister but there was no resemblance. We ate pasta, tomatoes and

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cheese. "I am sorry to say I have a complaint against the English," she said. "The truth is that they do not love Greece." With good humour and a sort of restrained compassion, she explained that we had exploited Greece during the war and had never repaid our debt. Greece had detained a German army with the price of the blood of her children. It had done her no good. Only Britain had benefited. Her quarrel was with the British Government, not the British people however. Not many English travellers came to Agrafa. She had been told by her grandmother that 80 years ago an Englishman had been entertained in their house in Agrafa, accompanied by his mother: 'She wore furs, a magnificent woman, *mia aristokratissa*.' The meal ended. They crossed themselves and I lay down to sleep before my journey.

We left Agrafa at about 11.30 p.m. I had slept for an hour after supper and was woken by the priest who by now was more hungover than drunk. The muleteer was huddled over the fire in the dark kitchen and the priest brewed coffee. As we sipped the sweet scalding Turkish coffee we talked about Greece and England. The muleteer remembered an Englishman who had passed through Agrafa about four years previously and who was following the rivers of the area northwards. Our talk inevitably reached the war years and the English soldiers who had paid in gold sovereigns. The priest and the muleteer gazed at me in disbelief when I told them I had never seen a gold sovereign. They speculated why Britain had been so powerful and decided it was because of our colonies. I found the words for coal and industrial revolution but we tacitly decided we were getting out of our depth and I abandoned a private attempt to introduce 'inventive genius.'

It was bitterly cold in the yard when we left the warm kitchen - and pitch black. The mules were stamping in the courtyard outside and I had to edge my way gingerly along the wall to avoid their hooves. The priest disappeared to bring me a shepherd's cloak made of a thick felt that would have done good work as an underlay for a carpet. I wrapped myself in it and we set off on foot, descending rapidly to the river below the village. We walked for an hour by torch light along a narrow track carved out of cliffs along the river. Finally we descended again to the river and mounted. I rode astride. We put away our torches and adjusted our eyes to the dark. The river bed was a broad shingle stretch and the river itself wound from side to side, obliging us to cross and recross the river a dozen or twenty times during the night. The first crossing became a battle of wills between mule and man. I imitated the muleteer's constipated-sounding cry of 'Heep', kicked the animal in the ribs and we ventured cautiously into the river; but came to a standstill half way across, my

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feet just touching the water. Finally I must have got the intonation more or less right, and we managed the next crossing without a stop. Occasionally we would pass other riders heading towards Agrafa and exchange greetings before the dark swallowed us up. The wooden saddle was hard and uncomfortable - or my legs the wrong size. But sitting side-saddle, which I tried once, was no better because balance was difficult in the dark. I forgot the discomfort when we climbed out of the river bed along narrow paths across rock falls and cliff faces. My animal had a tendency to lean out at the corners, which it combined with an unnerving technique of not bringing its back legs round until its front legs were on the edge when it had turned the corner. I found it hard to preserve the reputation by Englishmen in Greece of *psychramia*, a sort of Nelsonian or Wellingtonian sangfroid. At 4.15 a.m. we crossed a bridge and found the bus waiting. It was still dark enough for me to be taken by the driver as a Vlach friend of his in my shepherd's cloak.

"*Ya sou Vasili!* How's the arm?"

And to me, "Where are you from?"

"*Apo tin Anglia*" I replied."

"Enough of that" he said "It's too early for joking."

There seemed no obvious reason why we should have changed from mule to bus at this particular point. We continued to follow the river, which we crossed twice more. The driver picked his way through banks of shingle and round stunted river bushes before we reached any kind of a road. The bus filled and emptied at regular intervals as we passed lights along the way, dim shapes of houses, figures dozing at the side of the road, running out of the dark as the klaxon sounded, an instrument of immense power, a factory hooter that drowned even the blare of the radio. The nearer we came to Karpenission the less I had to explain my presence. I dropped my study of Byzantine churches and became an English traveller and finally a tourist. Thus demoted I came to Karpenission. The journey from Agrafa had taken nine hours.

Sunday 5 October

"I was joined in Karpenission by two Greek friends from Athens, young bachelors who used to spend many weekends together walking and climbing in the remote parts of Greece. They had decided to meet me in Karpenission to accompany me to Proussos on Sunday. We started at 5 a.m. in Evangelos's car, an ancient Peugeot much habituated to the rough roads of the country. We got out to walk after a bit because the road was still under construction. We spent an hour over breakfast of sheep intestines, salad and wine on a wooden platform in

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an idyllic spot overlooking the river where there was a small taverna catering for the pilgrim traffic to Proussos. At 11 a.m. my two companions turned back when the valley ahead shook with an explosion which tore the footpath ahead to fragments. I continued on my way, obliged to make a wide detour around the construction site, with advice from the local population. It was an enchanting journey. The path went through a pine forest, past vineyards irrigated by a crystal stream which ran along the path through moss and roots. I spent an hour in the tiny hamlet of Tornos, sipping coffee in the *cafeneion* where the card game in progress was so intense that the players almost forgot to ask my business.

I reached Proussos around 3 p.m. hot and sweaty. In less than an hour the sun disappeared over the rim of the mountains and I froze. It is a small village, famous for its monastery where miracles are worked by a powerful ikon of the Virgin Mary.

Before walking down to the monastery, I bought lunch in the village but found only bread, goat cheese, figs and wine. There I met the drunk, one of the very few I have ever seen in Greece. He was scraggy and inclined to be bellicose. The rest of the village appeared to be avoiding the café where he sat but I realised his state too late. He came across to share my table and preached Mr Papadopoulos's virtues for over an hour. Eventually he was shamed into going home by the café proprietor, leaving me free to descend to the monastery where he had threatened to accompany me.

The monastery was enormous. It overlooked a deep gorge and was ugly with gaunt wings jerry-built in the Twentieth Century. The foundation is Sixteenth Century. New wings were being built to house the many pilgrims (and tourists) that came from all over Greece. During my visit there were two groups, a total of about 50 men and women. There had been 150 the previous day (Saturday night). The Abbot was 33 and had come from Agrinion 11 years ago. There was only one other monk. I attended the Sunday evening service, wrapped in the dark of a remote corner, immersed in the endless cacophony of bad antiphonal singing: the church alive with figures, bustling from stall to ikon, lighting candles, prostrating themselves to kiss the stone floor. There was a kind of warmth in the church or at least the absence of cold compared to outside.

Supper, served in the refectory, consisted of beans, bread, cheese, grapes and wine. Fortunately there was no fast as there was once when I visited Mount Athos. I shared the meal with a group of eleven sturdy Athenian women, many of whom had originally come from the area. Nine wore black, one red and one

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green. I had done well, they said, to come to see the church and the ikon. They ate quickly and returned to their devotions in the church. That night I was given a small room, the length of its bed. Above the foot of the bed there were deep shelves taking up a third of the room, piled with blankets. There were sheets on the bed but clearly they had not been changed since the last occupant. Towards midnight I was woken by a knock on the door and someone demanded blankets. I piled their arms high and left another pile outside the door, determined not to be disturbed again. I slept until 4.30 a.m. when the Abbot woke me for my bus.

