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### **Sir John Alexander Noble GRAHAM GCMG (born 15 July 1926)**

(4<sup>th</sup> Baronet created 1906, of Larbert; GCMG 1986 (KCMG 1979, CMG 1972)

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## **BRITISH DIPLOMATIC ORAL HISTORIES PROGRAMME**

Recollections of Sir John Graham Bt GCMG, recorded and transcribed by Martin Lamport, Salisbury Place, Shipton-under-Wychwood, 7 March 2016.

### **EARLY LIFE**

ML: Sir John, where were you born?

JG: I was born in Calcutta, old spelling, and my father was also born in Calcutta, so that caused me a few problems when India became independent and the British Nationality Act came in in 1947 and I had to register as a British Subject.

We had a family business, which originated in Portugal, Graham's Port is probably the most well-known. But the business had diversified in the 19th Century to India and elsewhere and that's why both my father and I were born in Calcutta. It went bust in 1929, and the port side survived but was sold off to Symingtons in the 50s.

ML: And you were born in 1926?

JG: I was born in 1926. My mother and I returned every year in summer to avoid the hot weather, my father every three years. Then I was sent home when I was seven to a boarding school pre-prep in Winchester and then I went on to a prep school and then I went on to Eton in 1939 on a scholarship to College. I was at Eton through the war. I remember two bombs falling on Eton in December 1940, luckily no one was hurt. I took a scholarship exam to Cambridge in 1943 and was awarded that, but I stayed on at school until joining the army in September 1944. Not National Service. We joined up then because the war was still on "for the duration".

ML: Which unit did you join?

JG: I joined the Brigade of Guards, Grenadiers, partly because friends were going in there and partly because it was a much easier entry. I managed to get mumps at the OCTU [Officer Cadet Training Unit] which delayed me quite considerably really, so I was not commissioned until the war in Europe was over and the war in the Far East came to a conclusion in August 1945. I remember going to London on VJ Day with a friend and cheering the King on the balcony of Buckingham Palace, with the crowd round the Victoria Memorial. And then after a period in Britain, when I had a demonstration platoon on

Dartmoor, I was posted to a battalion of my regiment, the third battalion, in Palestine in 1946 and I stayed there until December 1947 when I was demobilised.

Having a place in Cambridge I went up to Cambridge in January 1948 reading what I had sat the exam in, Classics, because I had to face an exam in May, the Prelim's and I thought I couldn't tackle a new subject in only three or four months.

ML: Which college?

JG: I went to Trinity College. And then for my last year there I switched to Law. As long as you take Prelim, part I and part II it counts as the Tripos. I got a degree, 2(1) which was just enough to qualify me for the Foreign Service.

ML: What attracted you to the Foreign Office?

JG: I had been abroad. I was attracted to the Colonial Service, but I realised it was winding down. I did not have any close relations in the FO, but I had been impressed by a book about the UN, so was interested in international affairs. Had I not got into the FO I would probably have gone into the family business in Portugal, but that did not last.

I took the Foreign Service exams in the spring of 1950 and was accepted in the summer. I was a bit dilatory, I did not report straight away to the office. I thought I would receive a letter summoning me, and I had a lovely summer holiday. I went for my first interview in August 1950 and there the two people in the Personnel Department who were dealing with me said they wanted me to learn Chinese. I had just had lunch with a friend who had joined the Service a little before me, who said "don't let them talk you into a hard language". I know and I knew then that I am not a talented linguist and we had just closed all our consulates in China and I did not fancy learning Chinese and said so. So they scratched their heads and said; "Well there really isn't anything else. All the other posts have been taken by your colleagues who were quicker off the mark, except Arabic. We've got a very good school in Lebanon, MECAS (The Middle East Centre for Arab Studies) and we'd like you to go there." Knowing something about the Middle East, having been 18 months in Palestine in the army, I said "OK, if there really is nothing else". So I was always afterwards down as a volunteer.

We first went to SOAS [School of Oriental and African Studies] to learn the script and the pronunciation and then in January 1951 I and Michael Weir set off by train to Venice, by ship

from Venice to Beirut and then up the hill to MECAS. It was great fun actually. I don't think the teaching was of very high quality, but those with the talent managed to learn quite good Arabic. I managed to pass the second grade, the second class. I remember writing in my diary earlier in the year that I did not mind where in the Middle East I was sent so long as it was not Bahrain; but then, at the end of November I was posted to Bahrain to the Political Residency.

### **BAHRAIN AND KUWAIT 1951-1953 Third Secretary**

In the Persian Gulf we still had treaty relations with Bahrain, Kuwait, the Trucial States and Qatar. They were what were known as Protected States. We were responsible for their foreign affairs, but didn't directly intervene with their domestic relations, with some exceptions. My predecessor in Bahrain was moved to be Political Officer in Doha in Qatar.

ML: Who was that?

JG: Christopher Ewart Biggs, who years later was killed by the IRA. He set about persuading the Sheikh of Qatar to abolish slavery. Our treaty relations with all these states included and indeed were partly motivated by the abolition of the slave trade: of course also for the protection of our communications with India. The abolition of the slave trade was central to all the treaties, but it did not apply to the domestic arrangements. He persuaded the Sheikh of Qatar to abolish slavery, but the Sheikh insisted on paying compensation to former owners. When Christopher said, "There will be lots of bogus claims" the Sheikh said, "That's alright. I'll beat the slave and if after a beating he maintains that he was a slave, I'll pay the master." Of course, socially it is not as easy a problem as it sounds because a lot of the domestic slaves had been brought up in the household and had nowhere else to go. So they really stayed in their employment, but were nominally meant to be paid and were free to leave.

I spent about a year in Bahrain, and then the Political Agent in Kuwait was going on leave and I was sent up to help as a locum to Kuwait, in I think it was October / November 1951 and I stayed there until the spring of 1953 and was posted to Amman in Jordan.

ML: How were relations with Iran in those days?

JG: The relations with Iran, luckily for me, were broken off because under Mossadeq they had nationalised the Anglo Iranian oil company which was largely owned by the Government

and we had imposed sanctions and broken off relations. Why it was lucky for me was because, while I was in Bahrain, one of my humble duties was to check the visiting programme of the two Royal Naval frigates that we kept in the Gulf; nominally three, but one was always away being overhauled in Ceylon, Sri Lanka as it is now. They used to put in a programme of visits and if it was to a British protected port I would tick it off and if it was to a foreign port like Basra or Muscat I would send off a telegram to our embassy or consulate general in that country asking for permission for HMS Flamingo or whatever to call, on what was known as an operational call, no ceremony.

Well one month their programme included the little island of Sirri, in the Persian Gulf, which was uninhabited. It was underlined in red on the map I had, the atlas, so I ticked it off. The navy arrived at Sirri and they found about half a dozen or eight Iranian soldiers there living in a hut with an Iranian flag. They landed a party, they locked the soldiers in their hut, they hauled down the flag and hoisted the Union Jack and sailed away. It turned out that the Iranians had long claimed Sirri and objected that our claim, on behalf of the Sheikh, I think it was of Ras al Khaimah, was a false claim. My boss, who was Sir Rupert Hay, ex-Indian Political, ticked me off roundly and said I must always consult him. It was true, he said, that Ras al Khaimah had a claim to Sirri. I could only mumble under my breath, "Well, we've pressed it now". Luckily, although protests flew between the two capitals, because we had bad relations with Mosaddeq it did not come to anything.

In the Gulf at that time we still had capitulations. We had jurisdiction over non-Moslem foreigners. In Kuwait my temporary boss, Christopher Pirie-Gordon, who was an old hand from Palestine Mandatory days, did not like sitting in court so I found myself sitting in court. We applied the Indian penal code and the Indian procedural code, but without Indian lawyers, which made it much easier. It always struck me as rather a good system. The prosecution deployed its case and the magistrate then said to the defendant, "You've heard what they say you did, if true that constitutes an offence under the law: how do you plead?" Of course if he said "guilty", that was the end of that, but if he said "innocent" he then made his defence, his or hers, and so both sides were heard and the defendant knew exactly the case against him before he was charged. The worst case I had to deal with was an attack on board a tanker by one of the crew against another with a knife. The man didn't die, but he'd been seriously wounded. The attack happened at about two in the morning and the chap came to court about four o'clock that afternoon and I sentenced him to what was effectively solitary confinement through the Kuwaiti summer. It was therefore quite serious, but my powers

were limited, it had to be less than a year. The Swedish mate of the tanker said to me he thought the sentence was far too light for the gravity of the offence, but by goodness it was quick!

### **AMMAN 1953- 1954 Third Secretary**

That ended in about February / March 1953 and I was posted to Amman. That was an ordinary embassy, though we still had very close relations with the Jordanian government. We paid for their army, the Arab Legion.

ML: This was King Hussein, of course, the father?

JG: There was a regency when I arrived, but while I was there he was, as it were, crowned, because he was still at Sandhurst when I arrived. I think there was a thought in Personnel Dept (the Political Resident's daughter, who acted as his PA told me, which she probably shouldn't have done) that the Office had had the idea that as a public school product, Eton (Hussein was Harrow) and a soldier briefly, I might be able to get on with him particularly closely, but I was never introduced to him and you can't just turn up and say "Hi, King, I'm here to be your friend". But I did attend his coronation as part of the embassy staff.

