

**BDOHP index:**  
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1942-43 Language student, SOAS  
1943-47 Army, in ME and BAOR  
1947-50 Trinity Hall, Cambridge  
1950 Joined Foreign Service  
1951-53 Third Secretary (Oriental), Kabul  
1953-56 Second Secretary, Rio de Janeiro  
1956-58 First Secretary (Oriental), Tehran  
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1967-70 Consul-General, Luanda  
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1977-80 Minister and Chargé d'Affaires, Buenos Aires  
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1982-85 Ambassador, Caracas  
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This is Malcolm McBain interviewing Hugh Carless at Edmeads Cottage, Teffont, on Saturday the 23rd February, 2002.

MM I see from your records that you went to Sherborne to begin with and then to the School of Oriental and African Studies in 1942 to 43.

HC 1942, yes.

MM How did you get to the SOAS at that stage?

HC In early 1942 the Foreign Office, together with the War Office, advertised that they would give bursaries to sixth formers to learn Oriental languages before they went into the Forces. There were four languages on offer, Chinese, Japanese, Turkish and Persian. I applied for a Persian bursary because my father had learned Persian at Cambridge after the first World War on an ex-service grant. In all there were 74 of us bursars and we were boarded at Dulwich School and took the train up to the School of Oriental Studies every day. Eight of us were learning Persian, 20 Turkish and the rest Chinese and Japanese. We Persians, as we called ourselves, had three teachers, one of whom was a brilliant orientalist, a White Russian, called Professor Vladimir Minorsky who had an international reputation. I was happy to keep in touch with him in later life.

MM What was the purpose of teaching sixth formers Persian in 1942?

HC At that time Iran, or Persia as we still called it, was occupied by the British and the Russians and the purpose of that occupation, which began in 1941, was to deny Iran to the Germans to begin with. And secondly to use Iran and its communications as a land bridge to take military equipment to the Soviet Union.

MM So that is interesting. And after you had done your year at the School of Oriental and African Studies you went to do your normal military service. What did that consist of?

HC Yes, we Turks and Persians went into the army in April 1943. We did our initial

training, then we went to OCTU and by the end of the year we were commissioned, about 12 of us I think, in the Intelligence Corps, and shipped out to the Middle East.

MM And you served in PAIFORCE. What on earth was that?

HC That was Persia and Iraq Force and its headquarters were in Baghdad and in Iran there was a division, an Indian infantry division. The 12th Indian Division had its headquarters in Tehran and for a time I was on the staff there. Tehran at that time seemed very far away from the war so I asked if I might volunteer, switch from Intelligence to the infantry because I wanted to see something of the war. Because there was a great shortage of infantry officers, particularly young ones, they allowed me to do this very quickly and for the last nine months of the war I was in the infantry. At first in the 5th Division, the Division which had captured Madagascar, and that was then resting in Palestine. And then with a number of other spare officers I was sent back to England and sent on to the Second Army in Europe. There I served in a Scottish infantry division, the 15th Scottish, and it was an enormous privilege to serve in a veteran division in a victorious army. I was in the 6th battalion of the Royal Scots Fusiliers which Churchill had commanded for a time in the first World War. Nearly all the company commanders had won the MC and nearly all the sergeants had won the MM. And I was with them in the closing months of the war. We did several spectacular attacks, some at night time, under what we called, 'Monty's Moonlight.' This was created by searchlights trained on clouds ahead of us.

MM And this was in Germany?

HC This was in Germany.

MM So you had a pretty exciting time during military service?

HC That part of it was. Then, just as 15th Scottish were being disbanded, I think this began in June 1945, we were ordered to hand over the province of Mecklenburg on the 1st of July to the Soviet army, the Red army. This was an extraordinary experience. Then, because I had learned some German at school, I was transferred back to the Intelligence. This was my great

good fortune.

MM That's right. Once the war had ended there was very little requirement for infantry compared with the corps and regiments, so back to the Intelligence Corps.

HC Yes, 12th Corps had headquarters which were in Holstein and there I fell in with a brilliant group of intelligence officers, one of whom, Niall McDermott, was to become a Labour Minister, then Secretary General of the International Commission of Jurists at Geneva. Several others, including my future brother-in-law Paul Rolo, became university professors. The most brilliant of us, although we never knew it at the time, was the man who instead of drinking and singing songs and playing poker in the evening, as most of us did, went to his room and studied comparative languages. A few years later he emerged as the man who had deciphered the Minoan script, the earliest Greek script called Linear B. That was Michael Ventris. These fellow officers together gave me the idea of joining the Foreign Service.

MM So, when you finished in the army you went to Cambridge to become educated?

HC Yes, I went to Cambridge to Trinity Hall and I read history. One of my teachers was Noel Annan, a most gifted writer and brilliant academic who later became vice-chancellor of London University, and, as a life peer, Lord Annan. And I can remember the first book he told me to read was a book by Karl Popper called 'The Open Society and its Enemies.' The enemies, of course, being totalitarian. At Cambridge in my last year I went to sit the Foreign Service exam and I believe I went to the last country house party when that selection system was still in the country, at Stoke D'Abernon in Surrey.

MM And you were successful, of course.

HC I scraped in, I think, perhaps on the strength of having Persian, or being believed to have learned Persian.

MM So you got into the Foreign Office and after a short time they sent you to Kabul.

HC Yes, that's it. I joined in April 1950 at the salary of £425 per year. The first month or so was taken up on a training course. I remember we had several lectures and one of them remained in my mind ever since. It was given by Ashley Clarke, later to be a brilliant Ambassador at Rome. His theme was that as a diplomat one had to maintain a certain moral discipline and he illustrated this with an unforgettable anecdote. It was in 1934 when he had reached Marseilles on his journey back to England after a posting in the Far East, and he got off the ship and had to wait a night at an hotel before catching the train to Paris and London. In the hotel, in the bar was a very attractive woman who got into conversation with him and gave him to understand that she would be very happy to spend the evening with him. However, he declined this interesting offer. The next morning the police rushed into the hotel, arrested the woman and held Ashley Clarke for several hours. Earlier that morning a Croat gunman had assassinated M. Barthou, the French Foreign Minister, and King Alexander of Yugoslavia whom the Foreign Minister had come to meet in Marseilles and accompany to Paris. The attractive woman in the bar turned out to be the accomplice of the Croat gunman. If Ashley Clarke had yielded to temptation, he might have been in a very unpleasant situation.

MM Indeed, so with that preparation you set sail for Kabul in 1951.

HC Afghanistan, yes. I remember my brother-in-law remonstrating with me when he heard of the posting, he said there would be no women there, and he was more or less right but even so I was happy to go, for although I was going as Third Secretary, I was to hold the resounding title of Oriental Secretary. I travelled out there on one of those long sea journeys, which people enjoyed in those days, to Bombay, then on another boat, a small one, a coastal boat to Karachi. Then on the night train to Peshawar and then on the embassy lorry, I think it must have been the early summer, which drove through the night because it was so hot. Arriving in Kabul, I found myself in this magnificent 25-acre estate, built in the 1920's and Curzon, who had been Foreign Secretary, had decreed that it should be one of the finest Residences in Asia. It was a beautiful property with the Ambassador's residence surrounded by gardens, tennis courts, both grass and hard, houses for staff, stables, garages, its own well. I lived in what was called the hospital compound, a smaller detached compound which is

still British property today. The main embassy we gave up to the Pakistanis about 15 years ago, I think. In this hospital compound I had a bungalow which I shared with the embassy doctor. We even had a British doctor in those days. It had a small garden with a beautiful apricot tree and a bank of irises.

MM Who was the ambassador?

HC The ambassador was John Gardener. He had been in the Levant Consular Service and he went on to become ambassador to Syria. He was well liked. He had written to me before I went out there that I shouldn't bring a car as there wasn't any petrol in the country. This was due to an embargo by Pakistan on petrol supplies for Afghanistan because the Afghans were then demanding very vociferously that Pakistan should cede to them "Pushtunistan", that would have been the North-west Frontier Province, where the people were Pathans or Pushtuns. They pursued this demand vigorously and very noisily and the Pakistanis had cut off their petrol supply. The Russians soon made that good so the ambassador in fact didn't give me the best advice.

This Pushtunistan policy was led by the royal family who formed a Pushtun tribal dynasty from the 'Mohammedzai' clan. There was King Zaher, who is still alive today and has been living in Rome. His uncle was prime minister, his cousin was foreign minister and another cousin, Daud, was war minister. They were all aristocratic Pushtuns. Daud was extremely ambitious and some years later deposed the King and made himself prime minister and dictator, in fact. Then he turned to the Americans and said, 'Supply me with modern military equipment.' The Americans refused. So he went to the Russians, who embraced him with open arms, and that was the beginning of the end. The Russians trained many thousands of Afghans in the Soviet Union. They set up a puppet government, that led to the Afghan resistance. When the Russians left, 10 years of civil war led in turn to the rise of the Taliban. A sad story.

MM Yes indeed.

HC And it all began with the Pushtunistan policy of the late 1940's.

MM What sort of a place was it when you first arrived there? Was it a developed society?

HC In no way. To give you one example; the roads: there were only two hundred yards of tarmac road in the country and that was the street which ran up to the Prime Minister's office. Journeying about the country really was very hard. The airline hadn't been developed, buses were very infrequent and the way I travelled about, John Gardener, my ambassador was very good in encouraging this, was buy a place on a lorry. If you were lucky you could buy a place next to the driver. If not, you had to ride on top of the freight. If the latter, you were either very dusty or you were very cold.

MM What I meant was, were they not a literary people with poetry and art?