Monday 6 October

The mountain villages south of Proussos as far as the Gulf of Corinth were served by a web of roads, unsurfaced, carved out of the rock sides of the valley, endlessly looping back on each other. It was possible to travel for an hour and still be within sight of your starting point far above or below. Along these roads the buses moved, 16 or 20 seaters with the engine and clearance of a heavy lorry. During the next three days I spent a total of 15 hours in three such buses. They started in the most remote villages at 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning so as to reach the nearest market town in time for the day's work. My bus from Proussos left at 5.30 a.m. but I first had half an hour's walk from the monastery in the black night. The bus was full when we started: there were 16 seats, mostly taken by the 11 Athenian pilgrim women, and room on benches at the back for the six of us who found no seats. The cold was intense. But the bus soon warmed up, even though the windows were ill fitting and cold seeped in through a hundred cracks and corners. By the time we reached Thermos, where the Athenian passengers changed bus for Agrinion, there were 37 of us in the bus; two hunting dogs, two goats and a few hens having already got off. A small boy was sick on my feet. An enormous woman in black kept her balance with implacable fingers gripping my knee. There was an interlude when we stopped half way down a mountain to repair a small bolt on which the entire weight of the bus seemed to be resting.

I spent two hours in Thermos, time enough to eat a 10 o'clock breakfast of keftedes, salad and beer with one of my fellow passengers before his bus left for Agrinion and mine for Platanos. Having read Patrick Leigh Fermor's *Romeli* I wanted to see some of the villages he describes in the area north of Nafpactos. I had imagined they would still be as poor as when he went, if not as poor as in the Nineteenth Century when they were the home of the beggars, the *zitianous*. The bus left for Platanos at 12 o'clock; and would only start by being run down

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the main street backwards because the battery was flat. This time we weren't full and I shared a seat with a garage mechanic from Messolonghi on his way for a holiday in his home village in the mountains. The passengers got to know each other well in the next five hours. We stopped for nearly an hour waiting for a bulldozer to finish its work on a section of the road. We spent another $\frac{3}{4}$ hour in Platanos itself, seated on the church steps in the last patch of sun, sipping coffee as the bus driver delivered his parcels. Platanos was not as I had expected. It had become a summer resort for Athenians and the villagers had apparently left their poverty behind. The houses were in a fine state of repair, balconies rioting with flowers. An enormous plane tree shaded the clean square where we sat. I had already decided not to stay there, because I had learned from one of the passengers, on his way to fetch his sheep down from their summer pasture in the mountains to the central plain for the winter, that there was an old monastery - Fourteenth Century he said - at a village called Ambelokiotissa in the direction we were going. This was more than a priest, also a passenger on the bus, had been able or willing to tell me. The sheep owner said that, if I stayed the night at the roadside inn where he was intending to break his journey, I could walk over to the monastery the next day. He was anxious that I should know that he was no Vlach but a substantial farmer, with a house (a proper house I was to understand) in Agrinion itself. He did the journey with his sheep twice a year; it took only about three days. He slept out with his sheep, taking enough food with him for the journey.

We reached the inn just as the sun disappeared, at about 5 o'clock. There were two cafés by themselves, without another house in sight, in the midst of an enormous mountain wilderness. Roadworks were in progress nearby and the workers stayed the night at this isolated place. There was a room free and I took it. I spent until 9 or 10 at night drinking ouzo, sitting first in one café, then in the other. My host was an old man who remembered little of the English he had learned during eleven years he had lived in America between the World Wars. His café was wretchedly poor, bleak, cold, dirty. He and his wife were too old to join their son, a priest, in America where they knew they would feel in the way: too young to die. Their son had been over for a visit last year and had probably brought money because they had hired a man to rebuild a part of their house. This man had also been abroad; he had spent three years working in Germany, sending money home to his wife and family, until he fell ill and had to come home. There was meat to be seen in the other café but I preferred the look of the beans which were delicious, the inevitable tomatoes, bread and cheese.

Tuesday 7 October

My walk to Ambelokiotissa took me the whole day. I overslept and did not start until 9 a.m. It took me nearly four hours on the road to reach Homori, a badly depopulated village in a fine position with mountains all round. I drank coffee in the local shop and listened to a long eulogy on the present government from the shopkeeper. If Greece had had this government ten years ago, how much better off the villagers would be now. He was referring mostly to the agricultural debts which had been cancelled. There were no public works in the village to justify such a statement. The school had been rebuilt, but by a rich emigrant to America. I was told that in 1950 there had been 100 families in the village; now there were 40. Houses stood empty to witness the fact. A man with a gun walked in. He was over for the summer from America. He told the boy to fetch me figs. He had been ill and no longer worked but received a pension from the American government of \$160 a month. I bought some bread and cheese and found the path to the monastery, with the help of a large lady dressed in brown, a Greek American who had come over on a charter flight for a month to visit her relations. Twenty others in this village alone had come on the same flight.

It was a very hot day, at least until 4 p.m. when the sun went down. By then I had reached Ambelokiotissa and was established in the *cafeneion*, one of four as I later discovered, eating *loukoumi* and drinking Turkish coffee. There was no bed free in the *cafeneion*, because a group of four forestry officials had arrived. The local *agrofilikas* offered me a room for the night in his house. In the end however I stayed with a young boy of 17 and his mother and grandmother in a cottage on the outskirts of the village. He was a petrol pump attendant in Athens, visiting his mother for a fortnight's holiday to help her. Both her husband and daughter lived in Athens but appeared to be sending little money home, to judge by the condition of the house.

I visited the monastery but found that all the buildings were comparatively recent, some indeed built last year and one still under construction. The solitary monk was weak in the head and I was shown over by a passing villager. The bishop came once a year from Nafpactos; as far as I could learn, the new buildings were to cater for pilgrims and perhaps conferences. There would have been a room for me there but I could not face the monk's company and in any case preferred the café life in the village below. That evening I met a man who had fought in the Korean war, much travelled as a result in the Far East. He plied me and the other customers with ouzo - and the party went well.

Wednesday 8 October

The bus left for Nafpactos at 4.30 a.m. Nikos, my host, who was also travelling to Nafpactos, and I nearly missed it. It seemed colder than usual and all the windows were kept open for the sake of a girl who was intermittently sick for the next five hours. We reached Nafpactos at 9.30 a.m. and, with a rising temperature and feeling increasingly ill, I decided to take the shortest route back to Athens. Instead therefore of taking country buses along the north coast of the Gulf and staying the night at Amfissa, I took the express coach via Rion for Athens which I reached that afternoon.

The Peloponnese: from Patras to Tripolis, 19-25 September 1970

In September the following year, 1970, the Ambassador told me to return to grassroots Greece, this time to the Peloponnese. I decided to start in Patras on the Gulf of Corinth and aim for Tripolis in the centre of the Peloponnese.

Eighty years ago, in 1890, a Greek doctor called Christos Koryllos, living in Patras, published an account of a journey he had recently made on foot from Patras to Tripolis, through the mountains of the Northern Peloponnese. He took a friend with him, a lawyer called Christos Maragopoulos, and also a mule, Korpa, and its master, Michael Bairachtaris. In his book, he gave an exact description of the route they took, the villages they stayed in, the legends they heard and the ruins and sights they saw, as well as of the principal occupations of the inhabitants. He was evidently a native of the region for they stayed mostly with friends.

Now, 80 years on, Koryllos's book was as good a guide to the same route as I could find. Alkis Anghelou, my Greek teacher, had found a copy in his library and lent it to me more or less as a joke. It was invaluable; for it served not only as a guide to these comparatively remote parts, but as an explanation of my presence and as a key to the villages through which the doctor had passed. The 1970s traveller in such areas of Greece was regarded with suspicion by the local inhabitants, who were used neither to strangers nor foreigners coming to their villages. Almost their only visitors were natives of the village who had emigrated to the towns and who sometimes came to spend their summer holidays where they or their parents had been born. Anybody else was suspected of ulterior and sinister moves: particularly if he was alone. On my journey in the Pindus mountains the previous year, when I had explained my presence by saying I was studying Byzantine churches, I had met no difficulty.

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But I had heard as much about miracles worked by the local saint as about life in the villages; and my questions had had to be circumspect. This time, armed with Koryllos's *Walking from Patras to Tripolis*, I was able to say that I was following the same route in order to write an article comparing the situation in 1890 with that in 1970; and the door to the village opened a crack.

