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BRITISH DIPLOMATIC ORAL HISTORY PROGRAMME

Interview with R W Bailey, CMG, on 25th April 1996. Interview conducted by Mr John Hutson.

Mr Bailey, we have put down on paper the factual details of your education but what it doesn't say is how you came to join first of all the Consular Service. Would you like to tell us about that?

Well, I attended King Edward VI School in Southampton and Southampton at that time was the biggest passenger port in the UK. I joined the League of Nations Union, so it was my job as Secretary to invite people to come and talk to this school group. The obvious source were the consuls of most countries, the American Consul and most of the South American countries had Consuls General there, like Brazil and so on and, in fact, I became very - good friends with the American Consul there, John Brooms, and it so happened that we were later colleagues in Beirut and then also he was in the State Department in Washington. And when he sadly died I was one of the honorary pallbearers at his funeral. So that shows how the connections I started at school continued throughout the whole of my life. But it convinced me that I would be very interested in being a member of the Consular Service. What started me off on the next stage was that it became obvious that languages would be the most important subject so that after school certificate I studied French and Spanish (Spanish being a very important language in Southampton because of the great trade with South America.) And in 1936 I obtained a scholarship to Trinity Hall, Cambridge, in Spanish and French. On my first day there I sat next to, as a new undergraduate, someone who was obviously not English and I said to him 'What are you going to study' and he said 'Spanish and French' and I said 'What sport are you going to do' and he said 'rowing' and I said 'So am I'. And from that point we became very good friends. He was Egyptian and his father was at that time Minister of Agriculture and later Minister of National Defence and then there was a change of government and he lost that job. But during the holiday periods in those days before air services Fuad couldn't get back to Egypt for the Easter holidays so he came and spent them with me and my parents. Then his father came to England in 1938 and said that we had been very kind to him throughout. 'Would you like to come back and see us in Egypt'? So my parents agreed and we went off to Egypt where I had a most interesting time seeing Egypt under very special circumstances, going out with the army and meeting many prominent persons including Nahas Pasha who had been Prime Minister and so on. So that was an introduction to the sort of life I would be conditioned to later.

So when I took the examination there were several hundreds of us sitting for the whole Civil Service examination in a hotel in North London. Quite a formidable array to look at. I was lucky enough to pass out eighth into the Consular Service. At that time it would not have been practical for me to have gone for the Diplomatic Service which was quite separate because of two things. One was, until 1936 a private income had been necessary which I did not have and secondly German was required which I had only studied for a short period of time. And also my intention had always been for the Consular Service. And so out of sixteen successful candidates I passed through eighth and that was very satisfactory from my point of view. I then went to see a very remarkable man in the Foreign Office, Sir David Scott. He was the Under Secretary in charge of personnel. He said to me after congratulating me, "Now I've got a drawing of you which I made during the examination interview," and I said, "Can I see it?" And he said, "No, I'm sorry. I don't let people see my drawings." But after a bit of a chat he said, "What about Beirut? You've been to Egypt and you know a little about Arabic"? So I said that I thought that would be a very good idea to go to Beirut to learn Arabic and learn how to be a Consul or Vice Consul. He said, "I'm

only going to give you one piece of advice. Do the best you can and don't worry. For once you start to worry you are of no further use to us." And I think that's a very sound piece of advice and not an easy one to conform to.

So the next thing was to get out to Beirut. In those days you were largely left on your own. There was no briefing of any kind. I went into the Finance Department and they said you'll need £130 for kitting yourself out and you'll need a certain amount of money to be able to get out to Beirut - so here's a cheque for a couple of hundred quid and a chap wrote it out and handed it over to me. And then he said, "To make all the arrangements go along to Cooks and they'll give you 5% discount and you can make all your own arrangements. Just in case you can't go out by sea we'll get you visas for all the countries on the Orient Express." So my passport was then filled up with about eight or nine visas. However, Philip Adams (now Sir Philip Adams), who was a colleague of mine, and I joined the ship in pitch blackness in Southampton, sailed across the Channel to Le Havre, took the train to Marseilles and after two to three days joined a ship called the Marechal Joffre which is what the French call a Nautonaphthe, in other words it was a diesel-driven ship, which was quite a rarity. And we didn't know at this time whether Italy was about to come into the war, so we crept round along the North African coast behind the island of Pantellaria and arrived at Alexandria. From there we had just set out for Port Said when one of the engines failed so we crept along into Port Said, stayed there two to three days while everybody looked at the engines. Then we set out for Haifa which was then under British mandate, stayed a day there and eventually going in a series of half circles, engine-on engine-off, we turned up in Beirut.

A lively introduction to the Service and how did you find the training in Beirut?