HC No, unfortunately not. At that time Afghanistan remained a rough and simple society, unlike Iran. The difference crossing from Afghanistan into Iran, in those days, was enormous. It was a medieval country in which nearly everyone wore Oriental clothes. They didn't wear trousers and suits. There was some lorry transport, there was a certain amount of trade, but trade in simple things like raisins and sheepskins. There were very few industrial plants in the country.

MM Drugs?

HC Not much at that time although a lot of people smoked hashish. The lorry drivers used to take it to keep themselves awake.

MM Like in India.

HC But I made some interesting journeys. One of them was to the Panjshir Valley to which later I was to return with Eric Newby, on a journey chronicled in 'A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush'.

MM Tell me about 'A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush'. That was a very important

publication, wasn't it?

HC Thank you. It was indeed. That came after my posting to Brazil. May I tell you about it now?

MM Yes, of course. We don't have to be completely tied to strict chronological order.

HC I have written a little about the background to this book in 'Traveller's Tales' which was published in 1999.

MM That's the Travellers' Club publication?

HC That's it. I had been on an earlier journey with an American diplomat, an American colleague in Kabul. We had been to make a reconnaissance of this great mountain of twenty thousand feet, Mir Samir it was called, at the top of the Panjshir Valley and on the frontier separating the Panjshir Valley from Nuristan. It was a very little known part of Afghanistan at that time, very few Western travellers had ever been there. Eric and I had developed the ambitious project of both climbing Mir Samir and going into Nuristan. The book describes that and Eric was a splendid companion. He had great enthusiasm for everything. The last line of the book, the exit line is a wonderful one. I don't know whether you know it?

MM No, please tell me.

HC In the last chapter we meet the famous explorer, Wilfred Thesiger, and camp with him one night. The evening and the camp and the food that we ate and what Thesiger was like are all minutely described. And then the time came for us to go to bed. Wilfred saw one of us blowing up an air mattress because the ground was very stony and exclaimed, 'God, you must be a couple of pansies'.

MM He would sleep on the stony ground.

HC Yes.

MM You had a lot of fun on that trip, I imagine?

HC We had a lot of fun and the book was to serve as an introduction to many British people who became interested in Afghanistan in the 1950's, 60's and 70's. It had a tremendous publishing success. The paper back alone I think has sold over half a million copies and it's still in print. Of course recent events have caused its sales to pick up again. So it had that quality of re-introducing British people to Afghanistan. Eric and I were twice invited to go back to Afghanistan. The first, about 25 years ago, to act as leaders on a sort of up-market trekking tour in the mountains, to be organised by Cooks Tours, but for some reason that fell through. Perhaps because there was a coup in Kabul, I think that was it. And then more recently, in 1998, we were due to go back and plans were well advanced to make a television film for BBC 2. Unfortunately a few months before we were due to set out the Taliban captured Mazar-i-Sharif, the main town in Northern Afghanistan, and the BBC decided it was going to be too difficult and too dangerous. But I would have loved to have gone.

MM Never mind, it sounds as if you had a pretty interesting time there, one way or another. Should we go back to Rio? You were there for three years, from 1953 to 1956.

HC I arrived in Rio by ship, I remember it well, on the 20th August 1953. It was the date on which the Shah returned to Iran after the Mossadeq revolution. Henceforth, as long as the Shah was in power, it was a national holiday. When I heard the news I felt that I shouldn't be here in Brazil, I should have been in Iran. But I soon settled down in Rio and enjoyed it very much. I was the Second Secretary in the commercial department. It was quite a large commercial department headed by a Minister, and had a First Secretary, a Second Secretary and a locally engaged market officer. After the war (World War II-Ed), Brazil had had a large volume of Sterling balances which were used to buy equipment from Britain, railway stock and cars. But by the time I got there they had spent all this money and they had even run into debt and had accelerated a policy of import substitution. So, in brief, we were rather overstaffed in the commercial department. But it was a very pleasant country in which to live. I came to admire Brazilian architecture very much. I loved air travel which was much more developed at that time in Brazil than in Europe. Everybody seemed to travel by air, on

Dakotas.

I did two memorable things while I was in Brazil. The first was to play in a test match, cricket test match, for Brazil against Argentina. We Brazilians got thrashed. The second was that I met my future wife there. She was born in Sao Paulo of an Italian-Brazilian family. She had worked in the Museum of Art in Sao Paulo, and she had been to London with a collection of their pictures exhibited at the Tate Gallery. There she met a lot of people while she was in London, including my brother who wrote to me saying, 'Do look up this charming Brazilian lady'. And I did and we have been together ever since.

MM So you brought something good back from Brazil. So after Brazil you were then posted to Tehran, Persia. What job were you doing there, Hugh?

HC I was Oriental Secretary, First Secretary (Oriental) and I was delighted to be in Iran. I think it is a fascinating country, one of those countries which has enormous depths, history, literature, architecture, archaeology, and people I have always thought were charming. And then it has an important position strategically, as well as very significant oil reserves. The embassy in Iran was a very beautiful one. I don't know if you have been there but it is a big estate in the centre of the city with huge plane trees and its own water supply, underground water supply. Also there was a summer residence, another estate further out towards the foothills of the mountains behind Tehran. That was very pleasant.

What I particularly remember about the embassy was the high quality of the staff there. The ambassador was Sir Roger Stevens, who went on to become vice-chancellor of Leeds University; the counsellor was John Russell, who became ambassador in Brazil and Spain; the Third Secretary was Michael Simpson who ended as ambassador to Mexico while Leslie Fielding, then a language student became head of the foreign affairs directorate of the European Commission in Brussels. Some very fine people. The work of the Oriental Secretary, in brief, was to advise the ambassador and through him the Foreign Office, who was who in Iran and what was happening. For this I had as assistant a well-educated Iranian called Sajjadi, and he was able to introduce me, and other people in the embassy, to a whole range of Iranians.

MM You were, presumably, expected to read the local press? And listen to the radio.

HC Yes, at that time the press was becoming more developed. There were a couple of leading papers, one was later published in English as well as in Persian, called Kayhan. I arrived three years after Mossadeq had been ousted and the Shah was cautiously finding his way, nervously finding his way, towards the position of autocratic power that he was to assume in later years. But at that time there were other power centres as well as the Shah. There was the parliament, which still had a certain independence, and there was the seven year plan organisation which ran the allocation of the oil revenues under an economic czar called Ebtahaj, later pushed aside by the Shah.

MM So, your job was basically to get to know the locals, to infiltrate yourself into the local society so you could give the ambassador some feel for the undercurrents at play in Persian society?

HC Yes, that was it. We used to have vigorous arguments within the embassy and also with colleagues in the American embassy. There was one American friend of mine, John Bowling, with whom I served both in Kabul and in Tehran, who was a good friend and very supporting. We argued about the future of Iran and how we should try to keep the Iranians in the Western camp. I belonged to the school of thought which advocated that we should try and do this, we should try and bind Iran and the Western world together with a thousand threads. One of these threads, for example, would have been through parliamentary exchanges. In September 1956, at the time of Suez, there happened to be a British parliamentary delegation in Iran. And how surprised, astonished and dismayed we were, the parliamentarians and those of us in the embassy, that the British government had joined in this attack on Egypt. It didn't seem intelligible when seen from Tehran.

MM There you are trying to persuade the Persians that the Brits were really quite civilised, sensible, well organised people and they do something completely out of character.

HC Yes, the Iranians, of course, never had much time for the Arabs, particularly for the

Iraqis, with whom they were later to go to war. But perhaps they also drew conclusions from the fact that it had been unsuccessful.

MM That what had?

HC The British and French intervention had been unsuccessful.

MM Well, it had been.

HC Another of the threads that we thought we could develop was that of skiing because the Iranians had just taken up skiing, while the Shah was an excellent skier, having been to school in Switzerland. We got Sir Arnold Lunn invited to the country. He was then head of the British Ski Federation, and he gave a lecture or two and presented the Shah with an honorary membership of the British Ski Federation at a little ceremony on the ski slopes outside Tehran. It was quite a dramatic ceremony because it was the last occasion on which Queen Soraya appeared in public. She was there looking very elegant in ski clothes; she had a lovely figure. I remember the court minister telling us she had packed 27 suitcases and would be leaving tomorrow. It always seemed to me that it was as much Soraya leaving a rôle that she didn't enjoy and didn't understand, of acting as a dutiful Queen as much as the Shah divorcing her for not having produced an heir. She really wanted a jet-set, play-girl life.

MM Where did she go?

HC She went to live in Italy and there she became the partner, the companion of various men. I didn't follow her life after that but I think she went rather down-hill.

MM Sad. What was the reaction of the Persians to the Suez adventure?

HC I think the reaction was of dismay. I think there would have been the dismay that Europeans were attacking a Moslem country. Then the reaction was of how stupid of them to make this attack without it being successful. And then they might have said to themselves, well, look it goes to show that we must turn to the Americans if we want anything done

properly.

MM Oh, they drew that conclusion...

HC They may have done, I am just talking off the top of my head here. Throughout our discussions that we had on the future of Iran some of us remembered a theory put forward by Professor Minorsky, who had taught me at the School of Oriental and African Studies. This was his theory of the two Irans. It was based on the fact that from the Arab conquest of Iran in the 8th century, when they made the country Moslem, until 1800 the Iranians had passed about 700 years under foreign rule and only 400 under indigenous Iranian dynasties. These long periods of foreign rule, when they were under Mongols and Turks and Arabs, had given them a very special attitude - they looked for secrecy, for example, and deception in politics, and the concealment of one's true thoughts and they were very emotional. Their religion, Shi'ism, also contains some of these characteristics that had overtones of opposition, of martyrdom and, indeed, of revolt. John Russell, our counsellor in the embassy became quite interested in religion in Iran, that is in Shi'ism. I remember he wrote a brilliant mood piece, or thoughtful analysis of the month of Moharram in Iran, that is the mourning month, the mourning for the death of Hasan and Hussein, the sons of Ali the son-in-law of Muhammad, who were killed in an inter-tribal conflict. Their martyrdom became the basis of Shi'ite ideology. John Russell was spot on there. He used to ask me sometimes, 'Well, what are the Mullahs thinking?' I must admit the rest of us didn't pay much attention to the Mullahs and we didn't pay attention because the Iranians themselves at top level, the educated Iranians and particularly the Shah, as his father had before him, paid little attention to them and attempted to diminish their political rôle. We were all wrong but this was 20 years before the Iranian revolution.