Saturday 19 September

Corinth railway station, from which I started, was full of Greek soldiers, shepherded by immaculately dressed officers, fortunately travelling to Athens rather than, as I was, to Patras. The station was decorated with two large modern wall paintings: one with a pantheon of heroes of the Greek War of Independence of 1821, heroically depicted, and the other of classical Greek heroes, equally heroically depicted but including, rather oddly, Julius Caesar. In the train I nursed Koryllos on my knees, an offering to the curiosity of the Greeks; and shared the row with a 17-year-old painter from Aegion, who had learned French 'because everyone else learned English' and had been rewarded for his initiative by a job in the Club Méditerranée the previous summer; now he was planning to ship as crew on a boat to Australia. My second companion was a fat pensioner who exchanged anaemic jokes with his friend, a man whose efforts to amuse the child in front only succeeded in slamming the window on its fingers: 'I didn't mean to do harm. I meant to do good,' he complained.

We arrived in Patras at 1 p.m. and I went immediately to the bus station where I learned from two grumpy officials that the next bus for Halandritsa did not leave until 6.30 p.m. "Why did I want to go there and not on to Kalavryta?" I explained and one of them thawed and asked to borrow Koryllos until the bus left. I spent the next five hours exploring a largely unknown city. Koryllos had left Patras at 4 p.m. in a horse cab "in order not to excite the curiosity of the street urchins by our curious garb and especially our broad brimmed straw hats." I left by bus, with my own broad brimmed straw hat folded in my ruck sack, but in the knowledge that wherever I went I would never be able to evade the curiosity of the grandchildren of those urchins so much feared by Koryllos.

I had decided to make Halandritsa my target for the first night, because it had been Koryllos's first stop also. He, however, had started walking from the bridge over the ravine at Manolia, an hour's journey by horse cab from Patras. My neighbour in the bus, George Cordonis, to whom I had hastened to explain my mission, was able to point out the ravine and he shared my interest in identifying the landmarks described by Koryllos. We decided that there were as

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many vineyards as ever; but the two inns at the cross roads, before Halandritsa, had disappeared and he did not think that badgers still plundered the maize-fields, as Koryllos had learned when he found a woman preparing to spend the night in her fields to protect the crop. George worked as a cobbler in Patras during the week; but at weekends he joined his wife at his home in Halandritsa where they had a small farm. We drank ouzo at the local *cafeneion* before supper and I cautiously worked the conversation round to politics. It became clear where he stood. "You can't all be in the same Party," he said. Then he looked around nervously. "Between the two of us, eh?" Talking politics was forbidden by the police. He was a man of the centre. No, he did not want to see the King back. "What would I like for supper?" His wife gave us a confection of eggs and tomatoes, with aubergine and bread, and we drank home-made wine until he was tiddly. That night I stayed in the adjoining house, belonging to his cousins who had abandoned it in favour of Athens.

In the Nineteenth Century the people of Halandritsa at one time apparently grew hashish but, according to Koryllos, its cultivation was suspended 'because its importation into Egypt, where it was consumed, was forbidden.' Kordonis told me that now the cultivation of tobacco had been prohibited by the present Government. He did not know why but I was told further along the route that the Government had decided that there was not sufficient demand for the local tobacco which was not of good quality. I heard a whisper however that the stuff was grown secretly and smuggled across the mountains, a whisper which had no doubt reached the ears of the police. Koryllos also gives special mention to the efforts of the mayor, Athanassios Tzinis, with whom he stayed, to re-afforest the surrounding hills, efforts which he described as unsuccessful and which show today few signs of being continued. Any traveller in modern Greece soon grows accustomed to the sight of bare hillsides, from which every trace of green has disappeared, ravaged by goats. In the course of my journey I constantly came across great slopes of scree stretching up a thousand feet, in which the rains had cut deep channels. In places the forestry service is active but it seems almost a hopeless struggle.

Sunday 20 September

The next day also, I travelled by bus: as far as Ano Vlassis, which I reached before noon. Anybody who wants to travel slowly and stay in remote villages so as to have the greatest possible opportunity to meet and talk to the villagers is confronted by a basic problem, at least in the Northern Peloponnese. The road network is extensive and, wherever there are roads, buses travel. It is thus

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almost always possible to reach a town with a hotel by nightfall; and one is rarely justified in asking for a guide because it is rarely necessary to walk. Again and again I was asked 'but why not take the bus' and 'but why don't you go on another few miles; there is a tourist hotel further on.' That is where Koryllos was so valuable. That he had gone on foot and that he had stayed at this village rather than that one was my reason for doing the same. Instead of following the roads by bus, I took the footpaths with a guide and stopped in the *cafeneions* along the way. And from the guides one learned something: one could talk undistracted by the presence of others. What was almost useless of course was travelling alone. But as far as Ano Vlassis I took the bus, because the road was direct.

As I entered the village square of Ano Vlassis alone, silence fell on the Sunday customers, the silence of suspicion and curiosity which I had brought Koryllos to satisfy. As an experiment, instead of simply making enquiries in the *cafeneion*, I asked to see the President of the village, to whom I explained myself and asked for a guide to take me across the mountains the following day to Livarzion. It was decided that I should be taken by the son of one of the village councillors, with whom also I should stay the night. Antony Skarmoutsos was 14 and less than ideal as a companion; but I had no choice. It was he who took me to the monastery of Aghios Vlassios above the village. There, in Koryllos's time, there had been 10 monks; now there were two. The view was still as magnificent, stretching down the valley far away to the sea. And the forest of firs, one of the few apparently to have triumphed over the ubiquitous goat, still stood. It was here that an important trial of strength had taken place between the nationalists and the guerrillas in the Civil War: Antony showed me the place where the guerrillas lay buried and outside the monastery I saw the memorial to the fallen but victorious Nationalists.

Antony's father, Panayiotis, was a man of some substance, married to a slight woman as diffident as her husband was self-confident. His house was more modern than anywhere I had yet stayed in a Greek village. It had recently been rebuilt and the inside was still incomplete, unplastered and unpainted. Even so, it was not unrepresentative. It was stone built and wooden floored. The guest bed was in the sitting room. There was no running water and the lavatory was in the usual shed at the bottom of the yard, less noisome than some. There was electric light, installed when the current had reached the village some time after the coup of 21 April 1967. Cooking was done either on a wood fire or by gas from a portable cylinder. The animals - a horse, goats and chickens - slept beneath the house which was built on a platform; and there was a courtyard in

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front, as well as behind, where wood was stacked for the winter. The food too was not untypical. Koryllos hardly mentioned what he ate; he sometimes describes the food as delicious, and once mentions trout. It seemed unlikely however that the diet had changed significantly: spaghetti, pasta, bread, beans, tomatoes, occasionally potatoes, chicken only on feast days and guest days: the same in fact as I had eaten in the Pindus except, like the schoolmasters, petty officials and other folk richer than the average villager, this time when eating in a *cafeneion* I supplemented the standard fare with the occasional tin of meat. As in the Pindus, I saw no obvious sign of undernourishment, no evidence of breadline poverty.

That night before supper I had sat for two hours in a *cafeneion* listening to the discussion as it ebbed and flowed in obedience to the arrival of a newcomer: the Middle East, hijackings, the Greek guerrilla war, English soldiers who had been sheltered in the village, improvements in roads and the arrival of electricity, emigration from the village. The talk was typical of what I was to hear wherever I went. The owner of the shop, a Mr Keramesinis, believed himself to be related to the family of the same name with whom Koryllos had stayed 80 years previously. I was shown the house where he would have stayed, rightly described by Koryllos as 'having the position of a palace in the village.' The main descendant, a cousin of the shop owner, now lived in Athens, but I was shown an ikon in the church which he had presented only this year.