Well, that fell into two halves. The first half was learning consular work and the second half was learning about Arabic and the Arab world. And in the mornings we did consular work which consisted of visas for British subjects going to Palestine which was then under a special regime because of the problems in relations between the Arabic group of peoples and the Jewish group of peoples so that numbers were severely limited on both sides and this had to be kept in careful check. And then in the afternoon we did Arabic studies and all about the Arab world generally to train ourselves and prepare ourselves for our future careers. Then in June 1940 there was the collapse of France and the take-over by the Vichy government. The Consul General Sir Godfrey Havard was summoned by the French High Commissioner Monsieur Gabriel Puaux who said 'I've received instructions from Vichy that no British Consulate must remain in a French port. Where are you going to spend the summer Consul General?' And he said, 'In Aley' which is up in the mountains about fifteen miles from Beirut. 'Well, Aley is not a French port is it Consul General?' So the hint was taken and the Consulate General moved up to Aley. And by this time we were in Vichy territory and a German/Italian armistice commission came and the German representative on this commission was Herr Chapeau Rouge. (The French commanding officer was called Le General Mittelhauser!)

Was he a Frenchman?

No, he was a German from the Rheinland which at one stage had been French and he later went to Bulgaria as the Gestapo representative and I'm told was murdered there during the war years. However, I continued to do work in the Consulate because people came up to Aley for their visas. We had all sorts of work to do. We had to keep accounts and do aspects of consular work, look after quite a considerable British community there and at the same time report on the situation in the country.

That continued as far as I was concerned for only a few months as I was then transferred to be Vice Consul at Alexandria where we had a totally different situation. First of all we were in a country very friendly to the UK. As to my job there, in fact, we had 40,000 British subjects in Alexandria. Shipping in those days was almost entirely British. One has to remember that we had an enormous merchant navy fleet. And those ships came in and out of Alexandria and the Consular officer was responsible for many things to do with seamen, signing on and signing off, repatriating them to the UK and generally seeing that they were getting proper accommodation while they were in Alexandria. There was a Merchant Seamen's Club and we also had a lot of Chinese crews on British ships and Indians and one of the things I was able to do was to found a Chinese club for the Chinese seamen because they naturally couldn't speak English and felt a bit at sea in the British Merchant Seamen's Club. The Indians on the other hand spoke English and were quite happy to be with the British members of the crews there. So that was that side of things and then almost immediately began the evacuation of Greece. Those to be evacuated were supposed to go to Beirut but German submarines were operating in that area and we had a telegram at the Consulate which said, '2,000 British subjects arriving 08:00 tomorrow, please accommodate'. So that meant a terrific rush around. We collected 2,000 mattresses from the Alexandria mattress company. We had to set up security because we didn't know if there would be German spies infiltrated amongst them. We had to feed all these people. We got the ladies of Alexandria hundreds of tins of corned beef which were converted into corned beef soup and these people had to be temporarily accommodated and 'CO then vetted by the security authorities. So that was a terrific rush. One of the ships was hit by a bomb on the journey over so we had ambulances and one had to go on board these ships and see everybody, many injured and several dead. It was quite a tragedy but eventually they were all brought ashore and in the process one met quite a number of interesting people. One was Lawrence Durrell who came out of Greece at about that time and he became first of all an Information Officer in Alexandria and then went to Cairo and he and I remained good friends. Incidentally, on the 'Alexandria Quartet' as one who was Vice Consul in Alexandria I can't recognise a single person in amongst them as being a reality. It's just a jolly good story and brilliantly written. And also we had the King of the Hellenes, King George II. He had no office so I gave up my office to him. He insisted I should sit there but I was naturally very discreet and left him to stay there for several days before he moved on to Cairo. He was one of the nicest people you could have possibly met.

And then, of course, as a member of the Consular Service you were not permitted to carry arms, but I wanted to do my part for the war effort and so three nights a week I went minespotting. This involved two nights in a boat in Alexandria harbour and one night moored between two vessels. And there happened to be a revolution taking place outside Greece between the Communists and the supporters of the King and the two ships opened fire on each other. There was not much I could do about it except that as we had made fast to a buoy I managed to creep over the side, release the ship and let ourselves drift out of the line of fire between the two ships. But we did have quite a lot of bombs fall in the harbour and we were able to spot where they fell so that the mine disposal people could come in and check them out. And the other place we went was what was called the Boghaz Lighthouse which was on the coast so that we could spot possible enemy action. Also there was Kom -el- Dik which was a high hill run by the British army at that time and I used to spend one night a week in a little hut there and received many commendations from the military authorities for the accuracy of our reporting of the bombs falling, so the ambulances and so on could get to the spot immediately. It was done on the triangulation principle. There were two posts and we did a triangular system from there so the exact spot of the bomb falling could be spotted. So that was Alexandria. It was a tough life. We were bombed and so on, but one wonderful thing happened to me while I was in Alexandria.

There was a very beautiful WRNS officer and we're just about to celebrate our golden wedding. So that speaks for itself.