MM Of course, how could you be expected to second guess people who were actually running the country.

HC Exactly, unless one thought very carefully about this and the theory of the two Irans.

MM Anyway, your time there came to an end and you were returned to the Foreign Office

and a posting to Information Research Department.

HC Yes, and I had a fitting introduction to my next job, which was Information Research Department, before I left Iran. I was travelling in the north of the country, one evening arriving at a small town very dusty and dirty. I went to the local public baths. The public baths in Iran used to be very good, well organised and an attendant would scrub you down with a rough flannel and get the dirt off you. The bath attendant who looked after me was a voluble man and soon told me much of his life story. He said that during the war the Russians, who had occupied that part of Iran, had arrested him, transported him to Russia and made him work down a salt mine. One day, in the winter, a wolf strayed into the mine shaft. He and the other famished convicts surrounded the wolf, strangled it, skinned it and ate it. Later on, whenever the subject of the Gulags came up, I always thought of that bath attendant.

MM So what was your job in IRD? Were you a specialist in Communism?

HC No I wasn't. At that time IRD had a Head of Department who was Donald Hopson, an assistant, Norman Reddaway, later to be followed by Oliver Wright, and three First Secretaries from the Diplomatic Service. In addition there were several dozen temporarily employed members of the department, some of them were gifted experts. The Department had been established in 1946 and by the time I joined 14 years later it was a going concern with well-defined areas for research. There was research on the Communist bloc. Much of the research material in fact came from the Summary of World Broadcasts produced daily by the BBC at Caversham. By then IRD also had a book publishing business. They published a series called Background books. I think they published about 100 books over two decades. Later they began another series called Ampersand books, of which about 20 were produced in conjunction with Allen and Unwin.

MM And these were books which gave...

HC Background to subjects connected with Communism. And in addition to the books there were periodic publications, particularly a monthly publication called The Interpreter, about

what was happening in the Soviet Union. Among occasional publications, one was the Middle-East Digest.

The three First Secretaries in the Department, I was one, supervised the work of various desks within the Department. My sector was the Middle East and Africa. At that time the situation in the world seemed sombre. Khrushchev was in power in the Soviet Union, Mao in China, and the Sino-Soviet split hadn't become apparent. In addition there was the Afro-Asian movement which was led by vigorous personalities like Tito, Nasser, Nehru, Nkrumah, Soekarno. We British together with the other Europeans took a terrible battering at the United Nations. All the newly independent countries were of course nationalist and most of them gave every benefit of the doubt to the Soviet bloc and their actions and were quick to criticise, in particular, British policy.

MM Criticising us basically for not granting independence more rapidly to what remained of our Empire?

HC Yes, while Britain had already embarked on this steady process of de-colonisation, the French de-colonisation in West Africa came much more suddenly and gave rise to fears that much of West Africa might be infected by Communism. In fact only one country became properly Communist, that was Guinée. So that was certainly one of our fears, of West Africa becoming communistic.

In IRD I also had other duties and I used to attend meetings of the CENTO Counter-Subversion Committee, which were held every six months in Ankara, in Tehran and in London. We also had one in Beirut where we had a regional information office at that time. Philip Adams, a delightful man who has just died, was our man in Beirut in those days at the regional information office. I also had a very pleasant duty. For a year or two I was the political adviser to the British parliamentary delegation to the Inter-Parliamentary Union conferences which took place twice a year, in my year in Athens and in Tokyo. So I did a vast amount of travelling one way or another.

MM How delightful. How much advising did you do to these inter-parliamentary groups?

HC They were Members of Parliament and they were older and much more experienced than I was but in a way they did need help. Whenever an international issue came up, they appreciated help over things like a communiqué to be drafted, notes to be written, attitude to be taken towards a gambit put forward by, for example, the French delegation.

Back in IRD there was one thing I wanted to tell you about in particular. That was we wanted to do what we could to establish relations with French-African countries as they became independent. We had very rudimentary embassies in those days. I remember visiting Martin Le Quesne, who later became High Commissioner in Nigeria, in Bamako where he was established in two rooms in the only hotel there. He was, I thought, a brilliant colleague and he sent a telegram back to the Foreign Office saying that the best way we can help the Mali government to get started was to give them a Dakota, because the French had taken away the only aircraft that were in the country. He knew that a Dakota cost £30,000 at that time and it was far above his aid ceiling but it really would do the trick. I believe everyone in the Office agreed with him and he did get that Dakota.

I took an initiative but of a much smaller kind. I knew a free-lance journalist, Reginald Colby who I had met in the army, and he had once told me that he had been with the 5th Division which had captured Madagascar and he would like to go back there. When Madagascar became independent I persuaded our treasurer in IRD to give Colby £1500 for an air ticket to go there. He wrote several articles about the country and this led to the establishment of the Anglo-Malagasy society with Lord Merrivale, a French speaking peer as its president. I thought that you might be interested.

MM Fascinating. And it is still flourishing.

HC I am glad to hear that.

MM So that was IRD.

HC There is one other matter that I would like to mention. I became interested in the

publishing side of IRD which was run by Leslie Sheridan OBE. He supervised the publication of those books about Communism and books criticising Communism. I was able to introduce him to a good friend of mine, Rayner Unwin who was then just about to succeed his father, Sir Stanley, as head of Allen and Unwin. The upshot was that Allen and Unwin agreed to publish and distribute the Ampersand books. In 1962 they published, I think under their own title, another book which was called, 'On the Tiger's Back,' by a Nigerian called Aderogba Ajao. This Ajao was the son of a well-to-do Yoruba merchant in Lagos. He had been sent to England, to Leicester Polytechnic to read economics. There he became a member of the Young Communist League. On a journey to Germany he had somehow been enticed by the Russians into the Soviet zone and they kept him there, I think he must have been a more or less willing captive, for 5 or 6 years and sent him on various training courses to turn him into a political agent and a Communist leader in West Africa. But gradually he became disillusioned by events like the Hungarian revolution in 1956 and eventually he managed to slip away by train into West Berlin and by plane, I think first to London and then back to Nigeria. There a perceptive information officer called Colin McLaren realised that he had a valuable story and encouraged him to write a book which was subsequently published by Allen and Unwin and widely translated and widely distributed because it was the first book by an African warning his compatriots about the dangers of Communism. It was a great coup at the time.

MM It was nice to hear that about Colin McLaren.

HC You knew him did you?

MM Yes.

HC He did a very good job there and this story, incidentally, the public can now read in the Allen and Unwin archives which are at Reading University. Rayner Unwin unfortunately died last year.

MM That's a very interesting little interlude before you became a Private Secretary to a Minister of State in 1961. Who was the minister of state?

HC Lord Dundee. He wasn't really much interested in foreign affairs but Macmillan was Prime Minister and wanted a post for him so he made him a Minister of State in the Foreign Office. He was also the Conservative spokesman in the Lords on economic affairs. But I haven't got much to say about my time with Lord Dundee.

MM So let's move on. Of course that gave you some insight into the ministerial workings of the Foreign Office at any rate.

HC Yes, certainly.

MM So it was an important stepping stone on your way up before going on to Budapest in 1963 when of course there was a change in government in the UK, wasn't there?

HC 1963, Harold Wilson's first government, was it in 1963 or 1964?

MM I have a feeling it was in 1963.

HC Anyhow, Labour were in power most of the time that we were in Budapest.

MM And, of course, Kennedy died.

HC Kennedy died in 1964?

MM 1963.

HC 1963. Yes, in Budapest. When I arrived there our mission was still a Legation and was only in December 1963, five or six months later, that it was upgraded together with our missions in Bucharest and Sofia to full embassy status. What was remarkable about the embassy in Budapest at that time was the embassy building, which was a magnificent five-storey corner building in downtown Pest quite near the Danube. The building had been built as the headquarters of a Hungarian bank, the Hazai Bank, the National Savings Bank, and it

had the air of a fortress. Sometimes, particularly working late-ish at night I used to imagine it was a fort deep in enemy territory and I was helping to defend it. It had witnessed dramatic episodes in the siege of Budapest in the winter of 1944 to 1945. Part of the building was given over to the Swedes under the diplomat Wallenstein, the man who disappeared, and who sheltered, I think, 40 or 50 Hungarians in the bank, mainly Hungarian Jews whom he was trying to arrange to get out of the country. Then during the 1956 revolution, the Legation had sheltered some eighty British and Hungarian staff and British journalists.

MM What was life like in Budapest in those days? You were deep in Communist territory.

HC Yes. Well, we arrived in 1963, seven years after the Hungarian revolution, which, the Hungarians used to say, was the time when the Hungarians behaved like Poles, that is recklessly brave; the Poles behaved like Hungarians, sitting on the fence, and the Czechs, well, they behaved like Czechs.

MM Which is what?