Monday 21 September

The next day, Antony Skarmoutsos and I set off with a horse between us for Livarzion. For the first hour we climbed through a valley and up a ridge covered in fir forest to a height of 5,200 feet and then descended steeply the other side, still through firs. The trees stopped, however, long before we reached the village and there were virtually no more until after Langadhia, two days journey on. Once again we had no difficulty in finding the springs and identifying other landmarks mentioned by Koryllos. As we came into the village we saw men working on the installation of electricity poles.

Antony's mother came from Livarzion and his grandmother still lived there. He abandoned me outside his uncle's house, which he had last visited over a year ago and I set off in search of the village square. There I settled down, like Mr Micawber, 'waiting for something to turn up'. What turned up, ten minutes later, was Antony's uncle, wanting to know why Antony hadn't bought me in to the house. We ate *loukoumi* and he sent for the village President in case I had any

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questions I wanted to ask about the village. By the time the President arrived, I had exhausted most of the questions I could ask; but nevertheless was forced to get out my note book and ask them all over again in the President's office. Antony's uncle had once been President himself and sat with the present occupant on one side of the desk while I sat on the other wondering how far I could go with my questions. They described to me a village that in all essential respects closely resembled in its predicament the other villages in Achaia and Arkadia that I visited. It was of course a farming community. But whereas, in Koryllos's day, the principal occupation of the villagers had been tobacco growing, which was evidently very lucrative, now the village had had to abandon this source of income. The women no longer gathered silk worms and therefore no longer span silk thread: which used, according to Koryllos, to be their main occupation. Now there were no such cottage industries, and nothing to keep the young people from leaving to find better paid work and easier living conditions in the towns. It was becoming a village of old people. The two men thought that the pace of change had only quickened since the Second World War. But, according to a *History of Ancient Psosis and Livarzion* by Athanassios Lelou which I was subsequently able to consult in the priest's house, the first brave spirits left for America in 1880. From 1905-1936 no fewer than 160 individuals, out of a total of about 200 families, had followed them. There was plenty of evidence for the success of their initiative to be seen in the village. I counted three fountains inscribed as being donations from native emigrants to America; in the Church of St John the Theologian I read that the roof had been rebuilt at the expense of Tasia Louvary from the USA in memory of his wife; and that the league of ex-Livarzion men had recently sent books to the same church worth \$2,146. I also saw that the same league had sent 10,000 drachmas to the Church of St John the Baptist.

According to Antony's uncle, Livarzion, like the other villages of the area, had suffered much from the Civil War. In all 40 men had been killed on both sides. He himself had narrowly escaped execution, as an example, by the guerrillas. The priest and four other village elders on the Nationalist side had been less lucky, as their joint memorial in the Church of St George showed. I asked what had happened to the guerrillas, whether any of them or their families still lived in the village: a question I repeated wherever I went, and as usual was told that of course there were such people; and that the two sides had to live together as best as they could; many had recanted, and the rest got on with the business of living. At Ano Vlassia, in answer to the same question, Panayiotis Skarmoutsos had said that such people had begun to raise their heads a little prior to the coup of 1967, but that now fortunately things were quiet again. And the following day

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at Kontovazaina, I was to be told that several leftists had been rounded up following the coup and imprisoned until the military government had consolidated its hold on the country. Indeed the same person had heard on the *Voice of Truth* that two of these prisoners had been killed by the village police. No, he told me, he did not know that the *Voice of Truth* was a Communist radio station.

After leaving the President of Livarzion, I was entrusted to the priest's son John Klepetounas, who was charged with showing me the most important of the village's 13 churches. I was given egg and chips in his house, while he ate boiled potatoes, 'because of my stomach' he said. His father had gone to Patras for the night. It began to rain. We found a tombstone in the cemetery of the Church of St George to 'The family Chrysanthopoulos'. Dr Koryllos had stayed with two brothers, Charalambos and Vasileios, of the same name; and I was told that, although the family had long since left for Athens, the family house where Koryllos had stayed, still stood. I decided to press on that day and make for Tripotama, which Koryllos had not reached until the fourth night of his journey. But I was first curious to see the demotic school. According to Koryllos, the village school of his day had been excellent: women of all ages knew reading, writing and arithmetic - a fact which surprised him - and during the Turkish occupation the torch of Greek learning had been kept alight in the secret schools. In the present school I met one of the three teachers. He told me with enthusiasm that in 1967 the school library had had 100 books; now, thanks to the present Government's 'better management', it contained no fewer than 900 and was still increasing rapidly. Furthermore the compulsory text books were now supplied free to the senior three of the six classes.

I walked down the track to the road to Patras and listened to an old man's memories of the Balkan wars before getting a lift a few miles along the road to Tripotama, which I finally reached on foot around 6.30 p.m. As a joke, I asked a man for the Inn of Dionysios, where Koryllos and his party had stayed 80 years ago. He said 'I am Dionysios, and this is my Inn. Yes, I have rooms.' But he wasn't the other Dionysios's grandson, because, as I later discovered, his family had only bought the Inn in 1919. But that evening Dionysios Georgouloupoulos read the passage about his Inn a dozen times, mostly aloud. None of the electricity company workers, who were staying at the Inn while installing the electricity poles, were able to concentrate on their cards; one by one, the tables surrendered and Dionysios's wife dispensed bean hash to the sound of public reading. I bargained quietly in the corner with Dionysios's cousin who was asking too much to take me over the mountains the next day to Kontovazaina.

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We finally settled on 300 drachmas for what was for him a full day's journey: 5 ½ hours each way. That night I slept better than Koryllos had done. Although he had been quickly lulled to sleep by the sound of the river below and a nightingale singing outside his window, he quickly woke up again when he mistook the movement of the loose boards on the floor beneath his shoulder for an earthquake. I heard no nightingale but neither did I feel loose boards and I slept till 7 a.m.

Tuesday 22 September

My guide the next day, John Georgouloupoulos, set off firmly convinced that he had no relations in Kontovazaina. By the time we had passed through Dehourion, the most desolate and depopulated of all Greek villages I had seen, and reached the Church of St Peter on a ridge overlooking our destination, he had remembered that his grandmother, long since dead, had come from Kontovazaina. And once in the village we bumped into his uncle in the street. They got on well: in spite of the fact that the uncle was Vice-President of the village whereas John himself had made it abundantly clear during our walk together that he did not like the dictatorship; but then they did not discuss politics together. Instead we ate chicken, potatoes and tomatoes and drank beer at my expense in the nearest taverna, which happened to belong to the village President, and they caught up on family gossip.

I was introduced to John's cousin and it was agreed that he would show me the village and take me on to Divritas, now called Dimitra. He was 19 and expecting call-up, a prospect he appeared to relish: 50-something drachmas a month for two years. He told me that one of his first activities in the army would be a month's hike through the mountains, with 50 kilos on his back, camping at night. He could not believe that Britain no longer had National Service. We met the village Primary schoolmasters (there was no sign of the 'professors' from the Secondary school), waiting to start the afternoon lesson, and I was asked where they could find another copy of Koryllos for use in the school. I also met the local magistrate who looked bored and admitted that he had less work since the coup. He had just passed his exams for promotion and was due for a transfer.