When I first went there, Geoffrey Furlonge was Ambassador, and he was later succeeded by Charles Duke. Furlonge was very much a Foreign Office old hand. In a way he was more interested in the timing of his reports, his telegrams reaching London, so that they would meet the first distribution of telegrams, than what was actually in them. Charles Duke was more relaxed in that way. John Richmond became Minister: a very distinguished scholar, he had connections with the mandatory government of Palestine and he was a lovely man to work for. The embassy in those days was just above a long flight of steps leading down to the headquarters of the Arab Legion and on one occasion, everybody else seemed to be out, I was called upon to sign a cheque for the quarterly subsidy, which in 1953 amounted to something like four million pounds, which is quite a lot of money now, so I trotted down the steps delivering this enormous cheque. My other duties, as in any embassy chancery, were to try and meet the locals and understand what makes them tick. I was sent out one day to meet Aneurin Bevan and his wife, Jenny Lee, when they arrived on a tour of the Middle East. Driving them back to the embassy Nye Bevan said "You've got a new government today?" I said, "Not when I left the embassy" and he said "Yes, yes" and Jenny Lee tapped his shoulder and said, "No dear. Sudan, not Jordan!"

The Mountbattens were another group that I had to take around. She was very interested in the Roman remains. I took them to Jerash and I have a photograph of him sitting very gloomily and bored on a lump of stone, not a bit interested in the Roman ruins.

ML: Did you have any dealings with Sir Michael Wright, who was under-secretary for the Middle East around about that time?

JG: He became Ambassador in Iraq and made a major contribution to the breakdown. He behaved like a Viceroy in Baghdad, so I am told, but I never had dealings with him.

ML: I asked because my mother worked for him for a time.

JG: Well I was only a third secretary.

ML: My mother was a mere secretary. Any more about the nascent state of Israel in those days?

JG: Jordan administered the West Bank. Relations with Israel were the major topic. The Arab Legion had, of all the Arab forces, been the most effective in 1948. There was an enormous Palestinian refugee problem with camps in the Jordan valley. There were also continued attacks, terrorist the Israelis would say, across the armistice line into Israel with revenge, or retaliation attacks from Israel into Jordan. I remember in particular one village, Qibya, was surrounded and attacked overnight by the Israelis, with heavy casualties among the civilian population. It was not a very honourable retaliation. Whether it was effective or not, I don't like to say really. I don't know. We had relations on both sides and I do remember going to lunch with a Palestinian near Jenin, and the family. The young son had been a member of the staff in Kuwait and I had known him there. He had gone back to Palestine and very kindly invited us. One of the problems at that time was making contact with locals – social contact – and I have often thought it was because we were so much better off, though not exactly enormously well paid, but better off than the locals, so we could have them to a meal, but they usually hesitated to have us to their houses; possibly because I did not speak very good Arabic.

I had one good friend, who was private secretary to the Prime Minister. Saad Juma, I think he was called. He later became himself Prime Minister. And I knew some of the ex-politicians, Samir Rifai, who had been Prime Minister under the regency, under Talal, and I think also under Hussein and I got to know him quite well. He told me that once when he was Prime

Minister, Talal who was mentally deranged, had drawn a knife on him. And then there was a chap called Mushabbek, whom I knew, who was the Shell rep. I was not there very long, but I was there for the coronation and we had a coronation ball. In those days I used to play the bagpipes and I was asked to pipe for an eightsome reel at the coronation ball of the tennis club, which I did. The great advantage of the bagpipes is nobody else knows if you go wrong or lose the place. I didn't have a drummer, which was a pity.

ML: Did you meet or know Glubb Pasha?

JG: I sat on a committee of the Bishop's school in Amman and Glubb was a great patron of that, so I did know him, but I was very junior and he was very senior. I think I became Treasurer of the Bishop's school, taking over from a banker, who told me exactly what to do and I managed to fool people that I knew about accounts.

### **PRIVATE OFFICE 1954-1957**

I was posted home in August /September 1954 originally to NATO, which at that time was in France. Almost in the air I was switched to London, to the Secretary of State's Private Office to be the No 3. That has always seemed to me a piece of chance. The man I succeeded in the Private Office, called John Priestman, had served before in Belgrade. And there he had had an affair with his house-keeper and had been involved in a rather nasty car accident in which she had been rather badly hurt. Partly to get her to medical treatment in Britain, he married her. I am sure he was fond of her. But he did not go through the procedure required at the time that marrying a foreigner required the Secretary of State's permission. Of course, she was not only a foreigner, but a foreigner of a Communist state. He omitted that formality, it wouldn't necessarily have been a formality, and did not bring it forward until they had three children. This was in 1954. He was very able and Eden, who was the Foreign Secretary was very fond of him and thought highly of him. But the Administration took the view and represented it to Eden that we had this rule and if ever it was to be applied, in this egregious case you must apply it now. So John Priestman was made to resign. He was got quite a nice job in the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. So that vacancy caused me to be switched in mid-air.

I think I started in the Private Office in November 1954 with Eden, Anthony Rumbold, old school Diplomatic Service, as the Principal Private Secretary [PPS] and Andrew Stark, who ended up as Ambassador in Copenhagen, as the no 2. And a chap called Terence Grady as



the number four. That period was dominated by Winston Churchill, “will he, won’t he resign as Prime Minister?” Winston’s mind was beginning to go at that time. He very rarely finished the agenda in a Cabinet meeting. But I think he hung on, partly because he was not sure about Eden.

With Eden we went on a long journey starting in February 1955. We went off in a chartered plane to Rome, then Cairo, and it was in Cairo that news came that King Hussein of Jordan had sacked Glubb. Eden thought that this was engineered by Nasser, which contributed to his distrust of Nasser, but I actually think it was probably Hussein’s own decision, that he had to take control of his own armed forces and do it quickly without consultation. We went on from Cairo to Baghdad and then to Karachi and the Pakistan Government. Then we went to Bangkok for the signature and inaugural meeting of the SEATO treaty, then to Singapore for a meeting of the Commonwealth High Commissioners then up to Kuala Lumpur. Then back to Delhi, stopping for a day in Rangoon mainly to see the Shwedagon temple, for talks with the Indians and then home in spring of 1955.

In those days the Foreign Secretary didn’t retain control of the Foreign Office when he was away. It was handed over to another minister, in this case the Prime Minister and Eden was always worried, whenever his back was turned, that Churchill would take an initiative of his own, which hadn’t been agreed. But in the end he resigned as PM in April / May 1955 and Eden moved over.

I had a lucky escape. Because, when we were in Bangkok, I was originally told by Anthony Rumbold that I was to move to No 10 with Eden. I was not very happy about that, because my observation was that once you got to No10 it was quite difficult to get back and I didn’t want to spend the rest of my life working in London. But I was saved because at that time Rumbold was due to leave on posting, Stark was due to leave on posting and the powers that be decided that I should remain as the continuity man in the Private Office. So one of the Resident Clerks, Philip de Zulueta went with Eden in my place. My observation worked out because Philip never came back to the Foreign Service. He stayed and became quite a confidant of Macmillan.

When Eden moved to No10 we had Harold Macmillan as Foreign Secretary, who was a delight to work for. Very laid back, very relaxed but very clear in his own mind. I remember one occasion when a chap, called I think Coudenhove Kalergi, who was a great pro-European, wrote to the Foreign Secretary and the Department put the more or less stock

reply at that time “The Government’s policy was not to join the Treaty of Rome”. Macmillan signed the draft off, because it was Government policy, but minuted “But remember after all that I am a European”.

I got engaged to marry in September 1955. We were getting married in January 1956 and Harold Macmillan gave us a very handsome wedding present, a fine limited edition of WB Yeats’s poems, published by Macmillans and signed by Yeats.

However, Eden had a reshuffle in December 1955 and Harold Macmillan moved to the Treasury and Selwyn Lloyd took over. Pat Hancock, who succeeded Anthony Rumbold as PPS was very fond of and got on very well with Macmillan, but didn’t get on with Selwyn Lloyd. Selwyn was going through a difficult divorce at the time, so he had personal problems to wrestle with and I don’t think we were very helpful to him. He was not very good with us. Pat Hancock always maintained that Selwyn had kicked him on one occasion. I, as the youngest PS, would occasionally be ordered to go with Selwyn at the weekend. On one occasion we stayed in a house of a friend of Selwyn in Fittleworth and drank a lot of the friend’s claret and I think we established a working relationship. And on one occasion he was allowed a weekend at Chequers and I was instructed to join him for the weekend there. My wife and I by that time had a small baby, this must have been 1957. My wife dropped me off at Chequers and my eldest son’s nappies were changed at Chequers.

Selwyn Lloyd took over just before Christmas and we’d arranged the usual duties and job timings rota. But he said he wanted his telegrams brought to him on Boxing Day in his flat. I who had been planning to spend my last bachelor Christmas with my family in Scotland was deputed to take his telegrams to him on Boxing Day. So I caught the midnight train from Berwick and I arrived in the morning in the Office, sorted the telegrams and went round to Selwyn’s flat. I rang the doorbell and he opened the door and said “What do you want?” I didn’t say, “Well I’ve just come down 400 miles from Scotland to do this for you. What do you want?” But anyway it was not a very good start.

## **Suez**

And then of course Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal in July of 1956. The Government was extremely put out. There were various conferences. I had my first experience of a working breakfast when I had to come in and take the record at a breakfast with Brentano, who was the German Foreign Minister. It was at these meetings that the idea of SCUA, the

Suez Canal Users Association, was formed. We were planning a military operation, Musketeer I think it was called, and had mistakenly got the idea that the US would be prepared to use force if all else failed. Then Selwyn Lloyd went to the UN for the annual meeting of the General Assembly (I was not with him) and for negotiations with the Egyptian Foreign Minister and in early October they reached, under Hammarskjold, agreement, ad referendum, which gave us all we really needed in the Canal. But meanwhile the French had been in touch with the Israelis and came up with the enticement to Eden of a plot for the Israelis to attack and then we would intervene with the French and insert a force to protect the Canal. Selwyn Lloyd in New York was not privy to that. But when he came home he was effectively told (this is a reconstruction by me because at the time I did not know anything about the French contact with Eden) to forget his agreement with the Egyptians: there was a new plan.