HC Rather sluggish. This revolution, its aim stated in brief, had been to make Hungary like Austria. Austria which had become independent, was neutral and was Social-Democrat. Although the Hungarian revolution was suppressed, it succeeded in gaining some ground toward its aims, somewhat greater freedom for the Hungarians than that enjoyed by their fellows in other Soviet bloc countries. Another Hungarian epigram was that Hungary was the best hut in the barracks, the Soviet barracks. One freedom which Hungary enjoyed to a greater extent than other bloc countries was that there were more cultural exchanges with the West and we British had a very important cultural programme, which I think contributed to the loosening up of the Communist system.

MM What, overall, or just in Hungary?

HC Well, probably overall but I am only able to tell you what happened in Hungary. I would like to tell you about some of these cultural exchanges but first; what was it like to live in Budapest? On the one hand there were certain degrees of liberty allowed to some

Hungarians, on the other hand it was very much a Communist state. The secret police were everywhere, the Hungarian staff in the embassy, the domestics supplied by the foreign ministry to foreign diplomats all had to report to the secret police and we spent a lot of time on security matters. I was Head of Chancery, the number two in the embassy, and security was my main concern. Some of the Hungarian staff, after they had been to the secret police, would come to me and tell me what the secret police had asked them. One or two would, others kept away from me and I didn't tax them. Then the British staff. It was a regulation that when British staff met Hungarians outside their normal line of duty they must make a note of it, fill in a form and submit it to the head of their section. In the Embassy there were several fine looking English girls and one of these girls failed to fill in the form. Then she was posted away from the embassy. Two or three months later we got, I forget whether it was addressed to me personally or to Chancery, but we got a very sharp letter from Security Department saying that we had allowed a severe breach of security to happen. This girl had gone to her next post pregnant, had confessed that she had been having an affair with a Hungarian and who knows whether he was a member of the secret police or not. I remember thinking when that letter came in, is it my fault, is it the ambassador's fault, the section head's fault or all our fault? In fact the embassy was an extremely close knit and on the whole happy family, particularly under our second ambassador, Sir Alexander Morley, who was one of the first Commonwealth Service men to be given a Foreign Service post. He was charming. He had a Viennese wife. So that aspect of life, security problems, loomed very large.

MM How could you have found out about this girl getting herself involved with Hungarians?

HC Only through her close colleagues.

MM Yes, they must have known, presumably?

HC Well they may not have, or they may have felt their loyalty to her was greater than their loyalty to others concerned. And why should they peach on her?

MM Yes, worrying really. Well, it would have been in those days.

HC Yes, it was slightly worrying because who knows what had happened.

MM But would she have had access to anything of interest to a security service?

HC No, probably not unless she had been manipulated so cleverly as to.... I don't know, to find out what the military attaché had been up to. We had a military attaché and an air attaché. No, she probably wouldn't have had access, but there's one chance in a hundred that she might have had.

MM Anyway, it was all taken very seriously in those days, wasn't it?

HC It was. But then on the other hand we had these cultural exchanges and they really sent the adrenaline shooting up because the Hungarians, the educated Hungarians, were so receptive, so enthusiastic about events like the concerts given by the London Symphony Orchestra under Colin Davis. And a fine team came out from the Royal Shakespeare Company. I can remember Paul Scofield acting Lear and his daughters were Irene Worth, Diana Rigg and that marvellous actress in Dr Zhivago, Julie Christie. You can imagine the Hungarians seeing these Western performances. They had been cut off. Most contact with the West had been denied to most of them.

MM Yes, terribly important those cultural exchanges, I think.

HC These cultural exchanges were reinforced in 1964 by the first visit to Hungary by a British Cabinet minister. This was Tony Crosland, who was later Foreign Secretary.

MM Did he make much of an impression on the Hungarians?

HC I think they were impressed by him because he was impressive intellectually as well as physically. He had a beautiful American wife and they made a striking couple. He signed some sort of an educational exchange agreement, I think.

MM Was he Secretary of State for Education?

HC Yes he was at that time.

MM What sort of impression did he make on you?

HC To put it another way, the ambassador gave a lunch. One of the Hungarian guests was a man called Boldiszar who was editor of a very well produced magazine called the New Hungarian Quarterly. This Boldiszar was a bit of a know-all and during lunch he leaned across the table and said, 'Mr Crosland, tell me, which English papers do you read most enthusiastically?' Crosland said, 'Never read any of them.' "Oh, come Mr Crosland, surely the Tribune, the New Statesman". "Never read them, and I never read them because I know more than the people who write them". Then realising he had been rather arrogant, he added, 'But my wife has strict instructions to read all the papers and, if she finds anything nice about me, she is to show it to me, and if there is anything unpleasant, she is to conceal it.'

There is one anecdote that I would like to tell about Hungary, if I may, to give a flavour of the place. We had a valuable Hungarian adviser in the embassy called Dr Istvan Gal and one day he came into my room. He said, 'There is an unusual applicant for a visa. I think you ought to see him.' He brought in a tall and powerfully built man with distinguished features. This was Zsigmund Széchenyi who had come to us for a visa to go to Kenya. This was the beginning of a long friendship between me and Széchenyi, who had suffered a great deal through his patriotism. He had said to himself, I am Hungarian, I am not going to leave the country and whatever happens I'll stay here. As a consequence, he had been put into the category of a member of the former ruling classes and as such denied any priority in housing, education or employment and lived in a tiny sort of a hut built out of rubble. Széchenyi really is the most famous name in Hungary and his forebears had been prime ministers and innovators and reformers and were great Hungarian aristocrats. He had begun his life as a bit of a playboy but he had developed into being a very fine shot and naturalist. Before the war he had been invited to all these great shoots in Europe, by people with landed estates where he individually had sometimes downed 900 birds in a day. He once showed me his game books, - game books for Africa, where he had shot lions and buffalo, India where he had shot

tiger, America, grizzly bears. After the war he had stayed on and he didn't have any employment. He started writing about his life as a shot. His books, because they opened a window onto the outside world where the Hungarians were not allowed to travel, became best-sellers. When he came to the embassy to ask for a visa to visit Kenya, it was because the Budapest natural history museum, which had been destroyed during the war, wanted some animal heads to display in its new building. The government had given permission for Széchenyi, and his wife, to go to Kenya on a safari to shoot these animals, but they had insisted on sending a member of the secret police with them to make sure that he didn't vanish. He shot buffalo, lion and giraffe, had them skinned and sent back the heads to Budapest. Then he returned with his wife and at the airport he was accosted by a young aggressive Communist journalist, who said to him, 'Well Mr Széchenyi, as a member of the former ruling classes, when you were abroad how is it that you never did what all your family and friends have done and decide to abscond from Hungary?' Széchenyi looked down on this young fellow and he said, 'Young man, I must admit that Zsigmund occasionally toyed with the idea, but Széchenyi, never.' A reply which really deserves a line in the history of post-war Eastern Europe.

MM Is he still alive?

HC No, he died at least fifteen years ago. I heard about it rather late and I wrote an obituary note about him and sent it to The Times but it arrived several months late, so they never printed it.

MM So that accounts for your time in Budapest and you came back to London, in fact to Glasgow and went to Glasgow University as a Civil Service Fellow.

HC Yes, I went there for a year from 1966 to 1967. Just before then the Plowden Report had recommended that some officers should have a break in mid-career and should be sent on sabbatical. So it was a compliment to be chosen for one of these mid-career sabbaticals. I had hoped that it might come to me but I had hoped that it might come a couple of years later, when I had some project for writing, or something like that. However, I went to Glasgow and I worked in the Department of Politics under Professor W J MacKenzie who was the first

appointment to Glasgow University as Professor of Government and Administration. I gave some lectures on Eastern Europe and I supervised the tutorials of some of the students about international relations and I did some research, never published it, on the economic development of Brazil. It was a pleasant enough year but for my wife it was really like a foreign posting but without the benefits.

MM So after Glasgow you went off to be Counsellor and Consul-General to Luanda, of all places.

HC Well, it was a surprisingly interesting post. It was an independent Consulate in that it reported directly to the Foreign Office with a copy to the ambassador who was in Lisbon, Angola being a Portuguese territory. We had a small staff, a Second Secretary (commercial), a vice-consul and a British lady secretary, just the four of us.

MM And you were in charge?

HC I was in charge. Angola was a very important piece of real-estate. Larger than South Africa and possibly as rich in minerals. By the time I got there, there were already two producing oil fields which have been very much extended since. Diamond production was important, Angola had 900 miles of Atlantic coastline with important fishing in the cold Benguela current, which came up from the Cape of Good Hope. Export earnings were quite high and British exports to Angola were \$11 million, 9% of the market, which was much higher than our exports generally achieved. One reason was that a British company, Tanganyika Concessions, still owned the Benguela Railway which was one of the few railways in the world that made a handsome profit, and the reason for that was that it was a mineral railway, bringing down the copper from the Copper Belt and nickel and other minerals from Katanga. I remember that at the time Angola imported 1000 Land Rovers a year, which was 2% of the total Land Rover production, which was 50,000. So that territory few people had heard about, already had 2% of that British production.

MM So it was obviously quite a prosperous territory.

HC It was already quite prosperous. The Portuguese were doing what the other European powers had ceased to do, they were colonising Angola, building roads and hospitals and schools in the hope of staying there more or less for ever.

MM And sending Portuguese citizens out there, to settle?

HC And they had a large army there, I think 60,000 or 80,000, a conscript army which was fighting on the frontiers against the Angolan nationalist movement which was supported at that time mainly by the Communist bloc.

MM These were Portuguese?

HC The Portuguese army, yes. Service in Africa wasn't popular with a lot of Portuguese. I remember meeting one, he was a doctor from Oporto, who told me that he was doing his third period of military service in Africa. That situation eventually produced the revolution of 1974 and while we were in Angola...

MM Sorry, was that the revolution in Portugal itself?