It was only 75 minutes walk over the hill to Divritas. There, according to Koryllos, the main occupation of the inhabitants in his day was 'farming, stock-breeding and card playing; and from their card playing originates their laziness and litigiousness, for which the Divritsiotes are famous': an allegation which delighted the customers at the *cafeneion* to which I was taken. Moreover they

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admitted the charge and claimed that card playing, at least for money, had been recently forbidden by the Government. This did not prevent the Secretary of the village and the local schoolmaster (John Rouskas) from settling down for the evening to teach me card tricks. Since the *cafeneion* had a room, or rather the owner was willing to sell me the use of his own for the night, I decided to stay. Opposite I found a 'factory', where I found a new Italian machine loom at work on the production of carpets. The man responsible for this initiative, the only one of its kind in the area, was a Mr Paraskevopoulos, a native of the village, who had persuaded his cousins to help put up the 400,000 drachmas necessary. They had visited the British Embassy for information about British looms but had decided they were too sophisticated and expensive for profitable use in a village. They had sent a man from the village to train in Athens for three months and had begun operation only in the summer. In two years they expected to pay off the capital investment. Later they might expand. The rugs were well made and were finding a ready market in the surrounding villages. So far, they had not contracted to sell them in Athens or Tripolis.

Wednesday 23 September

My host, Dimitrios Polyzogopoulos, found me a guide who agreed to take me to Tropaia (Koryllos called it Vervitsa) the next day, not by the main road but by the old footpath, along the valley of the Ladonas, through the trees that had shaded Koryllos from the morning sun. Dimitrios Kapsis, my guide, was however a tedious man. He preached to me on his virtues as a family man, a guide, an honest, god-fearing, patriotic, 'Greek Christian' citizen. He informed me that it was better to have holy thoughts and remain outside Church on Sunday than have unclean thoughts inside Church. However, if not a churchgoer, he was certainly a devoted follower of Messers Pattakos and Papadopoulos (more devoted to the former). He was also a mine of information about mules, about which I questioned him closely, in order to distract his attention from his own virtues and my income. He refused to say how much he wanted for his services to me. I gave him 200 drachmas by analogy with the previous day, for a three hour trip; and he got his revenge by warning me how greedy and rapacious I would find that the men of Tropaia were. I declined his offer to guide me on beyond Tropaia, on the grounds that I would need a local man who knew every inch of the ground and all the local traditions.

We passed the dam holding back the waters of the artificial lake of Ladonas, constructed by the Italians, according to Dimitrios, as reparation after the last war. We saw the remains of the houses where they had lived, deliberately

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destroyed after their departure. And we looked down on the Ladonas far below, now dry, but in Koryllos's day a turbulent mass of rushing water. In Tropaia we asked a café owner for a guide for me. And I found myself in the difficult position of bargaining with a 'rapacious' Tropaiat, who wanted 400 drachmas for a 3 hour walk, in the presence of Dimitri, to whom I had given 200 for the same distance. For the next hour, Dimitri dogged my footsteps; and another man joined in the fun by offering to carry my knapsack himself, without a mule for 150 drachmas. The four of us had a bean lunch together. Finally I stood up, shook Dimitri warmly by the hand and asked to see the mule 'so that we can agree on a final price.'

Leonidas Katsikoros looked older than 57. He had a wizened monkey face and a head sunk on his shoulders. His two sons had lost their sight in the Albanian campaign of 1941. We went to his house 'to look at the mule' and his wife immediately burst into floods of tears, because she thought I brought even worse news about her children. We agreed on 300 drachmas, ate biscuits and nibbled a piece of chicken 'for meze'. At 1 p.m. we set out.

We had had a considerable discussion about the route we should follow; I was not sure whether Koryllos had simply seen the Frankish castle of Galata from afar or whether he had actually been there. Leonidas preferred the first interpretation, anxious that he would not have time to reach Langadia and return that night. After close consultation with the text, I agreed and we took a short cut, first to Lefkohorion (presumably what Koryllos calls Rekounion) and then up a steep path along a ridge, from which we could see the castle across the valley, to the spring of Gounari. As we toiled up the ridge, we had a magnificent view across the Peloponnese: folds of blue mountains stretching into the distance in the afternoon haze. We made good progress and Leonidas cheered up. Abundant and very cold water continues to pour from the spring. Koryllos and his party had been so thirsty that they had ignored the local saying that it was dangerous for lowlanders to drink the water; and had suffered no ill consequences. Indeed the only person Koryllos knew that had suffered in this way was the former Mayor of Langadia who gave them dinner that day; and his suffering was the result of their having drunk from the spring; their appetite was so great that they apparently ate him out of house and home. I also drank from the spring, but neither I nor my host suffered in any way.

Langadia is a largish town with a tourist hotel and souvenir shops along the main road from Pyrgos to Tripolis. I had an ouzo in a back street café and emerged briefly into the tourist world, escorted by three dropouts from the local

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Secondary school, before catching a bus for Magouliana, three hours' walk away across the mountains. It was clear that once again I did not have time to remain entirely faithful to Koryllos, who had stayed both in Langadia and, the next day, in Vitina, 90-minutes' walk beyond Magouliana. So I stayed in Magouliana which I reached at about 7 p.m. having walked the last five kilometres alone. Darkness was falling as I entered the village and I remember vividly the sight of the dimly lit street as I followed the dark silhouettes of a priest and his diminutive companion towards the square. Magouliana was something of a resort in the summer but by the end of September it had reverted to its identity as a remote and poor mountain village. At nearly 4,500 ft. it claimed to be the highest village in the Peloponnese. It was burnt down by Ibrahim Pasha in 1825, but immediately rebuilt. However, by Koryllos's time, many of its inhabitants had gone to live in the towns; and now it was as small and forsaken, at least in winter, as other villages of its size and situation.

In the *cafeneion*, I followed my usual routine with Koryllos; but by this time my use of the book was more perfunctory. The hours of sitting in cafés had taken their toll. 'Experience is nine-tenths boredom' wrote Kevin Andrewes in *Flight of Ikarus*. He exaggerated, but not badly in respect of Greek village life. I had no difficulty in understanding why people left the villages if they could. However I invited myself to sit down with the priest and showed him one passage in Koryllos particularly: 'The men of Magouliana are mainly occupied in wood cutting; of Vitina in carrying loads with their mules; of Stemnitsa in iron work; of Zygovistina in telling lies; and of Dimitsina in legal affairs generally. Hence the local villagers say that the men of Magouliana cut and prepared the cross; of Vitina carried it to the place of the skull; of Stemnitsa made the nails; of Zygovistina bore false witness and of Dimitsina condemned him.' The priest laughed.

The owner of the *cafeneion* invited me to his house to stay the night; and I gratefully accepted. Andreas Gianaliopoulos was married but had no children: a deprivation which embarrassed him sadly, more so than his wife, a robust woman, who loaded our plates with potatoes and chicken, while he plied me with beer and morsels of chicken from his own plate. It was a cold night but there was a fire in the kitchen where we ate and I found three blankets on the double bed in the best room where I slept. The room was impeccably neat, decorated with rugs, embroidery, little dolls, photographs and various knickknacks: a room not often used.

Thursday 24 September and Friday 25 September

I spent another two hours in the *cafeneion*, alternately watching a game of cards and the antics of a wounded eaglet in the village square before I was able to find a guide to take me by the short cut followed by Koryllos to Vitina. A man called Giava eventually agreed, a woodsman, paid about 120 drachmas a day by the Forestry Service for cutting wood on a contractual basis (the casual woodcutter can earn as much as 400 drachmas a day, but only for a month or so each year. No, the wages had not increased since the coup.) We picked an armful of grapes from his vineyard on our way and then hunted for the path, which was now little used; most of the fields through which we passed had been abandoned and the others were largely neglected. Having put me on the main path, he turned round and I was left alone to climb up to Vitina, another tourist centre. For the rest of the day, I made my way slowly from village to village: Alonistaina, Piana, Davia, all badly depopulated, along the side road to Tripolis. I ate in a *cafeneion* at Alonistaina and discussed with the son of the owner whether or not he should go and join his brother in Canada. By six o'clock, I had covered about 30 kilometres and decided to accept the offer of a lift into Tripolis; where I stayed the night and returned to Athens by train the next day in the middle of a thunderstorm.