ML: It was Eden's baby wasn't it really?

JG: Well it was really French. The French managed to get away with it in a way that we didn't. The idea came from Mollet I think. I learned there was something afoot because Selwyn cancelled all his engagements - one of my humble duties was keeping the diary, and I had to give out that he had flu or something. He and Donald Logan, who was the No2 PS, went off to France. I did not know what they were talking about. I'm not even sure that I knew where they went. It was all very secret. The Under Secretary in the Foreign Office who was in charge of relations with MI6, "Our Friends" as they were known then, Pat Dean, was in on it, but the Under Secretary dealing with the Middle East, Archie Ross, was not involved at all. Then Pat Dean and Donald Logan went off for talks with the French and in the end felt there was no way to avoid signing a bit of paper, which Eden had ordered them not to do. Eden when he learned about it tried to get it withdrawn

ML: Was this what we call a "non-paper" in diplomatic speak, or a "note"?

JG: I mean the Israelis had a copy. The French had a copy, so getting it back was really not possible. The cat was out of the bag if they wanted to use it. Yes, we have non-papers now as you say. I don't think we used that phrase then.

It was about this time that a telegram came from our ambassador in Tel Aviv, Jack Nicholls, reporting a conversation with the Israeli Foreign Minister in which the latter had implied that Nicholls was behind the game and should get new instructions. I was instructed by the

Principal Private Secretary to cause this telegram to be withdrawn from general Whitehall circulation and reissue it on the very limited Prisec circulation.

My first son was born on the 21st October. My wife was coming out of hospital the following Tuesday, 29 October, the day after the planned Israeli invasion. I went to my boss and said could I have the day off to fetch her from hospital. By that time it was Dennis Leahy. He asked the date and when I said 29 October, said, "Oh well, by that time it will be so hectic, you might as well go". So he knew the timing and I didn't know anything.

ML: He was the first PS?

JG: Yes. He had only taken over, almost the week Nasser nationalised the Canal, in July. And years later I wrote to him congratulating him on something and he wrote back and said that he had always regretted that he had been so new in the job that he had not felt sufficiently confident to put a spoke in the wheels. So then all Hell broke loose in the House of Commons and families in the country were split. I agonised. I picked up my wife on 29 October and took her down to the country and as I walked into the sitting room of my parents in law, they had the six o'clock news on and I heard about the ultimatum. It was the first I had heard about it and I was appalled. I really agonised about whether I should resign. There was one argument of principle and one of practical importance – I couldn't afford it. But secondly I argued to myself that even as a very junior private secretary, a resignation in the Private Office would be news in the papers and it was not my job to make life even more difficult for the Government and for my Minister that I served. So I soldiered on, but I did think it was the most terrible mistake. And the way it was done with the Israelis was about as bad as you could manage in the Middle East. And of course it led to ministers not telling the truth in the House of Commons, to put it mildly.

### **Four Power Meeting**

One other memory was of a Four Power meeting in Geneva, I think it was in June 1955 with Khrushchev and Bulganin, Eisenhower, Mollet, Eden and Macmillan. As part of Macmillan's team I was part of the delegation. We stayed in the Beau Rivage a very smart hotel now, which British delegations always used to live in, but they don't now. It's too expensive probably. I had never been to an international conference before and so it was a new experience for me and I was in my room in the hotel and the telephone rang and a voice said "Is that Mr Graham?" and I said "yes" and he said "When are you addressing the

meeting?” And my horror must have purveyed itself down the line. I thought, night watchman in cricket terms, what am I being asked to do? And then he said “It is Mr Billy Graham is it?” So I was let off.

ML: Did Billy Graham address the meeting?

JG: He addressed a meeting of his own.

ML: I can’t imagine that he would have been particularly welcome at a meeting of Prime Ministers.

### **Soviet visit**

JG: One result of the Geneva meeting was the invitation to Bulganin and Khrushchev to visit Britain, I was not much involved in the visit which was nearly spoiled because contrary to specific instructions, our friends mounted a covert operation for a retired naval diver, Commander Crabbe, to survey the hull of the Soviet cruiser that B and K had travelled in. The operation went tragically wrong, betrayed, now it appears, by the traitor Philby who had also organised the whole thing. B and K came to the Foreign Office to sign the concluding document that had been agreed and I remember ushering them into the FO lift which only held four so that with our ambassador William Hayter, and the lift operator there was no room for B and K’s bodyguard. He was appalled. I shouted “Follow me” and we ran up the stairs and arrived just as B and K emerged from the lift.

JG: Another memory, when Macmillan succeeded Eden as Prime Minister after the Suez debacle and Eden’s resignation, he set about restoring relations with the US and invited Eisenhower whom he knew well from war-time service at the time of the operations in Algeria and Tunisia, to a meeting in Bermuda. HMG took over the Mid-Ocean Club and put the American delegation up there. Junior members of our delegation of which I was one, were organised by the Cabinet Secretary, Burke Trend, to take the minutes of the meetings. Outside the official meetings Selwyn Lloyd heard that Foster Dulles, the US Secretary of State was in the habit of going for an early morning swim, so Selwyn decided that this would be a good opportunity to get alongside him. He also decided that a private secretary, me, should accompany him. So we swam. Luckily for me the exercise was not repeated: the sea was cold and the last thing Dulles wanted was to be bearded on his swim by the British Foreign Secretary.

## **BELGRADE 1957- 1960**

I was posted to Belgrade from the Private Office in, I think it was May 1957 and we drove out. We got there in June. I was to succeed John Julius Norwich, who had already left.

ML: What position was that?

JG: I was Second Secretary in Chancery. The Ambassador was Jack Nicholls and the Counsellor was Peter Hayman.

ML: Who later became Sir Peter Hayman and had a blotted copybook.

JG: Yes. The Head of Chancery was Andrew Stark, who had been No2 PS, when I was there, so I knew him very well. The Information Officer was Dugald Stewart, whose wife was bilingual in Serbo-Croat and English, having been the daughter of the pre-war Consul and during the war having been dropped in as a radio operator to the Partisans. The Commercial Section was under Bill Laver and under him Iain Sutherland.

We were a very jolly lot. The Ambassador's wife, or perhaps the Ambassador himself, we never really knew, took to writing plays and expected his staff to take part in the cast. The first one I remember was called "Bloodshed in Bled". It was about a British Ambassador who murdered his colleagues standing in his way of becoming Dean of the Corps. It was quite amusing in a way. But it became rather too serious. He insisted on taking a professional theatre, for which he had to pay and selling tickets for it to cover the cost. Theatre was heavily subsidised in Yugoslavia, so we were charging unsubsidised prices for an amateur play, which wasn't very satisfactory really. The next year's play, which I was not asked to act in, was called "Evil Counsellors" and it was about an ambassador who wrote plays in which his staff didn't want to act.

I don't remember in the time that I was there any great issues between us and the Yugoslavs. Tito had broken away from the Comintern and the Soviet Union and I remember Kardelj, the philosopher, as it were, of Yugoslav communism, producing a programme, which irritated Moscow very much, because no other communist leader in the Soviet empire was allowed to produce a separate programme. So we had an interest in really encouraging good relations with Yugoslavia and we were doing trade with them. They did of course stamp on opposition and there was the heritage of the split between the Communist partisans and the Chetniks, royalists. We backed Tito's communist partisans in the war because the royalist

partisans held back in their activities against the Germans for fear of the retaliations which the Germans inflicted.

ML: This is in Fitzroy MacLean's great book, *Eastern Approaches*, which covers all this.

JG: That's right. As I said, Dugald Stewart's wife was dropped into a group of partisans led by a man called Slavko Kumar who was the Minister of Agriculture under Tito. Tito, by controlling things through the Party, managed to keep the republics together. But the failure of his regime was the failure to produce a satisfactory means of succession.

Of course the war had left terrible memories. My closest Yugoslav friend, whom I really got to know very well, was Director of the Institute of International Workers' Movement. But he'd had a period in Oxford, writing about the Shop Stewards movement in the 1914 – 1918 war. So he knew us and he spoke very good English and he had a sense of humour about it all. But he was a Serb, who had been born and brought up in the Voivodina in an area that was Croat. And he had memories of his family and the village being lined up in church and shot, when he was only quite small. But in the census he put himself down as Yugoslav. I kept up with him for many years. He became a visiting lecturer at the Johns Hopkins branch in Bologna in Italy. His son is now quite a well-known commentator on affairs in the former Yugoslavia.