HC Yes, in Portugal itself and simultaneously in the colonies where the Portuguese army and the Portuguese authorities gave up and they all left Mozambique, Angola and Portuguese Guinée in a rush, and went back, it was the so-called carnation revolution. It was quite a peaceful one.

MM And they were just simply fed up with the idea of serving in Africa?

HC And with the concept, which Salazar, the Portuguese dictator for many years, had promoted that Portugal was indivisible, that Angola was Portugal as much as the metropolitan area was. Therefore it couldn't be alienated. This led the Portuguese to adopt a very dogmatic, inflexible approach, that Angola is Portuguese and that is that. Had they been more flexible they could, perhaps, have turned Angola into an independent state within a Portuguese commonwealth.

MM What proportion of the population of Angola was African?

HC Well, over 90% but let us say that 10% was made up of mulattos, mixed blood people. Quite a number of those Angolans were educated but many of them drifted away to join the freedom fighters. While we were there, there was inevitably friction between Britain and Portugal over Africa policy. There was the Rhodesian problem, the Beira patrol off the coast of Mozambique. We believed in decolonisation but the Portuguese stood fast against. So I realised that our effort ought to concentrate on the commercial and economic front. We set up a British businessman's group in Luanda. There were some excellent British businessmen and business houses importing, and I was able to persuade the British National Export Council to send a good mission to Angola. There were other British commercial missions at that time. So that kept us busy and...

MM Well, how were you able to avoid serious political discussions with the Portuguese?

HC One reason was that Portuguese policy was set in stone, and in particular in the first years we were in Luanda, by Salazar himself, a very elderly man. His successor, a man called Caetano, unfortunately followed the Salazar line. Following this line led to the 1974 revolution when Portugal lost these territories. Mozambique, as we know, has now become a member of the British Commonwealth in an extraordinary divergence. And Angola is still gripped by civil war. And it is such a rich country, with all its oil and diamonds and coffee and iron ore and everything.

MM Did you have anything to do with Jonas Savimbi, and people like that?

HC No. He hadn't appeared at that time. He appeared after 1974. He moved into the vacuum created by the hurried evacuation of the Portuguese.

MM Would you say that the Portuguese in Angola, were fed up with them trying to impose themselves, and what was their attitude?

HC In some way, such as the doctor from Oporto whom I mentioned. He thought it an absolute nonsense that he should be in Africa when he wanted to be at home with his family and practice in Oporto.

MM How about the British business community? Were they anti-independence?

HC They in general supported the Portuguese line. They had built up an important stake, or an important business so they generally went along with the Portuguese but they couldn't help meeting Portuguese who were frustrated. Fighting on the frontier in a conscript army, sometimes in jungle conditions, wasn't very popular.

MM It must have been an extremely interesting posting?

HC Well, it was more interesting than one would have expected from the outside.

MM Did you get into South Africa yourself at that time?

HC Yes, I went to a Heads of Mission conference which was held in Gaborone which meant travelling to Johannesburg. I may have gone to Johannesburg on another occasion but I was only in South Africa for a few days, but I did notice that in Angola race relations were very much easier than they were in South Africa. The Portuguese in that sense were more flexible.

MM You didn't have anything much to do with Mozambique, or Rhodesia as it was?

HC I never went to Rhodesia. I did pass through Lorenzo Marques, when I went to the Heads of Mission conference I think I did go via Lorenzo Marques, but again I only stayed there a day or two. I found the atmosphere quite different to that in Angola, it was much more British in a sense. One Portuguese quip was, 'Well, in Mozambique they drink tea, in Angola we drink coffee.' And then Mozambique seemed to look towards Asia, and then there were all those South Africans who went there for holidays.

MM So lets move on from there to your next posting which was Bonn in 1970 to 1973.

What were you doing in Bonn?

HC In Bonn I was the press counsellor, the information counsellor, in a large embassy. Bonn was a small town where the politicians and journalists enjoyed an unusually significant rôle. Most of the British papers had resident foreign correspondents in Bonn so they were a constituency. The information department had several British based staff in it; one section had excellent leads to the technical press in Germany. We had some good contacts with the press, the ministries and philanthropic foundations. One day I was rung up by Norman Reddaway, who was then an assistant under secretary in London, and asked to arrange for a group of trade unionists from Belfast to be invited to Berlin. I was able to walk down the road and into the Friedrich Ebert Foundation which supported the Social Democrat Party. There a friend said, 'My dear fellow, of course we can invite them.' So they invited these Northern Ireland trade unionists, I don't know what the aim was, to Berlin. Perhaps it was just to provide a break.

MM Or to see another divided city.

HC Or maybe to meet somebody there. But, to go back to the information department. There was one thing which seemed wrong when I got there. I found that we were still publishing a weekly newspaper called the Englische Rundschau. Did you ever come across it?

MM It rings a bell.

HC Yes, and this then had a circulation I think of 3000, or it could have been up to 5000, but most copies were given away and none were read by serious Germans, and it was costing, I don't know how much it was costing, I can't quite remember, £50,000 per year. So I persuaded the ambassador that we should stop publishing it. There were tears from the British based editor, but I am sure it was the right thing and it wasn't proper for an embassy to be publishing a newspaper.

MM Well, no doubt they were searching for economies at the time?

HC Even in London there was a certain nostalgia but I think nostalgia has its place, but it doesn't have all the place.

MM It probably went to schools.

HC Perhaps it did, and perhaps some copies were circulated amongst the British army of the Rhine, quite numerous then. Some of them had German wives, and that kind of thing. It didn't cut much ice. One thing I admired very much in Germany was their system of devolution, of considerable power devolved down to State governments. It was one of these governments, the Bavarian government, that in summer 1973 invited our Prime Minister, Ted Heath, to spend a weekend in Bavaria visiting baroque churches and palaces. I think the genesis of this invitation lay in the Munich Olympics of 1972 when Heath had been there and they perhaps had liked him and he liked them and they said, 'You must come back.' So he came back and with him of course was a small retinue; there was his doctor, his police guard and a private secretary. The Germans had a small group of 2 or 3 people from the foreign ministry, then there was the Curator of Bavarian Castles and Lakes, who was the chief guide for Ted Heath. Finally there was the ambassador, Sir Nicholas Henderson, and myself. So we must have been a group of about 10 or 12 people and we travelled about Bavaria in two helicopters, which was ideal for Heath, because you sat in a helicopter, flew over this beautiful, hilly, forested, rolling countryside. The helicopter would put down by a baroque church, Heath would jump out, stride into the church and by the time we had all got out of the second helicopter we could hear him playing the organ. It was a wonderful weekend of sightseeing and I think he must have enjoyed it because he wasn't put under any strain, he didn't have to make chit-chat with people and he could play the organ here and there. The evening and night we spent in a medieval town called Rottenburg op der Tauber. Have you been there?

MM No.

HC Well, it is still very medieval in architecture and appearance with a wall round it and it's on this river, the Tauber, and we stayed in the hotel where, in 1932, Winston Churchill and

his family had stayed several days. The lady who kept the hotel brought out her guest book, for that year with the great man's signature in it, his and Professor Lindemann's. Churchill also had with him his wife, and son and daughter. The hotel keeper at that time was a young newly married bride so she was full of stories about Churchill and his stay there. This was such an unusual weekend that I wrote an account of it later, it has never been published, but I can quote you what the Curator of Bavarian Castles and Lakes said at the end of the weekend: 'Mr Prime Minister, please remember that, when the churches and castles that you have visited were built, Europe was far more European in spirit than it is today.' It was a good remark.

MM Yes, and this is when, 1973? We had just come into Europe.

HC Yes, we came in during 1972 didn't we?

MM Well, formally I think on the 1st of January, 1973.

HC Just in, finally at last.

MM Yes, a good remark. So does that take us to the end of your time in Bonn?

HC I think it does.

MM And you came back to the Foreign Office and became Head of Latin America Department, about which you have got something definitely important to say?

HC Thank you very much. I was in the Department for three and a half years at a time when LAD was very much more a political department than you might expect. Its work had become politicised as a result of the cold war. There were several developments which had quite a bearing on our relations with Latin America that became political issues in Britain. The first one was our relationship with Chile, in particular the question of the warships. Then there was our relationship with Brazil, and in particular the visit to Britain of the Brazilian President in 1976 and, finally, there was the long running saga of the Falkland Islands.

May I begin with the warships? The Labour government came to power early in 1974 and the Minister of State then supervising the Latin America Department, the first Minister of State, was Roy Hattersley. As soon as he came into office, he called in 6 or 7 heads of department and asked each of them to explain to him in one sentence what the main problem of his department was. I said it's the 4 warships for Chile which we had here in British ports, or under construction. He reflected for a moment and then he said, 'Well, I believe we will let them through.' But this wasn't a foregone conclusion because opinion around the world about Chile had been polarised on cold war lines. Allende had been a Soviet protégé. Pinochet, who had overthrown him was perhaps an American protégé and opinion in Europe, in France, in Italy and in Britain was sharply divided. The left-wing of the Labour party was against these warships for Chile being allowed to sail back to Chile. The Foreign Secretary was Jim Callaghan and he dealt with this problem courageously. He began by announcing that there would be no new arms exported to Chile and that existing contracts were being reviewed. Then he made a statement, or answered a question in the House of Commons, a month or two later, saying that existing contracts for the sale of 4 warships, which had been ordered by the government of President Eduardo Frei, in 1969, would be completed together with the spares and equipment pertaining to them. These 4 ships were 2 frigates which already had Chilean crews on board, one was on sea trials and the other, it was called the Lynch after one of the British founders of the Chilean navy, was nearing completion. Then there were two submarines building on the Clyde. The O'Brien and the Hyatt, also names of English or British origin, for delivery a bit later. The agony of this situation was that the Royal Navy under Admiral Cochrane, our navy, had been the father of the Chilean navy, and indeed of other navies in Latin America, and now these important links between the Royal Navy and the Chilean navy were near to being snapped.