Reflections

The Ambassador asked me what conclusions I drew from my journeys on the attitude of Greek villagers to the Colonels' Government.

I reported that any conclusions could only be extremely tentative. Greek villagers knew how to keep their mouths shut. My visits had been too short to overcome their suspicion of me, a foreigner. My Greek was better at communicating than inspiring trust. Martial law cast a shadow. I therefore remained very much on the outside of village life. And my journeys were through mountains, mostly at over 1,500 feet, where the villages were remote and had their own special problems. Nevertheless some general calculations were possible.

In both the Pindus and the Peloponnese, Government control of even the most remote areas, was absolute. Villages were linked by a network of roads, paths and telephones which enabled the police to follow the movements of the stranger and the villagers themselves efficiently and unobtrusively. The communities were small and the personal circumstances and attitudes of their

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members easily known. It was as absurd to imagine the system of local control breaking down, as a result of local action, in mountainous Achaia or Arcadia as in Berkshire or Sussex. The Revolution was not of course responsible for setting up this system of control, which had existed in Greece since the end of the Civil War. But it maintained the system and used it as a valuable tool in imposing itself throughout the country.

What difference had the coming of the Revolution made to the average villager? The answer usually given to the foreigner by the villagers themselves was that it had brought certain material benefits and 'peace and quiet'. I had seen a lot of road-building on my travels as well as, in some villages, men at work installing electricity for the first time; and evidence of expenditure on schools and certain public works. These had probably had an impact on attitudes to the Government, although previous Governments had also wooed the villages through public works and most of the roads had been built before 1967. In addition, the writing off of agricultural debts had been popular although it seemed likely that by the time of my visits the effect of this had now largely worn off.

On the other hand, the present Government had not yet revolutionised the rural economy. Like the French villages I had seen on my work camp in the Pyrenees in 1960, the Greek mountain villages I visited were slowly dying. The young people were leaving for the towns and abroad. Fields lay abandoned. Houses were empty. The middle-aged were staying to look after the old until they died, and were then too old to leave for a new life elsewhere themselves. There was enough food; and the people looked healthy; but they aged quickly, worked hard and thought themselves poor. There was certainly no money for luxuries. Summer visitors from the towns and the Greek diaspora abroad brought some money into the village but this served also to emphasise the difference between urban and rural standards of living. The mountain air was fresh and the views magnificent but neither compensated for the tedium of life in a Greek village - even to the foreigner.

If the villagers were to judge the Revolution solely by its success in giving life to these villages, they might condemn it. But they did not expect miracles. The Revolution was doing well if it did only a little better than previous Governments. Furthermore the economic criterion was not the only one used by the villagers. The slogan 'peace and quiet', much used by the Government in the countryside, was an effective one. It was partly designed to exploit memories of the atrocities committed by the Communists in the Civil War. In practically

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every conversation I had, the Civil War was mentioned. I was shown the tombs of those murdered, told tales of the battles and repeatedly heard people say that they hoped never to live through those terrible days again. No doubt the subject often came up because of the part that British soldiers had played. No doubt also Revolutionary propaganda had played its part. But there was no doubt that memories of that time were still fresh. These memories helped the Revolution in two ways: positively because it was credited, at least by some, with preventing a resurgence of Communism in Greece; and negatively because, with his memories of the last Civil War, whatever a man's political views of the Revolution, he would think twice before resorting to violence to express them.

The slogan of 'peace and quiet' was also a powerful one because it exploited the exasperation felt by many of the villagers at pre-Revolutionary politics. They blamed the politicians for the demonstrations, strikes and public disorder that were such a feature in Athens and other big towns in the years prior to the coup. I came away from the Pindus with the belief that the villages there were too remote for their inhabitants to be much influenced by such activities. The Northern Peloponnese however might be different. There the villagers made the most of better communications in the area to visit the towns regularly. Athens itself was no more than a day's journey from the most remote village I visited. I was constantly meeting men who had just returned from, or were just going to Athens, Patras, Tripolis, Corinth or Pyrgos. Furthermore, I never met a man who did not have some close relative living in one of these major towns. The opportunity therefore for knowing, and even seeing, what was happening in the towns in 1965 and 1966 was great. And the impression left by those years of disorder appeared to be deep. Again, Revolutionary propaganda had played its part. But, in bringing 'peace and quiet', the Revolution brought what many people believed had been needed.

All this on the credit side; but it would be as wrong to believe that the villagers were in massive support of the Revolution as the opposite. As my host said in one village where I stayed, 'everybody can't be in the same Party'. He might have added 'except in a One-Party state.' And I came across other evidence that support for the Revolution was less than 100%. It would of course have been astonishing if it had been. Voting patterns prior to the Revolution were not monolithic; and old habits died hard. Not all the guerrillas in the Civil War had been killed for example; and some had had children. In any case, as in the UK, a proportion of people were just 'agin' the Government of the day. What was significant however was that, in the villages to a far greater extent even than in the towns, the Revolutionary Government was judged by much the same criteria

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as its Democratic predecessors. What interested the villagers was law and order, economic prosperity, schools for their children and good jobs for them in the towns afterwards. This contrasted with the attitude of the man of liberal conscience in the towns who condemned the Government on ideological grounds as an affront to Western Democratic principles; and who was consequently unwilling to give it credit for anything.

There was however at least one principle of Western Democracy which the Greek villager did value: the principle of free speech. He cherished his right to tell his friends in public what he thought of the Government, as much as his counterpart in Britain does. He was denied that under the Colonels' Government. I was told on three separate occasions on my travels that talking politics was not allowed by the police. In the coffee shops the men played cards more than they talked, and when they did talk it was not about politics, at least in my presence; unless by talking politics you mean singing the praises of the Government in general and Mr Pattakos in particular. So much therefore for the Government's claim that freedom of speech was allowed. I could not believe that this was the state of affairs prior to the coup and I believed that the villagers found the restriction irksome. But they resented it, less because it was undemocratic, than because it denied them a source of amusement to which they were accustomed.

To summarise my conclusions: I thought that 20% to 30% of the villagers in the areas I visited might support the Government fairly strongly. A like amount were probably against it. The rest, say between 40% and 60% could see some of the merits of the Colonels but might also resent some aspects of the Revolution. They had not, however, yet been radically affected by it, and were therefore, as much as anything, indifferent. How they would vote in an election would depend on who was allowed to participate: the leaders of pre-Colonels Greece, Karamanlis? Papandreou? But, since it was unlikely that an entirely free election would be held for a long time, and since Government control in the countryside was even stronger than in the towns, what they thought did not really matter. It would not have much effect on the future of the Revolution.

APPENDIX 3

RETIREMENT WORK

The story of our retirement can be told in a short version and a long one. The short one is that we continued to live in Wimbledon while I worked for the Order of St John and then we moved to The Old House in Somerset. There for a time we each worked as volunteers in a variety of roles. But the house and garden as well as our family and friends and other activities occupied us so fully that I gave up paid work. We travelled widely, entertained and visited our family and friends and led a quiet and contented life until we eventually decided to downsize to a house in Dorking to be near Nicholas, nearer Eleanor and more accessible to Robert on his visits to London.

The Venerable Order of St John of Jerusalem

Shortly before leaving Canada, I heard that The Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem (the Order of St John) were looking for a new Secretary General, a paid job with a good salary. I knew that a number of retired diplomats had done it in recent years; that it was the umbrella organisation for two well-known charities, St John Ambulance and the Eye Hospital in Jerusalem; and that its origins lay in the Hospitallers who had cared for the sick during the Crusades. Its history and reputation attracted me. Having consulted the current Secretary General, Christopher Macrae, who I had known as High Commissioner to Nigeria, I applied immediately and was excited to be appointed. I did not consult Macrae's predecessor, Colin Imray, nor Patrick Wright who had served the Order as a senior volunteer for a short time. Had I done so, I might have been less keen on the job.