I remember one event. There was a naval visit in 1958 to Split, HMS *Surprise*, which was the ship in which our admiral commanding in the Mediterranean flew his flag. I was ordered down as liaison officer. It was one of the first times I wore my new tropical uniform and I remember catching the spike on my helmet on the coaming of the companionway and falling down and being dusted off by the Marine sentry at the bottom. The C in C had a lunch for his Yugoslav opposite number, in which I was involved and my Ambassador was there. There were two admirals involved, Admiral Lamb (Sir Charles) and Admiral Edwards (Sir Ralph). I think Edwards was the C in C and Lamb was the No2. After lunch for some reason the C in C picked on me and I found myself sitting next to him while he held forth about the iniquities of communism and of Yugoslavia in particular. As the visit was intended to improve relations, this was not thought to be a very good thing. The No2, Lamb, and Lady Edwards and my Ambassador got together and agreed that Edwards had a mental problem. They drafted a telegram to be sent on the Foreign Office net, saying he should be removed from command and replaced by Lamb. I was told to send this to our embassy to send it to London. I had no cypher communications, but I don't think that mattered because if the

Yugoslavs were reading it they would have realised that we thought that Edwards had gone mad. So I telephoned the text to Belgrade and it was sent off and he was removed. He was diagnosed with a brain tumour and died really quite soon afterwards.

Terence Garvey took over from Hayman and was a breath of fresh air. He got us all learning Serbo-Croat. He was later ambassador in Belgrade and in Moscow. His wife Rosemary had been formerly married to Con O'Neill and whose daughter is Baroness O'Neill today.

Belgrade was a happy post. It was my first married post and we enjoyed it a lot. We were able to travel throughout Yugoslavia without let or hindrance, or being followed. Probably the military attachés were followed a bit.

In the summer of 1958 there was the revolution in Iraq and a telegram came through saying that Michael Wright had been replaced in Baghdad by Trevelyan. Trevelyan had asked for a replacement and I was to go to Baghdad. Jack Nicholls, my ambassador, protested that I had only been there just over a year and it was cancelled. I was quite relieved really, as the only person who had been killed in our embassy staff in the revolution was a distant cousin, Ludovic Graham, who had been a sort of master of the household for Michael Wright. He was shot, whether deliberately or by a stray bullet, nobody has ever discovered, while on the balcony of the embassy in Baghdad.

### **BENGAZI 1960-1961**

In the summer of 1960, May, I was posted to Benghazi as Consul. We set off with two small children at that time, driving to Naples to catch a boat. We took four days. The first day we got to Trieste. The endurance of the small boys got shorter and shorter. So the stages got shorter and shorter. We stopped in Ravenna, Rome and then Naples, where we took a little boat called the "Cita di Livorno", which plied every fortnight between Naples and Benghazi calling at Malta or Syracuse. It became a great institution as it brought supplies. I arrived in Benghazi with our car and immediately ran into Middle Eastern bureaucracy because the official clearance had not reached the customs in Benghazi from the authorities in Tripoli where the government was. They said "You can't bring your car in", I said, "But you know I am Consul", they said "Oh yes, we know you're Consul, but your car has not been cleared, so you'll have to pay a deposit". I said, "But if I was a tourist what would you do?" They said, "Oh if you were a tourist we'd let the car in, but we have to give you better treatment!"



Eventually the local British businessman, who had the franchise for Austins, stepped forward and gave us the deposit which was refunded when the clearance came through.

I think Benghazi was our least agreeable post. We had a pretty miserable house and we had so called “liberated” Italian wooden furniture, which I think was riddled with bed bugs and my poor wife got quite badly bitten with bed bugs. We still had a battalion there and a battalion in Tripoli and quite a big military headquarters. They sent a chap round to spray the house and we got rid of the wooden beds.

I found the Libyans quite difficult to get to know. Officially the King was still in charge. Our landlord was a man called Abdullmullah Lenghi, quite a big businessman. The Ambassador was Derek Riches in Tripoli. The Consul General in charge in Benghazi was Noel Jackson. We had fun together. He was pretty idle. He was writing a book about horsemanship. He monopolised the time of our one secretary in dictating his book. He would come back from a meeting with the Governor, the Wali of Cyrenaica or whatever and come to me and say “He said this ... and I said that ... and would I do a record”. And quite often I would find the secretary was so busy taking down his book on horsemanship that I couldn’t get a word in edgeways.

ML: Did you travel much? Did you get to Cyrene?

JG: Yes, the embassy had taken over Graziani’s villa in Cyrene and we used to use that, up in the Jebel Akhdar, the Green Hill. Libya in the Spring had good rains and was beautiful; a mass of anemones come out and grass grows. But it is pretty hot in the summer. There was a big expatriate community, but that’s not really what one is there for. Good bathing. Noel Jackson and the French Consul and I used to go shooting chikor (a sort of partridge, the redleg) in the hills. Swimming below Cyrene at Apollonia, a Roman port, one could still see the sunken remains of the jetties and quays and you would suddenly run into a whole pile of 5” shells, dumped from the war.

ML: There must have been a lot of relics from the war and the landmines still causing casualties.

JG: I don’t remember that. We had military there. Maybe they dealt with that. When you were there they had gone, hadn’t they?

ML: Oh, long since, yes.

JG: The King lived over near Tobruk, so we didn't see him a lot, because it is a long way away, as you know. I argued, when the Head of the North Africa Department, John Beith, visited, and I think I managed to persuade him that our treaty with Libya, under which we had rights to keep two battalions and exercise troops, gave the King a false sense of security. One of my main roles was managing claims after the exercises. The King thought that if troubled brewed we would step in, but we knew we would not. I felt that without the treaty he might be encouraged to carry out some obviously needed reforms and that we would still be able to exercise our troops and send in teams to look after the incoming troops for training. My idea was not adopted and of course the situation did eventually lead to Gaddafi's revolution. The King, living near Derna, was out of touch: a great man in his day, leading the resistance to the Italians and very helpful to us in the war with his tribesmen and so on, but too isolated. And of course Cyrenaica and Tripoli are separated by 600 miles of desert.

ML: The Gulf of Sirte, a huge space.

JG: The oil had not come in when I was there. The oil was known about, but was only just beginning to come in, so they were poor. Tripolitania had been much more strongly colonised by the Italians and was a different milieu.

There was quite an amusing incident. Field Marshals Alexander and Harding came to visit their old battlefields and they were put up at the Berenice Hotel. It happened that the Brigade HQ was giving a party and they were, of course invited. The Brigade Major went to fetch these two Field Marshals from the hotel and Mrs Brigade Major said to Alexander, "Were you ever in Benghazi before Sir?" - "I captured it, twice".

We got a letter from the Foreign Office saying, "the Government is looking for a saving of 10% worldwide. Have you any posts you could sacrifice?" The Consul General, Jackson, was away on summer leave and I said subject to clearance with him I think we could do without one post. The Information Officer really doesn't do very much. A letter came smartly back saying "You", i.e. me, are to come home at short notice. Jackson agreed when he came back and so at about a fortnight's notice we packed up and left. My family went home by air and I drove the car on the famous "Cita di Livorno" to Naples and then back through Europe. For the first and last time I put the car on a little aeroplane that used to run out of Le Touquet to Lydd. It took two cars and their crew. It was much quicker than a ferry.

Just before I left I was summoned by Omar Pasha Kikhia who had been a big figure in the resistance and was an old man of about 84 and he said, "I have a young son", whose age was about 10, I suppose from another wife, and "I want him educated in Britain". I said, "We have a British Council, who organise these things". "Oh no!" he said, "I want you to do it". So we found him a place in a crammer in Kent. It was awkward really because he was about six or eight years older than my children and didn't fit in with them. We did not really know what to do. Then the old boy, his father died, and the boy was handed over to uncles. And after about three years, by which time Mansour, as the boy was called, spoke quite good English but was beginning to lose Arabic, I wrote to the uncles and said if he was to be of any use to his own country he must come back and finish his education in Arabic. They did eventually agree. By this time the boy was about twelve or thirteen and I had arranged provisionally for him to go on to Highgate School, because there was lots of money. But they agreed and he went to a school in Lebanon. The Kikhia family were not "personae gratae" with Gaddafi, the older ones took refuge in Cairo. I lost touch with the boy until about 20 years ago when he suddenly rang me up. He had become a lecturer at the University of Texas, in Law. I do not know what he's up to now. I should think if he's wise he is settled in Texas.

### **PERSONNEL DEPT and PUSD 1961 - 1966**

I joined the Personnel Dept about two or three weeks later. David Muirhead was Head of the Dept. John Ford was Assistant. Very nice colleagues of mine were Neville, First Secretary, Simon Dawbarn, Tony Flack. We had an area each to cover. My area was the Foreign Office [postings], with some oversight of the Middle East. Two problems: I think I found work in the Personnel Dept probably the most stressful because if we ever got it wrong, and in those days the posting for the middle ranks and below was very much in the hands of Personnel Dept, not of boards. There were some advantages in that because the Dept had a professional interest in trying to get it right, because if it went wrong they had to do it again. Boards in my experience tend to be a bit biased towards people they know. Years later I was sat as Private Secretary on a board for senior appointments and I remember one Under Secretary vetoing the appointment of a chap within his region because, he said, "he doesn't have any experience of Whitehall." So the next time when the Department tried to bring him back to London, so that he did gain experience of Whitehall, another Under Secretary vetoed him because he didn't have experience of Whitehall. The Department wouldn't have allowed that sort of thing to happen.

But the results of a posting, which you had had a hand in, and which you had had to break the news to the victim, came home to roost within a month. Whereas in other work your mistakes would only really come to light with experience years later. The other problem was trying to explain to a Head of Department or to an Ambassador, that while so and so was not top flight, he or she could do the job that they had for them to do. Leading Departments found it quite difficult to accept that their work was not quite so testing as some others.