In those days the British government had a degree of responsibility within Egypt and we had our own consular courts and amongst other things I had to be assistant coroner which was a very sad thing having to go and view various bodies and establish the reasons for death and report on that. We also had to plan in case of an enemy invasion because Germany had got as far as Alamein which was only forty miles from Alexandria. And we could hear the guns and so we had to arrange for the evacuation of people who might be a victim of the Germans, in particular the very large Jewish community. And some of them could go to Palestine but the numbers were limited under our agreements there and so the majority had to go to South Africa so there was the question of getting them down to Suez on the train, then from there they took ship to South Africa. We had a certain amount of difficulty with Jesus Christ. He was a Greek gentleman who was a priest who was convinced that he was Jesus Christ and indeed his name in his passport was the Greek version of that. And he wanted to go to Jerusalem because he said God had called him there but unfortunately he wasn't entitled to a visa! And that was fortunately one of the very minor headaches that one gets on these occasions when the Consulate is milling around with hundreds of people all desperate to get away.

My instructions were that if Alexandria were evacuated the Consul General and Consul would go to Cairo for further instructions but I was to remain to see what I could do for the British community. However, fortunately, it didn't come to that because there was the second battle of Alamein and that relieved Alexandria from threat of a German invasion.

The Italian broadcasting service said that the British troops had caused damage to various archaeological sites in Cyrenaica as the British government appointed an archaeological mission comprising Professor Alan Rowe and myself to go and examine the ancient sites in Cyrenaica even though the Germans were just a short distance away. When we got there we found one statue had its nose shot off by a drunken Polish soldier but otherwise all was well so we were able to put in this particular report.

The work was very heavy but we felt that we were doing an important part for the war effort, particularly over the shipping. Then in 1944 I was able to fly to Britain for a special course and enabled to see my parents whom I hadn't seen for five years and also see Joan again (later my wife) and then I went back to Alexandria and I was transferred to the Embassy in Cairo. I should perhaps explain that this special course was because, having been abroad for five years, I had very little idea of what was going on in the UK at that time and since we were representing the British way of life to so many people at that time it was very important to know developments in our own country. So that was what the course was about.

My job there was as head of the translation section which consisted of about six translators and there were vast amounts of material going from Arabic into English and vice versa, so that was my prime responsibility. At the same time it was very important to know what people were thinking in the villages and so on. Freya Stark had set up the Brethren of Freedom. The Brethren of Freedom were people in Egypt who were friendly to the Allied cause and that was tremendously important when the war was going on based on the Egyptian countryside and so on. Goodwill was so important. I travelled around Egypt and met people of the most humble kind. It wasn't just about top people, it was about going into villages, eating with them, sitting round, squatting down and we thoroughly enjoyed every moment of it. It also involved contact with groups such as the Mosques and also the churches because, as you know, one tenth of Egypt

is Coptic Christian. And one of the things I had to do was represent the Ambassador on specific occasions. And the funeral of the Coptic Patriarch was one such occasion. The old Patriarch died and so I attended the Cathedral and was shown up to the front row and seated on a sort of golden throne and on my right was seated the Head of the Coptic community whom I knew very well. And on my left was seated a priest and he seemed deep in prayer and I didn't wish to disturb him. Then I noticed there was a large lump of ice in front of him and an electric fan and I realised that he was the person whose funeral I was attending. Afterwards the head of the Coptic community said, "Now we've done our duty to his late Beatitude" and so we were able to take our leave. But it was quite emotional.

I should explain that by this time my wife had arrived. We married in England. Then my wife arrived and we set up home in Cairo and made many friends there, in particular with former members of the Long Range Desert Group because we were great travellers my wife and I. Colonel Clayton who had been number two in the Long Range Desert Group took us on a number of desert trips (just four or five people) including going to the various monasteries out in the desert. One of these is St Anthony's Monastery and we drove across the desert and arrived there. I had a letter from the Coptic Patriarch, knocked on the door of this huge building set at the foot of a rock and a voice said 'Who's there'? And I said I had a letter from the Coptic Patriarch and after about ten minutes they opened the doors and we walked up the steps lined by monks at the side. And the Abbot met us at the top of the stairs and said, "I know a little English...twinkle, twinkle, little star..."

But we made great friends and we met all these people all over the country and we really saw and understood their feelings. So we had an interesting time in Egypt. I always felt an affection for the country and I shall always remember that.

From Egypt we returned to London to the Foreign Office, the only time I'd ever served in the Foreign Office which was a mere 18 months and we went back by the old flying boat which was a comfortable way to travel. We took off from the Nile in Cairo and flew to Augusta, Sicily at a height of about 3,000 feet -you could see everything that was going on beneath you. And after a night there we flew to Poole Harbour and there my parents met us. At the Foreign Office I was responsible for former Italian colonies and Ethiopia. Of course, the former Italian colonies were under British administration and the work was to link up the administrative body there with British government policy. So that was an extremely interesting job. Also Ethiopia came under our responsibility and there we had Miss Sylvia Pankhurst who was very much involved in Ethiopia, and with her son, Richard Pankhurst, they published a journal and it wasn't always favourable to the British Government. But I do remember one phrase by Dr Gaswallah which read, 'O Ma, how beautiful you are' and that's a poem I shall not forget. But the main point there was that we ran Libya, Italian Somaliland (as was) and Eritrea and that involved a great deal of administration and we were able to do a great deal for those countries by linking up with various departments to provide aid and experience in their administration until they became, in due course, independent or, in the case of Eritrea, became a part of Ethiopia (independent since 1993).