The Order had recently been re-organised. It had previously consisted of eight independent Priors, of which the English Priory was very much *primus inter pares*. Embedded in it, an international secretariat had been responsible for relations with the other Priors: Scotland, Wales, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Canada and the United States; and with some 40 so-called National Councils in many of the other countries of the Commonwealth, including India, Malaysia and Sri Lanka where St John Ambulance played an important role in health care. The Queen was the Sovereign Head of the Order; Richard, Duke of Gloucester was The Grand Prior; and the Lord Prior, who was the head of the

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English Priory, was the most senior volunteer. Not surprisingly, the other Priors had become increasingly reluctant to acknowledge the theoretical pre-eminence of England and were more and more going their own way. Indeed it could be said that the Order - as opposed to its component parts - resembled Humpty Dumpty after falling off the wall. The sensible aim of the recent changes had been to give each Priory, including the English one, equal status. A Grand Council, chaired by the Lord Prior who was chosen from any one of the Priors, was formed to provide the Order with a degree of unity. It met annually and consisted of representatives - all volunteers - of each Priory and five Great Officers - also volunteers - chosen from the Priors and including a Prelate who was a retired Anglican Bishop.

The international secretariat, formerly within the English Priory, had become the Order's Secretariat answerable to the Lord Prior and the Great Officers. It serviced annual meetings of the Grand Council and quarterly meetings of the Great Officers. It resembled a civil service; and the Great Officers regarded themselves as Ministers. There were four of us, including me as the Secretary General, a Personal Assistant and two other members: one responsible for support for the National Councils and the other for ceremonial and chivalric matters and for the Secretariat's small budget.

During my three years in the job, the Lord Prior was first Lord Vestey and then Eric Barry who had been the Canadian Prior. I liked them both. Otherwise the most important Great Officer was Professor Tony Mellows who had been the main architect of the organisational changes. He was a very able lawyer who had devoted an enormous amount of energy, ingenuity, skill and time to the Order and in many ways was its greatest asset. He was of an unusually scholastic turn of mind and revelled in the arcane minutiae of the legal instruments needed to govern the Order's activities. I could imagine him as the Abbot of a medieval monastery, strict, devoted, in tight control of the monks and funds, and from whose eagle eyes nothing escaped. By contrast with him, Tony Strachan from New Zealand had been a member of St John Ambulance since boyhood. He was responsible for the National Councils and travelled indefatigably all over the world.

I concentrated most of my own efforts on trying to bring the Priors and National Councils closer together, in fact to put Humpty Dumpty together again. I sought further changes in the governance structure to provide a better balance between the Order and its constituent parts in the Priors and National Councils; to reform the public relations of the Order, including through

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agreement on a new logo to be used by everyone throughout the world; to persuade the Pories to provide more financial support for the National Councils in the developing world; and to introduce common world-wide policies on buying and selling medical and other health-related equipment. In all this I secured outside help, including of a number of retired professional experts who I introduced to the work of the Order. Most notable of these was Professor John Stopford, a retired member of the staff of the London Business School who specialised in providing advice on strategic business management. He became a friend and mentor both to me personally and to the Order itself; and was later appointed as one of the Great Officers who made an important contribution to the governance of the Order. Indeed I can't help thinking that my own most valuable contribution to the Order was in introducing John to it. His premature death in 2011 was a tragedy.

Each year I attended the meetings of the Grand Council, which took place in turn in Washington, London and Canberra. Having prepared its agenda, I took the minutes, a tedious chore. Before the Canberra meeting I visited the New Zealand Priory. I also attended annual meetings between the Venerable Order and its sister Protestant Orders of St John in Germany, France, Sweden and the Netherlands, again taking the minutes. More interestingly I visited Jerusalem where I saw the excellent work of the Eye Hospital in East Jerusalem and of its clinic in Gaza where I attended a meeting with Yasser Arafat to discuss the terms under which the Hospital operated in the Arab-controlled West Bank and Gaza.

After three years as Secretary General I decided to retire, frustrated by the lack of resources and the difficulties of bringing about the changes I believed were needed. I had not enjoyed the work as much as I had expected; and found the culture of the Order with its over emphasis on legal form, ceremony and hierarchy a distraction from its charitable purposes. But I left with a feeling of inadequacy and that I had not made more of the opportunity to contribute to an organisation with unrealised potential.

After our move to Somerset I served for a couple of years on the local council of St John Ambulance but soon resigned because I was adding little value, found no friendship in the Council and, if I had got more heavily involved as I was being encouraged to do by the new Chairman, would have had no time for other interests.

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Wellington

My time as a Governor of Wellington was more successful. Patrick Wright put my name forward. His father had been Tutor of my house, the Stanley, just before I entered the school in 1954; and he himself had been the most recent of three former Heads of the Diplomatic Service to be a Governor. I jumped at the opportunity, despite feeling that my own rank in the Service did not justify the honour, however strong my family connections with Wellington. I expected the work to be interesting, and not particularly demanding. Little did I know what was in store.

To my surprise, I was invited early in 2003 to succeed Sir David Scholey as Vice President of Wellington - and therefore Chairman of the Governors. With some trepidation I accepted and took over in September 2004, under the shadow of Wellington's fall to 217th in the academic league tables. That winter term got off to an even more wretched start with three nasty cases of bullying in the Combermere, one of the houses, resulting in the departure of the three offenders, to the fury of their parents who then proceeded to contest every aspect of their children's departure and to appeal to me, as Chairman of Governors.

I had been looking forward to working closely with the Master of Wellington, Hugh Monro, who I liked and admired. He and his wife Clare had brought to Wellington qualities of personal warmth, humanity and generosity of spirit that had been greatly appreciated by all with whom he worked. To my dismay however Hugh decided later in my first term as Vice-President that the time had come for him to retire after five years at Wellington and over 19 years of Headmastering in three different boarding schools. His resignation would take effect at the end of August 2005. I became heavily involved in discussions by Governors of what sort of person Wellington needed to replace Hugh and then in the recruitment process. We determined to look for a 'titan' who would be able to lead Wellington out of its traditional orbit into something much more ambitious. If we succeeded, the coming years would be very interesting and rewarding. They were indeed.

Hugh's resignation and the search for a successor were not the only matters to take much time. By coincidence, governors had decided to hold an Open Forum of staff and governors to examine some long-term issues facing the school. The event took place in October and was brilliantly "facilitated" by my friend John Stopford who had been so helpful in wrestling with the Order of St John's problems. It was a fascinating and useful occasion in helping to define some of

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the problems we faced as well as some possible solutions. A consensus emerged among the staff, particularly the younger ones, that Wellington should raise its game.

Throughout 2005, I spent an enormous amount of time on Wellington, leading first the search for a new Master and then Governors' consideration of full co-education. We selected Dr Anthony Seldon, Head of Brighton College, who moved to Wellington on 8 January 2006. He promised to be a very exciting Master and made clear his intention to lead it to 'greatness' within as short a time as possible. He proved to be a man of phenomenal energy, determination and breadth of vision, supported by his wife Dr Joanna Seldon, a delightful and erudite person who earned the affection and respect of us all. I suspected that Anthony himself would not always be personally easy to work with and that my job as Chairman might not be straightforward. But there was a real prospect that Anthony would succeed in transforming the College before my own retirement, due in 2011 when I reached 70. As for co-education, with Seldon present and pushing hard, as Master-designate, Governors decided unanimously in May - at a memorable meeting - to introduce full co-education as soon as possible.