### **PUSD**

That lasted for about two years and then I moved over to PUSD (Permanent Under Secretary's Dept) which had really two sides to it. The first and the biggest was defence, liaison with the Ministry of Defence and the Services and the other was liaison with MI6 (Our Friends). Originally they had been called by the name of the Under Secretary who had been in charge of the liaison, "Pat Dean's friends", for example. The name was dropped and it just became Our Friends. I was on the Defence side. I took over from John Waterfield. I enjoyed it. We worked very closely with the Ministry of Defence and the Services. We sat on the Defence Planning committee at the working level. The committee itself does not exist now, I believe. We worked out contingency plans for all the contingencies that we could think of. The Head of Dept sat on the Chiefs of Staff committee, almost as of right. When they were talking about what you might call domestic affairs of the Services or the MoD we were not there, but anything that involved foreign affairs, we went to the committee by right. I think the Assistant had a similar position on the Vice-Chiefs committee.

Issues at the time were the development of Polaris, the first American missile system for submarines. Of course we had our own nuclear weapons and there was a very complicated arrangement, which had to be renewed every time the Ministry changed, of the Prime Minister's control of the firing. And of course our relations with the Americans for the development of the submarines was very crucial. We were also involved with confrontation in Indonesia and we were involved in war in the Radfan in Yemen. There was Vietnam, where the Wilson government was determined to stay out. "All support short of aid." I think he was right to keep out of it.

Then, trouble in the Congo - one of my major sorrows at the time. We were contemplating sending in a battalion of the Paras, to Stanleyville to rescue the expatriate community there, who were under pressure. But the Belgians said they would do it, using I think, some of our facilities. We were going to supply a field hospital as soon as we knew the Belgians had

secured the airfield. This was all “teed up”. The hospital was in Nairobi, but it could not fly in until we knew the airfield was secure. I thought that, in consultation with the MoD, everything was tied up. I remember one member of the Chiefs of Staff committee telephoning me and saying was I happy with everything that had been laid on. What I did not know was that the executive order to move the hospital had to be given in London. So when I was telephoned at about two in the morning to say that a telegram had come in to say the Belgians had secured Stanleyville airfield, I said, “has that been repeated to Nairobi”. They said yes, so I assumed they would regard that as the trigger to go. In fact they did not. The decision to send the hospital in had been reserved to London. I didn’t know that and it was not therefore taken until the next morning, by which time night had descended and they couldn’t fly in because it was dark. So we lost a good 24 hours sending in medical help, which could have been crucial for some casualties. I don’t in fact think it was, but that was a big error, a failure of communication or understanding on my part.

We were also much involved in the Defence Review under Dennis Healey. Ordered to cut, I think it was 400 million odd from the defence budget, we in the Foreign Office argued that the one unit that could achieve that saving was the big carriers that were planned at the time and the Foreign Office took the view that we did not foresee an operation that would require aircraft carrier support independently of the Americans. [Denis Healey discusses this in his memoir.] So the carriers were cut. Luckily the Navy quietly went ahead with what they called “Through Deck Cruisers” which were the light, small carriers which proved very useful, indeed essential, in the Falklands operation twenty years later. Simultaneously, in part of the defence review the TSR2 advanced swing wing fighter bomber, mainly bomber, which was being developed was cancelled and the decision was taken to buy American Phantoms [ML: I think the F111 was really the alternative to TSR2] which was the approved aircraft. But as we insisted on putting in Rolls Royce engines, ended up being about as expensive, if not more expensive than the TSR2. The other cancellation was the jump jet that was being developed. Fortunately again, was it BAC, went ahead with developing a less powerful Hawker Harrier [jump jet], which again did such sterling service in the Falklands war. I served in the defence part of PUSD under Geoffrey Archer, who I regarded as a very distinguished officer, a very good Arabist, and later, when I found myself in Kuwait again he came out as Ambassador there. The other Assistant in the Dept was Clive Rose with whom I got on very well and has remained a friend.

In the spring of 1966 I was told that I was to be appointed to the embassy in Khartoum. There was no British or international school in Khartoum at the time and so we were faced with what to do with my second son. My first son was already at a prep school in England and would stay there. But we decided his brother should join him: his brother being only really seven at the time. But this is one of the problems that face all those who serve in foreign postings. It turned out that it was not necessary because, hearing that I was coming, the Sudanese Government broke off relations with HMG and my posting to Khartoum was cancelled and instead I was sent to Kuwait for the second time, as Head of Chancery. There was a British school, so my younger son could have gone there, but we decided that as he was already in his prep school, it would be better to leave him. My daughter went to the little school in Kuwait.

### **KUWAIT 1966 -1969**

I served three years in Kuwait the second time and in the thirteen years since I had left it before the city had expanded. The building of the dhows had been moved from the waterfront, we were onto the third or fourth ring road; there were tarmacked streets; street lighting; the Sheikh's palace; wealth widely spread among Kuwaitis, building on expatriate labour and expertise and particularly on Palestinian expertise. The Palestinians, having been educated under the mandate, a lot of them were bi-lingual, English and Arabic, and they had the skills and the education to supply the underpinning for the expansion of the oil industry and the development of Kuwait. It was a lucky dispensation for the oil producing Arab world that they had this skilled pool of labour to call on. My Soviet opposite number, whom I got to know, duly reporting the contacts, said to me that when he'd been briefed to come to Kuwait he had been led to the conclusion that he would find three thousand colonialists living on the sweated labour of the natives. He said after two years in Kuwait he'd realised that it was the natives who lived on the sweated labour of three thousand colonialists. He must have been a member of the KGB to tell that joke!

The overhanging cloud over Kuwait at that time was the threat from Iraq. When reading the records in the embassy I came across an anonymous rhyme in the papers, dating from 1961 because it referred to the progress from a political agency to a consulate to an embassy, with the progress of Kuwait from protected state to independence. But as a result of the Iraqi threat under General Qasim, who had overthrown the monarchy in 1958 we had deployed troops in 1961 as a precautionary measure. When the threat appeared to recede we had

withdrawn most of our troops as the Kuwaitis didn't want a permanent garrison there. But we had stockpiled tanks and various other things and this was a constant bone of contention. Who should pay for them? Did we want to withdraw them? If we wanted to withdraw them, who would pay the cost of doing so? Ideally the Kuwaitis would have been persuaded to buy them, but they were very reluctant to pay the price that the MoD was asking. Finally, I think, after we had persuaded the MoD to ask only the cost of removal, the Kuwaitis did buy the tanks. We did manage to create a Kuwaiti air force. We sold them Lightnings and we had a contingent of the Kuwait liaison team in to train the Kuwait air force.

Another issue that arose while I was in Kuwait was the 1967 war between Israel and Egypt and Syria and Jordan and the devaluation of sterling. The devaluation came on a Friday evening, which of course was the weekend for the Kuwaitis, with instructions to us to inform them of the decision to devalue. I managed finally to track down the Minister of Foreign Affairs, whose name was Atiqi. I remember his comment. He shrugged his shoulders and said, "Oh well, we've had a good rain". Because the bulk of the surplus funds from the oil revenues available to Kuwait were banked in London, the devaluation involved a considerable loss to the Kuwaiti treasury. In a subsequent despatch we worked out the loss from talking to Kuwaitis and others. I can't remember the exact figure, but I think it was about 400 million pounds. We reckoned we must have got it very nearly right, because at the insistence of the Bank of England, the despatch was not printed for circulation in Whitehall.

Then in 1967 there was the war, with the Egyptian attack on Israel and the Israeli attack on the Egyptian air force, with Jordan foolishly, but understandably for political reasons, joining in support of Egypt and Syria. With the result that Jordan lost administrative control of the West bank and Syria lost control of the Golan Heights. Egypt lost most of its air force and Nasser, in an emotional broadcast, resigned. I remember listening to that on the radio and listening to crowds in the streets shouting in Arabic, "Watch out Dayan, Abdul Nasser's on the battlefield!" Such was the reaction to Nasser's resignation that he withdrew it very quickly. The other aspect of it was that we had a police platoon on guard at the embassy and they had been listening on their radios to endless martial music and stirring speeches, anti-Israel and anti-everybody else, anti-the British, because of what came to be known and the "big lie". That was that the Israelis couldn't have managed the surprise attacks on the Egyptian air force unless they had used the British base in Cyprus, which wasn't true. But the police would listen to all this propaganda, but when a mob turned up at the gates throwing

stones the police stood to their arms and stood to and defended us nobly and we had no problem, despite the propaganda.

I developed a considerable number of friends in Kuwait and a respect for them. Other Arabs in the Gulf regarded them as arrogant. I never found that really and I remember an occasion when I was in charge, the Ambassador, Noel Jackson had been away, and a VIP was arriving at the airport. I arrived a bit late and looked in at the great hall where VIPs were received, with chairs all the way round the wall and as far as I could see there was not any space left for me and I was wondering what to do. I thought it would be really rather 'infra dig' for Her Majesty's Representative to stand and was thinking of just walking around outside as though I was not keen to sit in anyway. Then a Kuwaiti friend saw me, shuffled up on the benched and patted the place beside him and said come here. I thought that was unusually friendly. I was not sure that there were many Arab countries where that would have happened.

### **PRIVATE OFFICE 1969 - 1972**

We stayed in Kuwait until the Spring of 1969 when I was told that I was to come home as Principal Private Secretary to the Foreign Secretary, subject to an interview. I was interviewed by Michael Stewart, the Labour Foreign Secretary at the time. I remember saying to him that I looked forward to working for him, but that I couldn't write speeches. He said, "that's alright. No civil servant can write speeches. I write my own". Which was true. We used to provide him with what we called the "quarries" of briefing papers on different issues and he would sit alone writing his speeches out.

ML: That was before the days of Special Advisers then, was it?