However, I wasn't long in the Foreign Office before I was transferred back to Beirut as second in command at the Embassy. And there we had to deal with a series of Middle Eastern developments. The Consulate General had become the Spears Mission after the Allied invasion had wrested Syria and Lebanon from the Vichy government and handed over first to the Free

French and then to independence. So the British were extremely important to the management of the country. By this time it was a legation with nearly 140 people because it was responsible for many functions throughout the Middle East including information and eventually we brought in the Middle East Mission for Agriculture and so on. So there was a tremendous operation going on. As the war receded, of course, the number of staff reduced very considerably, but the work there carried on at great pressure. We also had a series of problems -a number of riots when the British were thought to be responsible for this thing or that thing. But we were able, I think, in the end to convince people that our intentions there were really good. By this time Churchill had identified the potential Soviet threat and the Americans and ourselves were beginning to do all we could to build up a defensive cordon across the southern side of the Soviet Union and this involved convincing countries like Turkey, Lebanon, Syria and Iran of the need for being friendly to the West and at the same time careful in their relations with the Soviet Union. A good deal of work went into convincing people on that particular point. There was also a period when we were now after the war beginning to build up relations for commerce and in particular Britain needed to export to have the means to pay for the post-war effort.

In 1952 I was transferred to Washington and, of course, in those days one could still go by sea and one had the great pleasure of going over in the Queen Mary to New York and then down to Washington. And there I was First Secretary (Middle East). On arriving there I was told that I should go at once to Livingstone Alabama for a four-day seminar on the Middle East. So we drove down collecting a car in New York never having driven before in America, drove down Park Avenue on a Friday afternoon at 5:00, over the Pulaski skyway and out into Pennsylvania. We drove down to Livingston, Alabama and when we got there we were told that the course would begin at 8:00 the next morning. So I found myself in front of several hundred state teachers together with a member of the Israeli embassy, an Egyptian First Secretary, a Palestinian student and a representative of the State Department Mr Earl King Senff who was running the seminar said, "Mr Bailey, you are the most recent arrival from the Middle East. You have nine minutes to tell us the problems of the Middle East." Needless to say I did the best I could in about a quarter of an hour on the subject. The problems of the Middle East at that time, as they usually are, were pretty legion. Well, the conference went on for four days. We discussed the Palestinian problem and so on and at the end of the fourth day I was asked to sum up and then having summed up a teacher stood up and said, "There is just one further question we would like to ask Mr Bailey. We have learned to live with the North, why can't the Arabs learn to live with the Israelis?" So that was the sort of thing we were faced with!

Well, there were many problems on the Middle East and eventually I was promoted to be Counsellor and Head of Chancery which is a coordinating job roughly the same as Chief of Staff in the army. And there we had in the Embassy a vast array of officials because each department in London in dealing with the US had its own representative in the Embassy with diplomatic rank and there was also the British military mission which was part of a very big tie up between the British forces and American forces and the Pentagon. All this involved a great deal of coordination and at the same time I remained the principal advisor on Middle Eastern affairs which involved me, for instance, when Sir Anthony Eden as Prime Minister came to Washington and called on the President. With him there was also the Foreign Secretary, Mr Selwyn Lloyd, the Undersecretary from home, the Ambassador and myself just 5-a-side for a conference with the Americans in the White House. Very interesting. We exchanged views on all sorts of subjects and on the Middle East I acted as our own principal adviser and kept the record of all conversation and that is now presumably permanently in the Public Record Office. The work was very high level because each time the Ambassador called on Mr Dulles on a Middle East

subject (and that was much of the time) it was my responsibility to go and keep the record. The real problems of course arose at the time of Suez. That was 1956. We were between Ambassadors at the time and the chargé d'affaires, John Coulson, and I called on Mr Dulles and I shall never forget the day that he announced that he was going to go to the UN against us. I still remember that he gripped his chair and the whites of his knuckles showed. It sounds a small detail but it shows how personally involved he was. Afterwards one had to go and speak to rotary clubs and other organisations and the point was constantly put to us 'Why do you listen to Mr Dulles'? And the answer, of course, is that he is after all the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. But he was already (we didn't know it and he didn't know it) a sick man having cancer and, of course, Anthony Eden was also a sick man and many people in the medical profession said that the tragedy of Suez was having two sick men each in charge of what was a very difficult and complicated subject. From there we went travelling about the United States a great deal lecturing particularly to Universities.

Then in 1957 I was transferred to Khartoum as Counsellor. The situation in Sudan at that time was that it obtained its independence on the 1st January 1956 and we were by this time only 18 months on into independence from the British. The administration, entirely by this time in Sudanese hands, carried on very similarly to the principles it had had before. There was tremendous friendliness everywhere for ourselves. We felt we were very much at home. We travelled all over the country and wherever we went we were absolutely welcomed. We climbed the second highest mountain in Sudan, Jebel Marra, and everywhere it was utter friendliness. Little did we foresee the problems, stresses and the strains that would happen to the Sudan later on.