A few weeks later the AUEW blacked work on 8 Chilean air force jet engines being overhauled by Rolls Royce. They did this as a result of an article by Hugh Scanlon, the leader of the AUEW, urging a ban on all work on military equipment for Chile. The workers at Yarrow who were working on the second frigate did stop work but in Glasgow, strangely, they voted against the ban for fear of redundancy. This issue, which was finally resolved in favour of allowing these ships to sail to Chile, brought about a crisis in British Chilean

relations. This got worse when a lady of British origin, Sheila Cassidy, was arrested by the Chileans and apparently tortured, and as a result we were obliged to withdraw our ambassador as a mark of disapproval; Reggie Secondé, did you ever come across him?

MM I know the name.

HC He is still about. He was well treated by the Office. He was later ambassador in Rumania and finally in Venezuela; a very nice man. Throughout this warships for Chile upset I immensely admired the steadfastness of the Foreign Secretary, Jim Callaghan. He received delegation after delegation, the TUC, the NEC, the PLP all demanding some action against Chile.

MM Yes, very robust, wasn't he.

HC Yes he was a good Foreign Secretary. During my time in Latin American Department, there was another event which proved to be a close run thing. This was the politically controversial State visit of President Geisel of Brazil. It took place in May 1976. Like most State visits, the date for this visit had been agreed well in advance and it was regarded as a return visit to that which The Queen had made to Brazil in 1968. President Geisel combined it with visits to France and, I believe, to Germany. The snag was that Brazil maintained a military government. It was certainly authoritarian but its actions were meek and mild in comparison to the harsh military regimes which in the 1970's dominated first Chile and later Argentina. And, since Brazil had been a wartime ally and was becoming so important industrially, there seemed to be no strong case to be made against going through with the visit. But left wing opinion thought otherwise. On 25th February 1976, the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party voted unanimously for the cancellation of the pending visit by 'the head of one of the most repressive regimes in Latin America', and over 100 Labour MP's signed a Commons motion expressing the 'earnest hope' that General Geisel would not be invited on the grounds that he 'runs a cruel military dictatorship like that in Chile'. There was the rub: Chile, a Cold War battlefield.

Then, in March, Harold Wilson surprised the country by resigning unexpectedly. It was not

until April that Jim Callaghan emerged as his successor as leader of the Labour Party and Prime Minister. He had hardly moved over the road from the Foreign Office to No. 10 before two of his Cabinet colleagues, Michael Foot and Tony Benn, made it known that they would boycott the Geisel visit; and the new Foreign Secretary, Anthony Crosland, decided to take up an outstanding invitation to go to China. So the PM was left to hold the Brazilian baby. It was then that he said to me, 'Hugh, if we don't get one large contract out of the Brazilians, you had better look for another job'. I was never sure whether there was a smile in his eyes.

Geisel and his retinue were due on Tuesday, 4th May. On Sunday the 2nd May, when I looked at the papers, my heart sank when I found The Observer had a centre page article headed, 'The Queen's Unwelcome Guest'. It was by Hugh O'Shaughnessy who espoused radical causes in Latin America. He said the State visit would be controversial with picketing and demonstrations and Brazil was a dictatorship sustained by torture. He argued that 'it is difficult to escape the conclusion that serious errors of judgement by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and perhaps also by the Department of Trade, have given the Brazilian government many advantages while Britain acquires a set of very doubtful benefits'.

On Tuesday morning, The Queen, as by tradition, met her incoming visitors at Victoria Station. There were demonstrators there and they threw a few tomatoes at the royal coach as it drove away with The Queen and President Geisel. Even the horses were nervous, according to an apocryphal joke. But the incident had been forgotten by mid-day, when the Prime Minister took me with him to Buckingham Palace to pay his courtesy call on President Geisel. The two men seemed to get on well. There followed an informal lunch hosted by The Queen for a couple of dozen people. My wife and I were invited to act as interpreters and I found myself sitting behind and between Senhora Geisel and the Duke of Edinburgh. The Duke launched the conversation by inquiring whether there were many snakes in Brasilia. Senhora Geisel was good enough to answer politely. They then discovered that they could get on quite well in German, so I withdrew.

For the next three days, the State visit ran its traditional course. Behind the scenes businessmen and their bankers negotiated with the Brazilians who were co-ordinated by their brilliant ambassador in London, Roberto Campos. He was later to become Minister of Finance. On the morning of Friday, 7th May, the Geisels left Buckingham Palace after

breakfast. By prior arrangement, my wife then took them out to lunch at The Noah's Ark, then a first class restaurant at Frilford, south of Oxford. The party included the Brazilian Foreign Minister, who was always known as Silveirinha, and our Minister of State at the FCO, Ted Rowlands and they could now relax and enjoy themselves. President Geisel called for a second helping of lamb chops. Afterwards, they drove to Blenheim Palace. There, Silveirinha felt unwell and was allowed to have a siesta stretched out on 'Churchill's bed'. Meanwhile, on Friday afternoon, we called a press conference at the Foreign Office. Mike Treble, the Assistant Secretary at the Department of Trade, and I took it. We were able to announce that the State visit had led to the conclusion of agreements for the supply and financing of equipment for a steel mill to be built by Davy Ashmore, for the railways and for offshore oil development in Brazil. These would be worth some £300 million. May I add, in retrospect, that later in the year, BP and Shell were to sign offshore oil exploration agreements off the coast of Sao Paulo and near the mouth of the Amazon respectively. So, the visit, which had begun nervously, ended in a pleasant glow. As the practice went, decorations were exchanged. Patrick Nixon, the Desk Officer who did much of the planning for the visit, and I received Cruzeiro do Sul (Southern Cross) awards. And, a few weeks later, I was surprised to be awarded the CMG rather ahead of my seniority. I never learnt who had nominated me. Could it have been the Prime Minister? Or conceivably Sir John Buckley of Davy Ashmore?

MM But before we leave Latin America Department I suspect the most important of your problems there would have been the Falkland Islands and all the problems that followed from our ownership and the desire of the Argentines to recover the Islands.

HC Exactly. Latin America Department had in fact inherited four territorial disputes. In the Antarctic which was resolved through the Antarctic Treaty agreement in 1961. A dispute with Guatemala over British Honduras, a dispute with Venezuela over British Guyana and the dispute with Argentina over the Falkland Islands. In connection with the Falkland Islands much of course has now been written. Apart from the Franks Report there have been numerous books and there has been Michael Charlton's excellent oral history of the events leading up to the Falklands war, which is called, 'The Little Platoon,' which was published in 1989. I myself was a contributor, one of a considerable number of people interviewed for

this important work.

But perhaps I can talk about two or three subjects which I think haven't been covered, or were only partly covered. One was a seminar held in the Foreign Office in May 1975 by David Ennals, then Minister for State. The second was the origin of the Shackleton mission to the Falkland Islands in January 1976 and thirdly, Tony Crosland as Foreign Secretary from April 1976 until February 1977. One of the problems about the Falkland Islands was that from Her Majesty's Government's point of view it was a marginal problem and it was a problem which was always dogged by lack of Ministerial time. In addition it was viewed by some senior people in the Foreign Office as an intractable problem about which really nothing much could be done. Yet the collective memory in Latin America Department was of the success of the Antarctic Treaty negotiations in which Henry Hankey, my first Assistant Under Secretary supervising Latin America Department, had been a leading player and much of the credit for the Antarctic Treaty must go to him. So there was this precedent. There was also the precedent of the Communications Agreements with Argentina which were negotiated between 1971 and 1973, agreements which led to the Argentines running an air service to the Islands, building a landing strip near Port Stanley and supplying petroleum products to the Islands.

MM The Argentines?

HC Yes, they built it. It was a rudimentary landing strip, they put down rolls of wire mesh and firmed up the landing strip. They also supplied the fuel oil for heating.

MM But on repayment?

HC On repayment. But their ships brought in the fuel. In addition, every Minister, from Michael Stewart in the mid-1960's onwards, had a go at trying to do something about this problem. Julian Amery, for example, a great imperialist in his day, even proposed to the Argentines that we should consider a condominium agreement. This fell through, eventually, but Julian Amery had proposed it. And Jim Callaghan's main proposal was that of economic co-operation in the South Atlantic.

But first, if I may, the Ennals seminar. David Ennals was a Minister I much admired. At times he would try to widen discussion about a major problem and he had several one-day seminars in the Foreign Office. One was about the Law of the Sea. This particular one was about the Falkland Islands and he invited about 30 people. There must have been about 12 Members of Parliament, some of them still about. Richard Luce was one, Tam Dalyell was another, Anthony Kershaw was there so there were 10 or 12 Members of Parliament and there were 6 or so people from the Falkland Islands lobby led by Sir John Barlow and there were business people, academics and several experts. One was Professor Griffiths from Birmingham University who had just carried out a survey about the possibility of offshore oil around the Falklands. So Ennals gathered all these people together and we held the meeting in the old India Office Council Chamber. There was a brisk discussion. One of the Members of Parliament and the members of the Falkland Islands lobby were dismayed but Ennals said to them that Ministers had to reconcile the interests of the Islanders with the broader interests of the UK. That was the dilemma. There is a record of this meeting, quite a full record, which I re-read recently and I was sorry to learn that it was one of the papers about the Falkland Islands which wasn't shown to the Franks Committee. In my view it was an admirable example of the Foreign Office sharing a national problem with informed leaders of opinion. You'll remember that when the Argentines landed everyone turned round and said, 'How is it the Foreign Office allowed this to happen?' Some people said it.