JG: There were no Special Advisers that is true. He was a very educated man and a man of great integrity. I was very fond of him. He was a bit out of the general Labour party stream I would say and [much under-rated]. I remember one occasion when a note was sent up from the department, announcing the death of some frightful fellow, like Idi Amin. I don't remember who it was, and Michael Stewart minuted in red ink, as was the Secretary of State's prerogative, in Greek, two lines from the Odyssey, which we then had to translate for the department, to the effect that, "it is wrong to rejoice in the downfall of men, but these were destroyed by the Will of the Gods and their own foul deeds". It's Odysseus speaking of the death of the suitors on his return to Ithaca. He was very impressive. I got the feeling that Michael Stewart was not so much of a politician and his relations with his colleagues were



those of mutual respect. I don't remember any particular social getting together with colleagues. Sadly under the pressures of office, he took to drink, especially when working on a speech, though it did not seem to affect his performance once on his feet in the House. On one occasion when he was due to dine with some fellow MPs he did lose his way and had to be rescued.

ML: There was not a lot of love lost amongst the members of that government anyway, I believe.

JG: I think that's right. And then the election came in, was it May 1970. One evening I was about to get into bed and the telephone rang and said the Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, wishes to have a meeting now! As soon as possible in No10. There was no word as to why or what. I obeyed. I dressed and drove into No10. There were two or three others there and Wilson appeared and offered us a whisky or whatever and after about ten minutes, quarter of an hour, said "now you can go home". This is so baffling that I find it difficult to be certain that my memory is not playing me false. Because later I discovered that he had been electioneering in Cornwall, but needed to get back for an early meeting the following day and so by inventing a meeting in No10 he got the RAF helicopter to fly him back, without having to charge the cost to electoral expenses. He lost the election and the Conservatives came in with Alec Douglas-Home as Foreign Secretary.

### **Conservative Ministry 1970 -1972**

One of the issues of the day was the supply of arms, particularly helicopters, to South Africa, still an apartheid ruled state. In his opening press conference Alec announced that his intention was to approve the supply of the helicopters. That was an immediate issue with the press and in Parliament.

### **Rhodesia**

He came into office with a determination to try and settle the Rhodesia question, which had originally blown up, UDI [Rhodesia's unilateral declaration of independence] when he was Commonwealth Secretary. In the interval, the Commonwealth Office and Colonial Office and Foreign Office had all been merged. So negotiations with Ian Smith and with the others started and got a long way down the road till, I think it must have been November 1971. The principal negotiator for the Foreign Office was Philip Adams, who later became Ambassador to Cairo and also in retirement was Director of the Ditchley Foundation, and Arnold

Goodman, a very distinguished, very large lawyer. One of the triumphs was getting them incognito into Rhodesia. He stood out in a crowd for his size and he travelled with a briefcase with his initials on it. But they managed to get in and out without being spotted. Then Alec Douglas-Home and a party went to Salisbury, as it then was, to sign this agreement, subject to a test of opinion by the black population. This was probably October/November [1971]. We took over the High Commissioner's house, which had been in mothballs since UDI and we saw Ian Smith. Alec wanted to see Mugabe and Nkomo, both of whom were in prison and Nkomo was allowed to come and visit and talk. Mugabe, we were told, was in the terminal stages of cancer and could not be brought out. Well, he's still alive now and that must have been a lie. But interestingly the agreement signed was progressive. It [involved] rolling increases in the black vote.

ML: Did it have a name, that agreement?

JG: I don't think it did. I've got a copy of what was published. Lord Pearce, a distinguished judge, was appointed to conduct the test of opinion. First of all there was delay because he was ill. Then, being a judge, quite rightly, he had to play it absolutely straight, so that it would not be impugned by any decisions that he came to. I think that, had we been able to push it on more quickly, the answer might have been different. Ian Smith's side didn't help with campaigning for the agreement. The irony is that had the agreement been put into effect, thanks to the rolling enlargement of the electorate, the voting system would have just about reached the same as it did in the subsequent negotiations in Lancaster House in 1979: without the civil war and the terrible casualties of that period leading up to the Lancaster House agreement. I think that was a terrible blow to Alec Douglas-Home, who had really tried hard to reach a peaceful agreement that would lead on to black enfranchisement.

### **Expulsions from Soviet embassy**

The other great event was operation Foot. The security services, the police and MI5 had been agitating for some time that the number of spies, number of KGB and other operatives in the Soviet embassy was out of hand and they were too many to be watched effectively by the resources we had and that we should demand that they should be reduced. Alec Douglas-Home had twice said this, in the spring of 1971, to Gromyko, his opposite number, with whom he got on reasonably well. Possibly because Gromyko didn't believe we would do anything, or possibly because the people concerned were not foreign service and therefore not under his control, he was unable perhaps (this is speculation on my part) to do anything about

reducing the numbers. So a decision was taken in September 1971 to declare 105 as “personae no gratae”. Some were abroad at the time and the embassy was told they wouldn’t be allowed to return. The clever part was that, while we accepted there would be retaliation, we said that the limit, the cap on the total staff which the Soviet embassy would be allowed in London, would be reduced by one for every ejection of our staff from Moscow. The movement brought enormous support from our allies. The Americans were astonished that we had been brave enough to do it. And it went down very well with the public in Britain, aided possibly by a defection from the Soviet embassy. The defector brought a lot of papers about the recruitment of sleeper agents in Britain, who would have been activated should a war come, with sabotage and so on as their objective.

ML: Was his name ever revealed publicly?

JG: I think it probably was. I think it began with an “L”, Lyalin?

ML: I expect it is on the record somewhere.

JG: That was early September 1971 and as usual Alec Douglas-Home was due to fly to New York to attend the General Assembly of the United Nations. We had, as usual, an appointment to call on Gromyko in the Soviet mission there. So we did, Alec Douglas-Home and I. We were shown into a padded room with only Gromyko and the interpreter present and the door was shut. Gromyko held forth for about 15 minutes. I do not speak Russian, but I could not fail to hear the constant repetition of the word “provocatsia!” I really began to wonder whether we were ever to get out. I forget what Alec replied, but no doubt my official record would tell you. But we were allowed out just. The embassy was reduced, the espionage effort and the subversion effort were spiked and it was a very successful operation, largely due to the efforts of two officers, Julian Bullard and Christopher Makins, Lord Sherfield’s son, both now dead.

### **UN Secretary General**

There was another occasion. There was a meeting in 1971 with the Americans in the Caribbean somewhere, possibly Bermuda, and the question of Kurt Waldheim being appointed Secretary General of the UN was current at the time. The day we were meeting with the Americans the vote was due to be taken. Up to that point Britain and the US had supported Waldheim. But we had begun to have doubts. At the meeting we agreed with the Americans that we would vote against him. So Joe Sisco and I rushed out to the telephone to

call our respective missions in New York. I had some difficulty getting through and when I did eventually I was told, "It's too late. We've voted already". If that issue had been higher on the agenda, Waldheim would not have been appointed Secretary General.

### **A security breach**

Personally, I had a disastrous accident. Alec Douglas-Home had been having meetings in the House of Commons and I had been with him and then there was to be a meeting in the MoD, with very little time between the two. I had a black box with papers that he'd been working on. I had to get that back to the Foreign Office and accompany him to the MoD, so I was in a rush. I must have slammed the lid of the box, but had twisted the key in the lock before it was fully shut. Picking it up, with the handle on the back, I ran down the steps from the House of Commons through the passage under the road and up the steps of the underground station at Westminster. I ran back to the Foreign Office and all the way the lid was hanging open and flapping. I only noticed as I ran up the steps of the Foreign Office. So immediately I reported it to Nicholas Barrington, my No2, who took it in hand. Papers were already beginning to be handed in to the Cannon Row police station, including a whole dollop by the man selling newspapers at the top of the steps. We got all the papers back eventually, but it was clearly a very serious breach of security. I suspect if somebody was foolish enough to do it today they would not get the papers back. They would be passed, on payment no doubt, to the press. I got a written reprimand. I was probably lucky. A lot of his parliamentary colleagues thought the problem was Alec, because he was notoriously vague about keys and security. I tipped the newspaper seller at the top of the stairs. He didn't know what it was about and I didn't tell him. I just gave him a bit of money because I owed him a big debt.

### **EU negotiations**

At that time we were negotiating in Paris, with No10 very much in the lead, for entry into the EU, EC as it was then. That was brought about successfully in 1972. I left most of the work on that side to Nicholas Barrington, who knew more about it all than I.

ML: It must have been about then, because that government did not last all that long. Did they lose the election in 1973?

JG: I think so. I thought it right that as Principal Private Secretary I should accompany the Foreign Secretary on overseas visits. As a result one found oneself in the position of being the sole adviser on hand when issues outside the area being visited, were referred by telegram

to him. In the spring of 1972 we went on a major tour of the Far East, India, Japan and Hong Kong and Korea. We had to cut it short because the Government had a thin majority and there was a key vote coming up and Alec Douglas-Home was ordered home. We were in a chartered Comet, which had a limited range, so we had to come down at various airports along the way. I remember the crew coming to see the Foreign Secretary and saying, we have got to come down to refuel and this means we are going to exceed our permitted hours of flight. We can get you home, but you should know and back us up. He said “Yes, of course”, so we got home in time for him to vote.

### **State visits**

Alec Home twice accompanied the Queen on state visits, to Thailand and on another occasion to France and I went with him. In Paris we dined in Le Petit Trianon and went on to an opera in the main palace. I was in the car with Lady Soames who said the dress she was wearing reminded her of her wedding when her father had said in the car “I hope this one works out all right.”