There was a coup d'état of which we were told just as it was happening but it was a military regime that was British trained and continued while I was there in much the same way as before. The main point was that we had to give various loans to the country and we were able to see that they were very well spent. The most important feature was the Gezira scheme where long staple cotton was grown in large quantities mainly for export to Britain. When the military took over they merely imprisoned one official for a few hours and then he was released. Otherwise, you would have hardly noticed a change. The ministers told to go were given one month's pay in lieu of notice.

After Khartoum I had my first independent post as Minister and Charge d' Affaires at the British legation in Taiz. The reason I was not a minister sur pied was that the Imam of Yemen who ruled it said that he could not yet maintain the dignity necessary in the country for someone of the personal rank of minister, and all foreign ministers there would have to be at the level of Charge. But, in fact, I was given the rank of Minister as though it were a legation sur pied. The arrival there was quite a to do because I went first to Aden and to get to Taiz involved about 100 miles by Landrover over the roughest roads you've ever seen, if indeed it was a road. It took ten hours to do 100 miles, the first thirty of which were asphalted in the Aden area. We passed the Palace where there was a stuffed lion on the palace wall and this was what was left of a lion which had been given by the Emperor of Ethiopia to the Imam of Yemen. The only vet in the country happened to be on home leave so they called in one of the Italian doctors to diagnose what was wrong with the lion. He diagnosed jaundice, gave the lion injections but unfortunately the lion died and so was stuffed and put on the wall.

We arrived at the legation which was both the residence and office. It was a stone building with slits for holding rifles for defence, if necessary, and situated outside the town area but with a wonderful view over the whole of Taiz including what was known as hostage castle. This was a

castle on top of a hill which was, in fact, a boarding school for the sons of Chiefs and the Imam was thus able to ensure that Daddy was well-behaved because if he wasn't the sons were at the Imam's immediate disposal. The reason it was Taiz was that the previous Imam, the father of Ahmed, had been murdered in Yemen and he, therefore, did not wish to live in Sana'a which was the previous capital. So his son, the Crown Prince, holed out in Sana'a and the Imam in Taiz. As a result the Crown Prince was also Minister for Foreign Affairs and he had a ministry in Sana'a while the Imam had a ministry in Taiz. In Taiz we had representation of all the non-Arab countries which were six in number. The US, West Germany, Ethiopia, British (there was no in Sana'a there were the Arab representatives and the two ministries of foreign affairs didn't always tell the same story so it was quite important to try to keep in touch with ones Arab colleagues to know what was being said in the other place. But we enjoyed our time in the Yemen. It was an utterly primitive country. One of my predecessors wrote "This country is hastening at full speed into the 14th century." There was no road apart from rough tracks except from Taiz to the airport (a mere 6/7 km). There was no bank, no hotel in the whole country and to get money for our various operations we had to get Maria Theresa dollars and we did that by -the Italian doctors who looked after the Imam received their money in Maria Theresa dollars (or riyals as they were known then) and we bought them off them and stacked them in piles of ten, 10 by 10, giving you a thousand riyals. For instance, to pay our telephone bills we put them in sacks, 1,000 per sack, and took them up to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to pay the bill for telephone services because there was only a primitive telegraphic system out of the country. We were not allowed to have diplomatic wireless or anything of that kind. But we loved it and the children flourished there, we were not allowed to travel very much except when I presented credentials to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Sana'a and there had a week - and very interesting it was too.

That is fascinating but it does raise the question -what were Britain's interests there? What was the work that you had to do?

The short answer to that is, Aden, because the Imam of the Yemen claimed Aden and there was a de-facto frontier between the two along which there were constantly armed incidents and one of our main problems was trying to stop the Yemeni tribesmen from fighting the Adeni tribesmen while the Governor of Aden tried to restrain tribal leaders on his side. So there were constant alarms and excursions over this question of the frontiers. Also if you look at the records of trade with Yemen you would think there was very little because Board of Trade statistics only show direct shipments to the Yemen whereas, in fact, they were routed via Aden, so they looked like Aden imports. But a great deal of the items in the various markets were British. There was, of course, a Russian presence there and a Chinese and American for building roads and public works and one of our most important though minor exports was fur coats to the Yemen -a tropical country. But these were sold to the Russians since they could only pay in local currency for them and they would take them back to Russia. So we had many odd little experiences that way. The number of visitors we managed to get to us was extremely small -we only had three British visitors in the whole of the time we were there. It was in many ways an important post because we knew it was on the brink of revolution. You could see it coming. The only problem where you can see things will happen is knowing the timescale and I think this is one of the problems of diplomacy. You can forecast what will happen but you don't know when. Not long before the Revolution did, in fact, occur the very kind gentleman called El-qunbula or 'the Bomb' put a dagger into me. He knocked at the legation door at about 1:00 in the morning. We thought it was a telegram from London which arrived usually about that time. I opened the door and a dagger was stuck straight into my chest. I was then hacked about and the nightwatchman who