Within a year of completing his first full year as Master, Anthony Seldon had revolutionised the College. Full co-education began with the first girls entering the new Orange house at 13 in September 2006. (There had been girls in the Sixth Form for many years.) Beginning so soon was a gamble, in view of the lack of time for preparation; but the start went well. Academic performance improved vastly: 79% of A levels taken were scored at A or B grade, compared to 69% in 2005, putting Wellington high in the second division of the *Daily Telegraph's* League Tables. By 2009 it was firmly in the first division with 92% of A levels at A or B grade. We continued to move steadily up the league tables. Anthony Seldon could take most of the credit for this outstandingly good result, achieved through much harder and more focussed work by pupils and staff. We avoided scandal and any bad Press e.g. over bullying and sexual misbehaviour. Pupil numbers rose from about 700 in 2005/6 to 750 in 2006/7. Parents were delighted. Most, but not quite all, staff were on-side.

Governors approved Anthony Seldon's far-reaching Development Plan for 2005-2015, including expansion to 920 pupils of whom some 320 would be girls, the introduction of an optional International Baccalaureate, and plans for new buildings. We had some difficult meetings, particularly over the financial implications. Anthony also developed plans for Wellington to sponsor one of the Government's new autonomous Academies and also began exploring the

possibility of establishing a “Wellington International” e.g. in China or the Middle East. Some Governors were nervous about the risk that these new ventures would distract management time and energy from higher priorities like academic performance. But the College thrived. Future pupil demand was increasing strongly. The problem now was deciding which children to take rather than to find enough to fill the College. There were four applicants for every place. Wellington’s reputation was soaring.

I discovered that one of the most difficult parts of my job was in identifying new Governors. But we were able to recruit a number of younger people and more women. Meetings were lively, and became better attended. I found chairing them very tough. Discussion of some of the far reaching changes proposed by the new Master was occasionally heated; but we all respected his extraordinary qualities of energy, vision, determination and flair with the media, and we never failed to reach a consensus.

Thanks to its new Master, Wellington’s fortunes certainly changed dramatically for the better in the six years of my chairmanship. The 2010 academic results were the best yet. The Wellington Academy, a state secondary school outside Tidworth, was launched. Prince Andrew opened Wellington’s first International school at Tianjing in China. None of this would have happened without Anthony Seldon. Perhaps my main personal contribution was in supporting his original appointment, backing him strongly through his first difficult two years, and in managing the relationship between him and the Governors. It was a difficult, absorbing and worthwhile experience. I learned at first hand how quickly one person - in this case Anthony Seldon - could change the fortunes of an institution by sheer force of personality and the richness of his vision. And in 2010, as if Wellington were not enough, he found the time also to write an excellent account of Gordon Brown’s Prime Ministership.

In 2009, the 150th Anniversary of the foundation of the College, the celebrations culminated in The Queen’s visit on 1 December. The programme of just under an hour packed in a great deal. Photographs afterwards showed Her happily smiling to pupils all the time. I accompanied from a distance. Her first visit as Sovereign was in 1959, my last summer as a boy there. Including Her visit as a girl with Her father, The King, in 1941, this was Her fifth visit to Wellington, and probably Her last. Earlier celebrations of the 150th Anniversary had included a dinner for the Duke and Duchess of Wellington, a concert for the Duke of Kent, a “Service” dinner for 350 or so servants of the Crown and a service in St Paul’s Cathedral for both the College and its Academy, when I read a lesson. A new

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'Bigside' rugby Pavilion was built and opened after an intensive fund-raising campaign led by Anthony. One seat in it was dedicated to Veronica's father, Peter Pender-Cudlip, a great Wellington rugby player in his day.

After six years, I decided to step down. The Governors elected Mike Rake as my successor. An Old Wellingtonian himself, Chairman of BT and Easy Jet and with a multitude of other commitments, my only doubt was whether he would have enough time for Wellington. He would clearly manage the task in a very different way from me. I finally left in a general tide of goodwill and euphoria at the end of June 2010. Perhaps the most touching farewell was at a Common Room meeting that I addressed when they gave me a standing ovation despite my having to explain why Governors had decided on a rather small salary award. Governors gave me a dinner in October, attended by the Duke of Kent. They also gave me a fine wooden garden bench and stone urn which now adorn our small Dorking garden. My third Wellington incarnation (boy, parent, governor) was over.

Anthony Seldon remained Master until 2015, having transformed the College. Knighted in 2014, he was subsequently appointed Vice Chancellor of Buckingham University. Tragically Joanna died shortly afterwards in 2016. Anthony and I continue to remain in touch with each other and to enjoy each other's company.

I have had little further to do with Wellington. My last visit was in 2016 when I attended a dinner to discuss the future of the new Fellows scheme introduced by Anthony Seldon. Veronica and I have enjoyed the biannual lunches of retired Governors - now concluded - as a way of seeing old friends and hearing news of the College. Anthony's successor as Master, Julian Thomas, did not last long and proved incapable of filling his shoes. Time will show the mettle of Julian's successor, James Dahl, who seems to have made an excellent start despite the exceptionally difficult circumstances of the covid-19 pandemic of 2020/2021.

Goodenough College

I was delighted to be invited, before leaving Canada, to join the Governing body of Goodenough College, as London House was now called. It had been founded by my grandfather and others in 1930, as a 'home from home' in London, to provide residential accommodation and a collegiate environment, on Oxbridge lines, for graduates from the Dominions. Over time its membership had been expanded first to all members of the Commonwealth and more recently to other

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countries. After the Second World War, William Goodenough House, named after my uncle William and himself a Chairman of Barclays, had been built on the other side of Mecklenburg Square to house women and married graduates. There were now more than 600 residents at any one time.

I served under two Chairmen of Governors. The first, Christopher Wates, managed the College largely through a small group of Governors in the Finance and General Purposes Committee (F&GP). Later the main Board was divided into two: the F&GP became the main Governing Board with Trustee responsibility, and the Council an Advisory Council, on which I served.

Towards the end of my time at the College, Sir Robert Fellowes, former Private Secretary to The Queen, took over as Chairman. The Queen herself took an interest in the College and used to visit it at regular intervals. The Director, a retired army officer, was first Tim Toyne Sewell and later Andrew Ritchie, both admirable people, who were liked and respected by the whole College.

One of the issues that concerned me most was the steady decline of Commonwealth membership and the corresponding increase of other nationalities, contrary to the original intentions of Frederick Goodenough and his friends. But it was becoming increasingly difficult, for a variety of reasons, to find enough Commonwealth applicants, particularly from Africa and India, although never from Canada. I believe the proportions of Commonwealth and foreign students at the College have now settled down to roughly 50/50.

For my first few years as a Governor, I had the company of my cousin, Roger Goodenough. But he retired on grounds of age. He suggested that I should consider putting my name forward as Chairman. If I hadn't been fully occupied with Wellington and living in Somerset, I would have been tempted; although whether I would have been elected was uncertain. Later I was joined by my cousins Hugh Crossley and, later still, by William Goodenough. So, by the time of my own retirement at the statutory age of 70, there were two other members of the family involved. I also succeeded in getting my friend John Stopford appointed as a Governor; and, as with Wellington, he 'facilitated' an away-day of Governors to discuss long-term strategy. Out of this, came a more coherent estates programme, a revised fees policy and the ultimate ambition of achieving ownership of the whole square: probably unrealistic but worth keeping in mind.

Despite my regrets about the diminishing Commonwealth connexion, I agreed with the consensus that the College was a remarkable institution which fulfilled

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a genuine need. Its members hugely valued their time there. And Britain benefited from the loyalty of former members in their future lives, as I had discovered in Canada. But, as one Labour MP once said to me, it is one of London's best kept secrets. Like both the Order of St John and Wellington, it probably has the potential to be something greater.

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