When Nasser died it was thought right that the Foreign Secretary should attend the funeral, so we set off in an RAF light aircraft, with George Brown who was offered a lift. We stayed at the Embassy with Dick Beaumont, the Ambassador. The actual funeral was chaotic but moving. I remember a burly policeman sitting on his motor bike in floods of tears. Visiting VIPs were meant to follow on foot the coffin mounted on an armoured car, but the crowd pushed in and made it impossible. Led by the Emperor of Ethiopia we turned tail and gave up. Seeing a queue for a tent we joined it only to find Arafat and Qadafi, as it were receiving the handshakes, Sadat, Nasser’s deputy, having collapsed. Faced with these two, with no press present, we pressed on, and got away with it. On our return to Britain I had to sign the bill for the drinks on the aircraft: from this it was clear that stories about George Brown’s drinking were only too true. Later Alec returned to Cairo to meet Sadat on a visit that turned out well, with a boat trip with the Sadats on the Nile.

I saw the role of the Private Secretary as a conduit between the minister and the department, conveying as accurately as possible the views of the latter to the minister and vice versa. I did not see it as my job to insert my own views in contradiction of the department though that did not rule out arguing with the department to modify their views.

## WASHINGTON 1972-1974

In August I was posted as Head of Chancery / Counsellor to Washington, arriving in, I think it was October 1972. We went by sea, by the Queen Elizabeth and we drove down to Washington from New York.

ML: Would that have been the QEI or the QEII?

JG: I think it was the QEI. It was not the Queen Mary. I had been on the Queen Mary for a meeting between Eden and Eisenhower. As a private secretary to Selwyn Lloyd I had travelled on the Queen Mary, but that was in January 1956, immediately after my wedding and 2 week honeymoon.

The Ambassador in Washington when I arrived was Lord Cromer, former Governor of the Bank of England and very much focussed on economic affairs. He was succeeded for my last year there by Peter Ramsbotham, who was a career diplomat. He was very good with his staff and liked to chew problems over with advisers. And, of course the Head of Chancery is a very different job in an embassy the size of our embassy in Washington. The chancery itself consisted of the Head of Chancery and about half a dozen very bright young people, each with their area, the Middle East, Europe, Defence and so on and relations with Congress. It included Pauline Neville Jones, who is now Lady Neville-Jones and Charles Powell, later PS to Mrs Thatcher, PS to the Ambassador, Christopher Makins, son of Lord Sherfield, John Moberly, Michael Pike, John Boyd, and later Ambassador in Peking. Part of the job was keeping these young Turks working together. Chancery was instructed on one occasion to produce a despatch, covering the field, and getting them all to work together was quite a problem. But it wasn't a satisfactory job. There were a Minister in charge of politics, a Minister Commercial, a Minister of information, and they tended not to be very open to management by a mere Counsellor Head of Chancery. The Head of Chancery didn't have a desk of his own with responsibility to go and talk to elements of the US government, whereas all the others, Middle East, Europe, Far East and China had contacts in the State Dept and elsewhere to visit every day. I think, when I went there, the "Cod War" was about the limit of my responsibilities because it fell to nobody else. So when I left I recommended that the Head of Chancery should take over the Defence portfolio and I think that was done with my successor.

## Watergate

The interesting part of my time in Washington was, of course, the fall of Nixon and Watergate. I arrived about a month before he was triumphantly re-elected in November 1972 with a big majority. And then the Watergate scandal broke and through the next year or so, leaked papers would appear recording the meetings with Nixon in the Whitehouse, with “expletives deleted”, which became a joke. And gradually he became a joke. And it always seemed to me that the American constitution only really works if there is great respect, even from the other parties, for the President. But the Watergate scandal made Nixon into a bit of a joke, despite his considerable achievements in the foreign affairs field. I left a week after he had resigned in August 1974. So I was not there all that long. I got to know a representative in the House of Representatives, called Gilbert Gude, who was a congressman for Maryland and he got me into President Ford’s inaugural address in the Congress, but then I left a week later.

We enjoyed America. We had left our three children in different schools in Britain. My daughter’s was not a very satisfactory school and we were just about to bring her out to a day school in Washington DC, when I got posted to Baghdad. We made a number of American friends, some of whom I had known before, but most of whom I kept in touch with until recently.

ML: It is true that it is very easy to have a close relationship with Americans, because although we speak a different version of the same language we understand each other more easily.

JG: That is true. We got to know people outside. I had a recommendation to a couple who had been at Cambridge while I was there, though I hadn’t known them then, and we got to know them and liked them very much. He was a fisherman and he managed to get me into a private fishing syndicate up in Maryland, a river called “Friends’ Creek” owned and run by the Colgate family. It was very agreeable, quite wild, except that there was a luxurious fishing hut with a kitchen and bedroom and I found that one could drive up there in about an hour and a half in the evening, fish the evening rise, spend the night there, get up early, fish the morning rise, and be back in the office by about nine o’clock. That was fun. As Americans are great ones for meetings I took the opportunity to see the rest of the country, to speak on whatever. It brought home to me how different the Pacific side is from the Atlantic. That is not immediately clear if you do not visit that part. California and the western part

have a different approach. When they talk about the ocean they mean the Pacific Ocean and China is much more real to them than Europe.

Perhaps I should have mentioned when I was Private Secretary and we were meeting over Waldheim, Kissinger came to breakfast with Alec Douglas-Home. He came alone, but I was there trying to take notes, while eating scrambled egg as well. Kissinger was very frank and when he had finished he said “Don’t tell any of my delegation what I have told you.” Which of course is no way to run a business.

ML: That is often true of America isn’t it. You’re not allowed to discuss intelligence with Americans even though it’s their intelligence.

JG: The people working for the State Department said they were like mushrooms, kept in the dark and fed on manure. I remember that when the Turks invaded Cyprus in the summer of 1974 the two Secretaries of State, Kissinger and Callaghan, would talk together daily on the telephone. Our private office recorded these conversations and telegraphed summaries to us in Washington. I used to take these summaries to the working level in the State Department who received no information at all from Kissinger’s office of what had been said.

The reason I left was that I had been vaguely approached by one of the investment banks. My friend working in one of them said would I be interested? Obviously the terms of payment and pension were very attractive and I was getting a bit browned off by my lack of job satisfaction in Washington. And then the Office came up and said, “We are re-opening relations with Iraq”, which were broken off when Balfour-Paul was required to leave in 1971 and this was the second quarter of 1974. “And we are going to put you forward, if you agree to be Ambassador in Baghdad.” And as being an ambassador was a sort of ambition when you originally joined, of course I said “Yes”, though it wasn’t for personal reasons all that convenient.

So I packed up in Washington and had a short leave and briefing and went out to Baghdad. We drove to Venice, took a ship to Beirut, drove to Damascus and then to Baghdad, arriving in about October / November 1974.

End of second session.



## **BAGHDAD 1974 -1977**

I arrived in Baghdad in October / November 1974. The embassy had been re-established under Ian Macluney as a sort of “John the Baptist” and there was a Head of Chancery, John Giddens, a Defence Attaché, John Sanders, and we were in the old embassy building offices, but the Ambassador’s house, which had been attached, had been destroyed in the 1958 revolution. All that was left of that was the old ballroom, which had become an embassy staff club. The old hall with its little fountain in the middle was in the open air.

It’s a hot and dusty town and the house they had found for us was in a suburb with glass doors and windows, which is the hottest thing you could have. We had desert coolers, desert bushes with foliage hanging in the windows with water dripping through them so when the wind blows theoretically you get a bit of coolness. Up to a point it worked. It was very hot in summer. It never reached officially above 50 degrees because it was said that there was a law that if it reached above 50 centigrade you were entitled to go home.

Saddam Hussein was vice-president at the time and the real power. There was a figurehead President, Ahmed Hassan Bakr. Then there was a cabinet with ministers. One minister, the Minister of Education was Tariq Aziz, a Christian, who spoke some English, and has been recently sentenced for collaboration with Saddam Hussein.

ML: He was the Foreign Minister, wasn’t he?

JG: Later, yes. He, I suspect, was not as bad as some, but obviously was involved and managed to survive by going along.

I presented my credentials to the President, who was agreeable, but I think with no power at all, no real authority. I did manage in the course of being there two official calls on Saddam Hussein. He didn’t receive ambassadors all that much, but on those occasions I had a visiting Minister, David Ennals, Minister of Health. There was a long tradition of cooperation on the health side between Britain and Iraq and medical training was in English. Despite an attempt by the Iraqi government to change it to Arabic, they had to give way when faced with the argument that to be part of the medical world, advances or developments, you had to speak either English or Russian.

The Russian influence was quite strong and certainly in the countryside they assumed I was a Russian, because of course we’d been away for four years. When I arrived the Kurds in the

north were being suppressed. They were having considerable support from the Shah [of Iran], which he didn't acknowledge. The Iraqi army by all accounts was running out of ammunition among other things. In 1975 Saddam Hussein met the Shah in Algiers and signed a treaty in which, without acknowledging that he was doing it, the Shah agreed to call off his support to the Iraqi Kurds. In return he was rewarded by Iraq conceding Iran's claims to a frontier in the Shat Al Arab, running down the middle, instead of on the eastern [Iranian] shore, as traditionally it had done for hundreds of years. The Shah had always objected to this border because it involved his ships going to Abadan and Khoramshahr having to pay Iraqi pilots and Iraqi dues. The frontier had been drawn following the traditional line by a Russian / British commission, which reported in 1913, but which, because of the war, was never really ratified. The Algiers agreement of 1975 redrew the frontier to the deepest part of the channel, the Thalweg, so it was liable to vary instead of being quite down the middle it was sometimes nearer one side, sometimes nearer the other. Saddam's agreement in this treaty was much criticised in the Arab press, as giving away sacred Arab territory, even though it was at the bottom of the river. I have long believed that repealing that concession was one of the motives for Saddam going to war with Iran in 1980. Certainly it was one of the issues that he hung onto until late in the war, when he finally gave it up.