tried to come to my aid was also hacked about by this man. My wife came out of the bedroom in her nightie and she attacked him and threw him down the stairs and he injured himself on his own dagger though he managed to escape. So thanks to my wife's bravery and Dr Gasparini who was eventually summoned by the Foreign Minister to come to my aid, I was then taken off to the hospital. They had very few if any facilities there, certainly no anaesthetics and in any case I'd lost half my blood by then so it was a question of stitching me up as I was. There were over 100 stitches to put me together again and I'm very happy to say here I am, hale and hearty at the age of 78. So that was one of the hazards that can occur to one in the course of ones diplomatic life. Why I was attacked I have no idea. There are various theories but since none of them are sure I hesitate to say. But one thing I do know is that this gentleman El-qunbula, 'the Bomb', had already attacked a Chinese working on the road and he had been in Aden and had injured a number of people there and it is quite possible that because he had been refused a visa for Aden a day or two before, he had it out on me even though I didn't know about the refusal of the visa as such. Anyway, that was what happened. The Imam was very upset indeed because I was 'on his face' as one might say, and he arranged for the American Charge d' Affaires to go down to Aden in his private plane -that was a bit awkward because the pilot was East German and a plane would not normally have been allowed into Aden with an East German pilot at a time of tension with the Communist bloc. However, circumstances changed this so he (that is, the American charge d' Affaires, Mr Robert Stookey) went to the Governor, Sir Charles Johnston, who immediately called the friend of ours who was the medical Commodore of the RAF and a call was put out in the church for blood of the right kind and he flew out with that and administered blood to me. And then my wife was presented with the choice of whether I should remain in Taiz or go to Aden. And the RAF side said 'he must go to Aden' even though the Italian surgeon said I couldn't stand the journey. But my wife decided finally that Aden it was - so I went to Aden, had about a fortnight in hospital, two weeks convalescence and then we sailed home. But it took nine months of physiotherapy to put me right and five years later I had a major operation to restore my health. But "EI hamdulillah" as the Arabs say, "Here I am."

Once I recovered from the effects of the attack I did a commercial course with the Board of Trade which involved visiting British factories and the City of London. This set me up very well for my next appointment which was HM Consul General Gothenburg because the prime objective there was trade. We had very close connections with many Swedish manufacturers because of the supply of British parts for their products. In particular when I travelled around the country I was able to call on many of their factories and encourage them to buy British products. I had a very special relationship with Mr Engellau - Head of Volvo - because he and I rented stugas not very far from one another in the country and we travelled into Gothenburg each morning and back in the evening in the same compartment in the same train. He was a workaholic and since the bodies of Volvo cars were made in Britain at that time and sometimes were delayed in transit he would phone me up at home very early in the morning sometimes and say 'Mr Bailey, where are my bodies'? In a country where the people love the countryside and spend much of their time there they go in the summer months to their stugas -country cottages out in the wilds such as in Lapland and enjoy boating, swimming in the lakes (when it's not too cold) and generally living a country life for several months. But we noticed that there were no caravans in the country and surely one of the ideal ways to improve their life out there would be to have caravans? So we got in touch with the British caravan manufacturers and they staged an exhibition which we organised in conjunction with the Swedish Trade Fair at Jonkoping. In the first year we sold quite a number but by the time we left, two or three years later, thousands of British caravans could be seen travelling over the roads of Sweden and it was a great British commercial success. Another thing that we were able to do was to have an exhibition at the

University of Gothenburg where each of a number of British firms showed off what they could do and each of these netted a return for this country. In particular BP showed a refinery and they received two orders to build refineries, one in Finland and one in Sweden, as a direct result of that and these were worth many millions of pounds as you can well imagine. So our work there was varied but also very important commercially, which was the main reason we were there.

I returned to the Arab world again by being appointed Deputy Head of Mission as Minister in Baghdad. Now, I was there only a comparatively short space of time when the Ambassador went on leave so that I soon found myself in charge of the Embassy. There was the usual diplomatic work to do and we had an RAF training mission there for the Iraqi air force. Unfortunately, there was one occasion when the air force decided to revolt against the government and they came and (I should add that our house was next to the Presidential palace) proceeded to bomb the Palace which was very close to where we were living. So we had our moments then. However, the Revolution was quashed because the air force station in Baghdad was largely loyal to the Baghdad government but they pretended not to be to the pilots and said 'if you come and land here you'll be amongst friends'. So the pilots who were based in Mosul for the original attack landed there. They were coshed on the head and taken to jail and that rather ended the Revolution. However, the government in no way blamed our mission for that, recognising that our work was purely training.