MM Yes, Mrs Thatcher?

HC Soon afterwards, unfortunately, David Ennals was moved on, he was promoted into the Cabinet, I think to Secretary of State for Health and Social Security. Meanwhile we had the drama of the Shackleton Economic Mission. The idea was launched in the autumn of 1975 that Lord Shackleton, a former Labour Cabinet Minister and son of the famous explorer should go out...

MM President of the Royal Geographical Society.

HC Yes, and it seemed an excellent choice. The Islanders reacted enthusiastically. And so

did the Prime Minister who, unusually for him, wrote a warm letter of congratulation to the Foreign Secretary, congratulating him on the excellent choice of the leader, couldn't be a better man, long experience as a Labour Minister etc: it was unusually enthusiastic.

MM That was Harold Wilson?

HC It was Harold Wilson. The idea, I must admit, hadn't been mine but that of Robin Edmonds, then Assistant Under Secretary, who had known Eddie Shackleton for years. I think they had been at university together. When we launched the idea, this mission was intended to build a bridge between the Islands and Argentina but, unfortunately, the Argentine government took umbrage when we announced the mission. The Foreign Secretary made valiant efforts to meet the Argentine Foreign Minister, I think it was either in Paris or New York that he met him, and at one stage seemed to have convinced the Foreign Minister that the idea was a good one and that Argentine experts should join the mission. When he got back to Buenos Aires the Foreign Minister was repudiated by the government. It was the last days of the Peronista government. So then we were faced with a decision as to whether to call off the mission or to send Shackleton and his team, not, as we had supposed originally, by air through Buenos Aires but by sea.

Well, we went through with the original plan and this led to a most complex operation, as to how we got Shackleton onto a ship in the middle of the south Atlantic, it was the Endurance, and how he arrived. He was helicoptered on board from some point in-between. When he got there, particularly when, a week or two later, he visited his father's grave in South Georgia, he lost his heart to the Falkland islanders. Most of us would, and he did. As a result, his report when it finally appeared was island centred rather than a plan for regional development, that is treating the islands and the mainland as one economic region. So, with hindsight we see this excellent project was a year too early and we failed to enlist the support and co-operation of the Argentine government. Had we been able to do so, history might have turned out differently. In 1976, when the Argentine military came to power and needed friends, they might well have been receptive to Shackleton leading a joint British-Argentine survey mission.

MM Well possibly Shackleton wasn't such a good choice in the end.

HC Perhaps his name had too much of a connotation.

MM I am thinking of his going to South Georgia and seeing his father's grave and being won over by the Islanders.

HC Well he became fired up with the thought of what can we do to help the Islanders without having been allowed to have the experience of looking at the Argentine mainland which was the base for the fishing in the south Atlantic and the base for the oil industry in Patagonia.

MM We still have three more sections, I think you were saying?

HC Crosland, the Foreign Secretary, then Buenos Aires 1977 to 1980 and finally, Venezuela 1982 to 1985.

MM So what have you got to say about Foreign Secretary Tony Crosland?

HC He became Foreign Secretary in April 1976 when Jim Callaghan moved on from the Foreign Office to become Prime Minister. Crosland was a political heavyweight with a powerful intellect and the kind of man who could stare any backbencher down. At first we found that he was reluctant to take any papers concerning the Falkland Islands or turn his attention to them...

MM This is Crosland?

HC Crosland, yes. He was reluctant at first because he said there were other more important issues that he had to get in place first. One of these issues was the Cod War with Iceland which he stopped, perceiving it to be against British interests. He stopped it although he was MP for Grimsby, one of our deep-sea fishing ports. Eventually he agreed that we should prepare him a dossier...

MM Excuse me, you were saying that he stopped the Cod War, he came to an agreement with the Icelanders that...

HC Yes, stopped the Cod War which he perceived to be against British interests, although his own political constituency was Grimsby...

MM Yes, deeply in favour of continuing fishing Icelandic waters.

HC Exactly. So eventually he agreed that we should prepare a dossier of material, maps and analysis, about the Falkland Islands. His wife, Susan, has well described his method of work. He would take work home to his house in Notting Hill, where he had a study, and he would read the papers and then he would walk up and down the lawn smoking one of his cheroots, reflecting. Eventually he said that he would have an office meeting, it would have been a large office meeting, it may have been 2 or 3, and as a result of these meetings he agreed that there was a problem concerning the Falkland Islands which had to be tackled. He began to develop the concept that we might be able to negotiate a series of agreements with Argentina over a period of years beginning with the outer edges of the problem. That is the Falkland Island dependencies. Subjects like scientific co-operation in those islands south of 60 degrees south within the Antarctic circle and technical matters like fishing and oil production. He always maintained that we should be more concerned with people rather than territory.

MM Did he take the Shackleton Economic Mission report into consideration?

HC Yes, he did consider it. So after his meetings with his officials in the Foreign Office he made a parliamentary statement, an important statement on the 2nd February 1977. I re-read it the other day and it reads very well. First of all he dealt with the Shackleton report and said that the government couldn't accept its more costly recommendations such as building a modern airport. He then said that he was sending a Minister to sound out the Islanders and obtain their views. This Minister was Ted Rowlands, the then Minister for State, who left in mid-February and I went with him and he made his journey via Buenos Aires, where he saw the Argentine Foreign Minister...

MM Mid-February.....

HC 1977. The Argentine Foreign Minister was Admiral Guzzetti who a week or two later was to be shot dead by an Argentine revolutionary. But we passed through Buenos Aires and flew, courtesy of the Argentine air force who ran the airline, from Patagonia to the Falkland Islands and the first news that we had on arrival at Port Stanley was that Crosland had died on the 19th March. From a brain haemorrhage aged 59. I have always believed that had Crosland lived he might perhaps have made some difference to the Falklands problem.

MM Yes, his death was a great loss.

HC And I was very interested to read from your interview with Sir Reginald Hibbert, that Hibbert remarked that Crosland's death was unfortunate for British foreign policy of which he had begun to gain a very good understanding.

MM Yes, also somewhere or other in the archives, I have got an account of Crosland's first meeting with Henry Kissinger and how Crosland was very reluctant because Kissinger was a heavyweight intellect; nevertheless did do so and established a considerable rapport because they turned out to be similar kinds of people.

HC Now we come to Buenos Aires. In 1976 the Chief Clerk one day rang me up and asked if I would go as ambassador to Peru. I asked if I could think it over for a couple of days. When I had done so I inquired whether they would allow me to go to Buenos Aires rather than to Peru even though it meant I would go as Chargé d'Affaires rather than as ambassador. I have forgotten that I didn't work into the account of Shackleton the fact that one of the results of his mission was that the Argentines asked our ambassador to leave. That was the reason there was a Chargé d'Affaires. I went as Chargé d'Affaires, the same rank within the service but not with the ambassador title. On our arrival in Buenos Aires we found that there were 24 security guards in the embassy, including 4 ex-SAS NCO's and to have two of these enormous men, looking very fierce, accompany you to a restaurant, or a bookshop, in Buenos Aires was an extraordinary experience. The security guards were there because in Argentina

there had been a great deal of kidnapping, particularly of businessmen who were asked to pay a ransom. I knew one British Anglo-Argentine businessman, Charles Lockwood, who was kidnapped not once but twice. On the first occasion his company paid \$50,000, on the second he was rescued after the police had killed all the kidnapers who were holding him in a suburban house. Then, a few years before, our ambassador in Montevideo had been kidnapped, Geoffrey Jackson. So there was some reason. After several months I was able to reduce the number of these security guards, and send the SAS away. We found that we lived in an enormous residence, a mansion with 98 rooms which had some priceless furniture on loan from the Victoria and Albert Museum.

In power in Argentina was a military junta, who took over from the Peronista government in 1976, and unleashed a wave of terror to crush the largest guerrilla movement seen in Latin America since Castro seized power in Cuba and they liquidated several thousand, I think about twelve thousand of their own people. They killed more Argentines than the Chileans killed their own compatriots in Chile. While the whole world, the liberal opinion of the western world joined with Communist influences to revile the Chilean government, there was hardly a spark of protest about the treatment that the junta meted out to Argentines. The reason for this was that Allende in Chile had been a Soviet protégé. In Argentina the junta maintained friendly relations with the Soviet government who supported them indirectly because Argentina was then selling to the Soviet Union the grain which the United States refused to sell them. They used to say in Buenos Aires that if a member of the small Argentine Communist Party was arrested, within 48 hours the Soviet ambassador would have had him released.

Fortunately for us in the British Embassy very few members of the large Anglo-Argentine community were arrested. Most of them in a general kind of a way were supportive of or accepted the military government. But there was one young girl who was arrested called Daisy Hobson. Her parents were well-to-do Anglo-Argentines and her father was the polo referee at the Hurlingham Club. Daisy was a brilliant girl who had a seven handicap at golf, had won all the prizes at the pony club and had been given a prestigious British Council scholarship to study at a British university which was open to girls at secondary schools throughout Latin America. But instead of taking up this scholarship she went to live with a

professional revolutionary. When the military came to power they sent out their hit squads against known revolutionaries. A hit squad burst into the flat where she was living with this man, killed him, arrested Daisy who at the age of 20, I think, was sentenced to 22 years in prison. In prison apparently she behaved very well. She was able to help a lot of other prisoners, but she was in prison for 7 years until the military government collapsed in 1983. She had 2 married sisters in Britain and she then came to Britain.

The Argentine military had a certain ideology and they were fascinated by geopolitics. One geopolitical theory was that Argentina had 3 neighbours in the world, one was the massive and mighty Brazil, the second was Chile, a smaller but prickly and vigorous country and the third was Britain. Nobody in Britain would believe that we were a neighbour of Argentina but they saw it that way. We were their neighbours in the Antarctic, in the Falkland Islands, in the Falkland Island dependencies, South Georgia and so....