After a very short time there I was appointed Ambassador to Bolivia. This may seem a little surprising but I had read Spanish at Cambridge and had known Spain well and so when we arrived there I was immediately fluent in the language which solved many problems. Again our work there was two- fold -one was that I was in effect the Commonwealth Ambassador. We had numerous Commonwealth members there, we had 300 Canadian nuns and there were many other nationalities from the Commonwealth represented there. So looking after them was one of our responsibilities. And also the city of Santa Cruz which was both an oil producing centre as well as an agricultural centre had flourished in such a way that our trade now there was developing and important. This was a period of comparative stability for the first two years we were there until the President Barrientos was, unfortunately, killed when he was piloting his own helicopter and it hit some electric cables. So a period of great instability occurred. This coincided with the kidnapping of our Ambassador Geoffrey Jackson in Montevideo and who was kept in hiding by the Tupamaros, and there were great fears that a similar situation could arise in Bolivia. From then on I had to have an armed guard, which was inhibiting when we wanted to travel about the countryside. However, on one occasion while my wife was in England and I was taking the dog for a walk in the garden when suddenly the dog froze and pointed at a bush and the guard who was just behind me shot just beside the bush and they pulled out a man from under the bush who said he was merely there to see how a British Ambassador behaved. But it was a strange thing. He was fortunately disarmed but we wondered what he was doing there. He turned out to be a nephew of someone important and so was released without further charge. But this was the kind of thing that went on all the time. However, we enjoyed Bolivia. It is the most beautiful country one could imagine. The Andes are simply superb and we had quite a number of visitors there including authors such as Jon Cleary not to mention ministers such as Mr Mulley who was then a Minister in the Foreign Office (later Lord Mulley) who came to stay with us. He looked at my wife and said, 'And what do you do all day'? She said 'I run the government guest house'. He looked around, saw preparations for a cocktail party that evening for one hundred people to meet him and also the staff coming and going, and he put his arms around her and said, "You're right my dear." I was unfortunately ill at that particular moment so she had to act as hostess for the Vice President coming and many Bolivian ministers and so on and so the wife plays a very

important part in the course of ones duties. And also Mr Mulley really enjoyed his time there very much indeed as well as various other Foreign Office and ministerial visitors.

My last post was as Ambassador to Morocco where I went in 1971. This was a country that was developing fast. It had many problems, the biggest one being an increase in the population by trebling in about thirty years. There were other problems, water being one of them and the Moroccan government built quite a large number of dams so that there was a great deal of work going on. Some of the planning for this went to British companies such as the steel works at Nador. There was a constant preoccupation that Morocco was trading predominantly with France, which had formed the administration of the country, but we wished only that it could take more work from our own country and that is where the British Consulate General Casablanca came in. Casablanca was the commercial capital of the country and the Consulate General was the prime mover in getting the commercial work going to the extent that we would like to have it.

One thing I should mention is that there had been a previous attack on the King before I arrived and that was at a place called Skhirat where he had a Palace and our own Ambassador then, Mr Tom Shaw, had to hide under a chair, and the Belgian Ambassador who tried to escape was shot dead. Altogether over one hundred people died in the attack by instructors from the military college and cadets. However, the King remained unharmed but it showed unfortunately that there were those in the armed forces who wished to overthrow him and take on responsibility themselves. That was before I arrived there. Not long after I arrived there was a further attack. The King had been to France for a visit and was travelling back in an aeroplane belonging to Royal Air Maroc piloted by an Air Force pilot when it came under attack from members of the air force based in a nearby town and many shots went into the plane but fortunately didn't bring it down. The King took hold of the controls and flew it at just about house level and managed to land safely at Rabat airport. The attacking planes refuelled and then went for the aerodrome and killed quite a number of ordinary people just waiting for passengers coming off planes. They (that is, the insurgents) then fled to Gibraltar and I was in Gibraltar by one of those coincidences at the time and the British government decided not to permit them to enter Gibraltar. They were kept at the airport and returned to Morocco because of the attacks they had made on innocent civilians. So as a result of that they were tried and one or two of the ring-leaders were executed and the others sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. This is the sort of problem that Ambassadors have to face. The decisions were made by the British government but nevertheless carrying out your part involves one in a feeling of responsibility.

After that we went in for a period of tranquillity. I am happy to say we enjoyed the rest of our time there very much -we were kept extremely busy because there were many developments such as the Festival of Islam Exhibition in London to which the Moroccans contributed in a big way and this involved them supplying and lending many important documents. Eventually in 1975 I retired and returned to England to enjoy a very happy time almost as busy, as it turns out, as being a member of the diplomatic service. In the first instance it occurred to me that there were no British/Moroccan friendship societies. There were other friendship societies but none for Britain and Morocco, so one of the first things I did was to found a British/Moroccan society. That, I feel, has developed and creates an element of friendship which is so vital between two nations. I was also asked to be Vice President and later President of the Society for the Protection of Animals in North Africa, known as SPANA, and for that reason we were able to treat something like 100,000 animals a year, mainly donkeys and camels and horses in North Africa and at the same time provide an educational background for the people there -for children in schools, in particular, to look after animals properly so they could get the best advantage of

them for the poor families who had them and also at the same time give the animals a happier life on this earth. That particular work meant that we travelled a great deal around North Africa after retirement and each of the schools in the countryside in Morocco has appointed one teacher who has been trained by SP ANA in animal welfare to show the children there to look after their animals and they will be the future people. And also television programmes in Morocco have brought home various techniques of looking after animals to the populace in the countryside at large. All this with the very firm cooperation and help of the Moroccan government.

Then also I became a member of the local town council which helped my reintegration into Britain after a lifetime abroad and I joined many societies in London, attending lectures, writing all sorts of articles on the subjects I knew about and being a constant source of information to people who frequently telephone me and ask for details about this or that. So I'm sort of a private information centre. The end result is that I have been extremely busy in retirement. One of the first things was that the British government was asked by the Omani government to have an official who could advise their Ministry of Foreign Affairs on organisation, so the Foreign Office put up two candidates: Sir Willis Combs and myself and the Undersecretary for Oman interviewed us both and chose both of us. And actually it worked out very well because we both had complementary skills. Sir Willis had been an Inspector in our Diplomatic Service and knew a great deal about organisational methods. I, on the other hand, knew how the Arab foreign ministries worked and also spoke Arabic, so the combination of the two of us produced a very good plan and a friend of mine, now the Omani Ambassador in London, who was at our course while we were there, tells us that the systems that we suggested are still in vogue. Following that we found that the archives were defective and so I investigated the archives in the India Office library and produced a twelve-volume Records of Oman 1867 -1960. Each government department in Oman has a copy of this and it does give the basic archives over the whole of that period -so I believe that is one contribution which by reason of my diplomatic service I have been able to make in my retirement.

Thank you. It is obvious from the tape that you have just made that you have enjoyed your career and found it, I think I can deduce, very satisfying indeed. Can I ask you what are your closing reflections on the development of matters for Britain over your professional life and retired lifetime and perhaps your views on the Middle East, a perpetual problem area with which you had so much to do?

Well, the most remarkable thing was that when I went out to Beirut in 1939 a colleague of mine went out to be appointed Vice Consul in Yokohama in Japan. And the first non-British port that he touched was Yokohama. He went by way of the Suez Canal which was then British run. He went from there to Aden, from there to Bombay, Colombo, Singapore, Hong Kong, the international area of Shanghai where Britain had a presence and part of the port, then on to Yokohama. How the world has changed in that respect. Now of course we are resigned to this island and the result is that our influence has diminished inevitably. The reasons for that are two-fold. One was that we had an in-built wish, and rightly so, that in all these countries our role was to prepare them for independence. The only thing perhaps was that it was often over-hastened at the end with some of the results that we see today in some of the Commonwealth countries. But the intention was there; it was formulated as early as 1900 that that was the ultimate objective, and we have pursued that policy. It was forced on us in a way at the end also by our own economic problems due to the fact that two World Wars had really exhausted us.

One of the great problems that has arisen derives indirectly from our withdrawal from Palestine. We had problems in Palestine because of the fact that there was an indigenous Arab population who had lived in peace with a much smaller Jewish population over many, many centuries. But with the German holocaust there was a great flood of German Jewish refugees and a lot from Russia also coming in to Palestine to an extent that we could not cope with, especially as we were under great pressure from the American government which had provided us with the Marshall Plan for our economic rescue, and their word had to over-rule our own theories as to how the problem could be solved. Our concept was that it should go to the United Nations and that they should be responsible for its management and we gave them six months in which to take on that responsibility and we said if it doesn't happen we shall go anyway. And so we went. But the end result was the war between the Israeli' settlers' (as they became) and the Arab population, facets of which still persist. Tremendous effort has been put into solving this effort by the international community. I was in Beirut on the UN Relief Works Agency Programme as our alternative representative to, in those days, Sir Henry Knight. And I saw at first hand the terrible problem of the refugees. Arab refugees who'd lost their homes in Palestine and their farms and here, fifty years on, they are still refugees and often under attack. It's a problem which I thought at the time would be the same as the Hundred Years War. Fifty years on it still exists but we have seen some progress which is the good thing and that is between Egypt and Israel and Jordan and Israel. There has been quite an understanding that war did not pay, which is really the whole essence of it. The problem is how we go from here to close completely the whole problem. It's not an easy one but I would just hope that we can manage to establish a new home for the Palestinians within the Jericho area and the West Bank as it is called. To enable the refugees to be restored to some kind of normal life the West Bank would require an enormous international assistance similar to that kind of assistance that Israel receives from the US, the Jewish communities abroad and other countries.

I have enjoyed my life in the diplomatic service. It has been full of problems both professional and personal because of the problems of being with ones children. My poor wife when she gave birth to our son was in England and I had to go at short notice out to Beirut at the time and she was, of course, very upset that I couldn't be present for our first-born. But these are the hazards of that sort of life. I feel that looking back over it that there are many things that one might have contributed more but on the other hand I am able to say that I have done the best that I could and that it has been of some use both to this country, who were responsible for sending me, and to the countries in which I have served.

(END)