MM So relations with Britain were extremely important to Argentina?

HC Very important, difficult for people in Britain to imagine. Fortunately, for a year or two we were saved from extreme Argentine pressure, partly by the World Cup, which was held in Argentina in 1978. Argentina managed to win. That took up a lot of national energy and then at the end of the year the Beagle affair came to a crux. That is the Argentine dispute with Chile over sovereignty over islands in the Beagle channel at the south of Tierra del Fuego. In 1977 the International Court of Arbitration gave their arbitration in favour of Chile. The Argentine government rejected the award, and by December 1978 there was a crisis and the real possibility that Argentina would attack Chile. I can remember the nationalistic emotion. The Argentine nationalists were boiling with indignation while the military were boasting that they “would be pissing in the Pacific by January”. War was averted due to timely action taken by the Vatican who sent a Cardinal skilled in foreign affairs, Cardinal Samoré, who performed a feat of shuttle diplomacy. But they were on the point of attacking the Chile. That, for me in the embassy was a warning and I reported, perhaps excessively, about this Beagle affair.

For the moment we enjoyed good economic relations with Argentina. The economy minister

was Martinez de Hoz, an aristocrat, and a land-owner. I think his father had been at Eton. There was an Eton connection, either the father or the son. He spoke perfect English and he was an economic guru, who was particularly in favour of lowering tariffs in order to make the economy more competitive. He was well regarded by the international financial community and we were able to arrange for a very good mission to come from the British Invisibles Export Committee to Buenos Aires under Sir Francis Sandilands, a delightful man. And then Martinez de Hoz took an Argentine mission back to the city of London where they were well received.

But we didn't succeed in another area where at one stage I had great hopes. This was the question of the billion-dollar frigate contract. When the military junta came to power in 1976 the navy quickly proposed that they open a contract for the building of seven frigates, one abroad and six subsequently in Argentina. Their specification favoured the type 22 frigate then in use in the Royal Navy. And for a time it seemed that Vosper would win this contract which I thought was immensely important because it would have locked Argentina into an important industrial relationship with Britain. But in the end Bloehm and Voss of Hamburg nipped in and won the contract. It may have been that the Argentine navy had always felt that the Labour government was too lukewarm towards them, but one of the Argentine admirals, Admiral Ziegler, told a friend of mine, after a couple of whiskies, that "you British could have had the contract long ago but you never came up with the money": the contribution to the navy widows and orphans pension scheme!

Well, my time in Buenos Aires ended with the visit by Nicholas Ridley, Minister of State in the Thatcher government. He went out to the Falkland Islands, and then came back and made a statement in the House of Commons proposing that lease-back should be suggested as the solution. For some reason or other his statement wasn't properly prepared, he hadn't prepared his own front bench or back bench and he was howled down by MPs on every side of the House.

MM What year was that?

HC That was the 2nd December 1980. I in fact had then left Argentina. I was succeeded in

1980 by Anthony Williams. He came with relations now upgraded to ambassador level.

MM And you went off to be on secondment to Northern Engineering Industries.

HC Yes. Can I add just a couple of sentences about Buenos Aires?

MM Yes, of course.

HC My wife really had a great success there and made friends with an Argentine painter called Vidal. She had already had several exhibitions but Vidal encouraged her to experiment and she had a successful exhibition at the Wildenstein Gallery in Buenos Aires, a very good gallery, just as we were leaving. So we left on a very happy note as far as our social life was concerned.

Then after I had been with Northern Engineering for several months, the Foreign Secretary selected me to go as ambassador to Iran. My great ambition in life. But on condition that relations with Iran were raised from Chargé level to ambassadorial level. As you know, that in fact wasn't a matter of months; it took 20 years.

MM And look at what has happened now.

HC Poor David Reddaway, he deserved to go there. He is a capable chap and he does speak very good Persian.

MM It seemed so short sighted on the part of the Iranians...

HC Yes, well it's domestic politics.

MM Of course, yes.

HC So after several more months the Chief Clerk said there is no point in your hanging around indefinitely. You had better go to Venezuela.

MM What is the capital?

HC Caracas.

MM How did that appeal to you?

HC It did in some ways. I was of course bitterly disappointed not to be going to Iran but I had been to Venezuela, when Reggie Secondé had been ambassador there, and I knew that it was an important country from the oil industry point of view. It had a lot of life. It was making waves in OPEC as one of the founder members and in the Non Aligned Movement. We arrived there though just as the Falklands war was ending.

MM 1982.

HC Yes, June. And during the war the Venezuelans had been extraordinarily enthusiastic in their support of Argentina. Partly it was Latin solidarity and partly it was because of the Venezuelan claim on a chunk of Guyana, the Essequibo. About a third, I think, of the territory of former British Guyana. They believed that, had Argentina managed to win back the Falklands, then they were likely to be able to pursue their claim on the Essequibo territory of Guyana, as it had become. But the Falklands factor in fact cost us quite a lot in Venezuela. It cost us a £200 million British Aerospace contract for the supply of Hawk training aircraft to the Venezuelan airforce. The Venezuelans withdrew £5 billion from the city of London, believing it might be frozen, and various other things were lost. One was a large and interesting Royal Geographical Society expedition to the Venezuelan Amazon. Then there was the possibility of a Royal Visit, so we lost quite a lot of ground.

MM What were the main problems in your time there?

HC The main problem had been this Falklands factor. When we arrived the Venezuelans felt very rich, the oil price had been up to, three years before, \$39 to the barrel. Many of them had become millionaires overnight. They were very brash, nationalistic. They used to say

when Venezuelans went shopping in New York or Miami they would always be exclaiming 'da me dos', (give me two). Whether it was apartments or evening dresses. It was the fourth largest oil producer in the world and the third market for whisky. And even Venezuelan taxi drivers drank Black Label.

MM While they were driving?

HC The third market for whisky and the government had stopped serving it at public functions during the war.

MM A gesture of solidarity with Argentina.

HC But we did manage to work our way back through a remarkable feat of cultural diplomacy. It had very little to do with me personally because much of it had been planned long before. In 1983 the Venezuelans celebrated in a very large way the bi-centenary of the birth of their national hero, Simon Bolivar. And they invited all those countries accredited to the Venezuelan government to participate in the celebrations. We formed a British co-ordinating committee under the chairmanship of David Eccles, who by chance had begun collecting books about Venezuela at the age of seventeen. By the time he was sixty his collection had become very important and he sold it to a Venezuelan friend of his, whom we also knew, for a million dollars. Eccles, through his interest in book collecting, became a very good friend of Venezuela. At the time in Caracas we had an excellent, outstanding British Council representative called John Mallon, an Edinburgh Scot. We were able to bring out to Caracas a Henry Moore exhibition which was exhibited in the Museum of Contemporary Art. I remember the largest piece weighed 5 tonnes, and it was inaugurated by the President. It was seen by, I think, 200,000 Venezuelans out of a population of 15 million and even the catalogue became a best-seller. Eccles was with us for that. Then a month or two later there was the London Festival Ballet which was another blockbuster with everybody in Caracas there, and the President. With us for that occasion was the then President, or Chairman, I think the name was, of the British Council, Sir Charles Troughton, a very pleasant and capable man, who had been Chairman of W H Smith. In short the British contribution was unmatched by that of any other country.

MM It makes a nice change.

HC Yes. It restored great warmth to our relations. It cost, I think, £750,000 of which the Venezuelans paid £500,000. That relationship with the British Council I found very encouraging. I had always admired the British Council and was glad that they were so successful.

MM Yes, that is an enormous success.

HC And again my wife continued her painting and had a fine exhibition at the leading gallery in Caracas, the Acquavella gallery, just before we left.

MM So that was the formal end of your diplomatic service career.

HC Yes.

MM And you had a number of appointments, and so on, after retiring. Do you want to say anything about any of them?

HC Yes, I'd like to say a word about the Argentine - British conferences.

MM Did you start those?

HC I helped to start them and I helped to start them, I must admit, after Sir Frank Roberts had given me something of a prod. I was talking to him about our relations with Argentina. At that time they were again back under a Chargé d'Affaires and he said, 'Well, why don't you think of doing something on the lines of the Koenigswinter conferences, with which he had been very much concerned. I got together with the then Argentine Chargé d'Affaires and one or two other people in Canning House and we started these Argentine - British conferences, the ABC conferences, alternating between Britain and Argentina. We had the first one in 1992, I think it was, just before we resumed relations at ambassador level. I

remember that we were hard put to raise the money to pay for that. It cost about £25,000 because it was a three-day conference for 60 people. The most expensive item was for the simultaneous translation. Fortunately the Dulverton Trust gave us £18,000 towards that.

MM Good for them.

HC At later conferences the Foreign Office helped us but generally we got the money from businesses, banks in particular. Companies like British Gas and the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank did well. They were able to buy investments when the Argentines started privatising. They may have lost a certain amount of money recently, but they must have made money as well.

MM Well, one hopes so.

HC I think a bank, like the Hong Kong and Shanghai, must have been able to repatriate profits.

MM So you certainly had a very good relationship with Latin America and with the Middle East and Afghanistan and, well, I suppose Germany too, to some extent. Looking back on it all, which of these particular episodes do you think the most rewarding?

HC Well, most rewarding from a personal point of view was my time in Latin America Department. It was the most charged with anxiety certainly.

MM That's while you were in London?

HC Yes.

MM Interesting. You have certainly had a useful and interesting career.

HC Well, I enjoyed it very well.

MM You can only be congratulated it

HC Well, how very kind of you.

MM Thank you very much indeed.

HC Thank you.