I don't remember any particular events during our time in Iraq. The Arab / Israel problem was a continual source of trouble. During the only calls I ever managed to make on Saddam he brought up the Balfour Declaration, so that discussions of medical affairs didn't really figure very much on his horizon.

ML: What about Iraq's nuclear programme? I can't remember when the Israelis bombed Ossiraq.

JG: That was after I left, so it was not a concern when I was there at all. He hadn't gone to war with Iran and the problem didn't really arise until after that, or during that. The war ran from 1980 to 1988. The Kurds were a continuous problem. One of my better friends in the official world was a man called Ismet Kettaneh, a Kurd. He'd been working in the UN and then he was brought home and he unburdened himself to me once, saying how difficult it was as a Kurd, whether to go on working in the government or whether he should go back to Kurdistan and take part there.

After the Algiers Agreement the ban on diplomats and foreigners travelling to the north, the Kurdish areas, was lifted. We had to get permission to leave Baghdad from the Ministry of

Foreign Affairs and there was a road block on each of the, about half a dozen, roads out of Baghdad. If you didn't have your bit of paper you could be turned back. I applied to go to the north and got my permission and I booked a hotel in Sulaimaniya through an agency. When we arrived the walls of the hotel were still just above ground. The building had just started and hadn't progressed very far. So we went back into the town and found a funny little hotel. I think somebody was turned out for us. We were unpacked, there and while we were out at dinner an armed posse arrived and said "You've got to come with us". It was not much good arguing. I said, "what about the bill for the dinner" and they said not to bother. We were taken back to the hotel under armed guard and told we were going to be accommodated by them. Then we were taken to a hall for a sort of meeting, conducted in Kurdish. There we met by chance my driver, a Kurd, and he said, "They don't know what to do with you." Then they took us to what must have been a sort of safe house and we were beginning to unpack, when in rushed the Head of Police and said, "It's all a big mistake, you're to come and stay with the Governor". So we packed again and we went up to the Governor's house, which was on a hill top overlooking the town. The Governor had been in situ only about two weeks. He was missing his family who hadn't joined him yet. We sat on the lawn, it was a lovely May evening with bright stars, drinking whisky, and the Governor's cook joined us. He'd been a cook with the British oil company and spoke some English and knew a lot of my oil company friends. So it was quite amusing. My wife, who was teetotal normally, thought we were drinking apple juice or something, but it was neat whisky, under the stars. The Governor was a very unhappy man waiting for his family to join him and he talked quite a lot.

We went away and toured the north, with fantastic mountains and rushing rivers and roads cut into the side of cliffs and we passed the alleged site of the battle of Gaugamela, Alexander the Great's victory over Darius, and then returned to Baghdad. Two weeks later the Governor was shot and killed by fellow Kurds as a quisling. We visited Iran from Baghdad and wanted to go to the Caspian but there was a landslide blocking the road and we got very behind. Hurrying on along a very twisty road my driver managed to crash one of the wings into the wall at the side. We managed to get to the hotel where we were staying, but had to leave the car for repair in Tehran, which was very sad for me because the only other car we had was not air-conditioned. So we had a rather hot summer.

Then I proposed a successor in 1977; Alec Stirling. He did have to face popular demonstrations. The embassy was besieged, there was a good deal of firing and a bullet

came through his office window and passed through the sleeve of his jacket without touching him. In his report to the office of what had happened he didn't mention that at all. He was very modest on that sort of thing. I had no problems of that kind. I used to go shooting black partridge with the Defence Attaché. Then they banned that and just to rub salt in the wound one of the ministers sent me a dozen black partridge that he'd shot. He was a funny fellow, who spoke very like Lord Hawhaw, such clear, good, pompous English. Another Iraqi I got to know very well was called al Ani. He was Under Secretary or Head of the Oil Department. He'd been educated in Germany and spoke good English and was definitely a technician and not a party official. We were beginning to make headway in trade, but we were not managing to sell armaments or aircraft. We wanted to sell the Hunter Hawk to the Iraqi air force, but we failed. We had "Catseye" Cunningham, the test pilot who worked for Hunters. He came and demonstrated it to the Iraqis and he got some quite useful intelligence from the Indians, who'd been training the Iraqi air force; particularly about their Russian Migs. I remember him telling me that the engine of the Mig only lasted for a ridiculously small number of hours before having to be changed. I can't vouch for the accuracy of that. We failed to sell anything to them in the way of armaments, which in hindsight was just as well. At the time we were instructed to do our best to sell everything. Apart from our Minister of Health I didn't have any Ministerial visits and certainly not any Royal Visits.

#### **DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY FCO 1977-1978 RHODESIA**

Then in 1977 in the spring I was posted back to London as Deputy Under-Secretary. David Owen was Foreign Secretary and his main interest at the time was Rhodesia. I remember my first interview with him; he said this was what he wanted me to concentrate on. He said, "I hope you're good. They say you are." He had a vision over Rhodesia. I went with him on a delegation when we met the Americans, Cy Vance, Kissinger having done his round and more or less promised money if they would settle. It was agreed that we would have a joint effort with the Americans and so I was pretty well nominated to be the main official to be involved with this and go out to southern Africa and stay there and get on with it. On the point of leaving I received quite an emotional letter from David Owen in his own hand, wishing me good luck. I met in Zambia the American who'd been nominated as my colleague, Steve Lowe, with whom I got on very well. We became very good friends. We went to Salisbury and met Ian Smith and the government. We held open house in the old High Commission house which we reopened again, and invited anybody black or white who wished to give us their views, to come and see us. Many did. We also met the leaders of the

opposition, the Africans. Nkomo was relatively easy to meet in Zambia. Mugabe was very much more elusive. When we arrived in Dar Es Salaam he'd gone to Mozambique and when we arrived in Mozambique he'd gone to Tanzania. We finally tracked him down and I remember my legal adviser, Henry Steel, who'd been involved in earlier negotiations in Geneva and knew some of these people said, when we were faced by Mugabe, Tekere, Tongagara and some others, in reply to my question written on my pad "who are these?" he wrote their names. Mugabe was very difficult at that time. Over the next eighteen months I met him several times and the last time I met him he said "Don't leave it so long next time", so we had managed to get some rapport. We met Bishop Muzurewa and a whole lot of active people on both black and white sides. Then we came home to report and went out again. We re-opened the British High Commissioner's house and we drew on the blocked accounts in the British High Commission's name in the banks in Salisbury to pay our way. The word that we had re-opened got around and the cook and butler and staff all came out of the woodwork to work for us again. We set up an office there, but the American thought he should distance himself slightly so lived in Meikles, the big hotel.

While I was doing this Lord Carver was nominated as Resident designate and he recruited some young officers, one of whom, Roger Wheeler (later General), married my secretary later. One of the joys of being in Salisbury was that we had no direct communication with London. We had a very primitive cyphering system and we had to send things via Pretoria. During that time there was Cy Vance, the American Secretary of State and Andy Young, who was very much on the side of the blacks. We had a meeting with him and with the blacks in Malta with Owen there and Carver. By that time we had worked out a document, a white paper with the constitution, because Britain had been drawing up constitutions for the colonies as they became independent, so that was relatively straight forward. But I remember when we were drafting it with the Americans, I flew over to Washington and we had a meeting, going through the draft and I didn't pick up, because I was tired from the flight and should have put off the meeting until the next day, so we allowed a phrase, "surrender of power", to go through. None of us picked that up, but it really gave the white Rhodesians a stick with which to beat us and reject the whole paper. Of course "surrender" in that case, didn't mean hands up and marching out, it meant handing over, but we should have used another phrase. The constitution we worked out pretty well survived through Lancaster House in 1979 with one major difference. We discussed a lot whether the President should be a "Constitutional President" which is very much in the British tradition, or an "Executive

President”, as it were in the French tradition. I thought, and put it to the Secretary of State, who agreed, that the executive president would be more easily understood by the blacks. The idea of a constitutional president is quite a sophisticated one and not readily accepted. But of course it was a constitutional president that the whites wanted. We put an executive president in the constitution and that was one of the major changes at the Lancaster House conference in 1979.

ML: Was that agreed?

JG: It was agreed at the Lancaster House Conference, but there was a time limit on changes to the constitution. Nothing could be changed for three or four years and the moment he was free to change the constitution Mugabe changed that power and took it for himself.

### **Islam**

That was my main preoccupation during the time I served in London. Somebody set up a little committee to consider the influence and power of Islam in the Middle East and elsewhere. Was it a growing threat? The committee came to the conclusion that it was not. But I remember Ivor Lucas, who was a very perceptive colleague who later became Ambassador in Muscat, objected. He said “I think you’re being too complacent”.

My work with Rhodesia came to an end when the covert group of rebels shot down a civilian Viscount in Rhodesia it became temporarily almost impossible to talk to the whites about a settlement. What we were aiming for was a settlement which would end the fighting and bring in “one man one vote” for both races. That was what was finally achieved in Lancaster House a year later. I think in the period after I stopped what changed was the South Africans were getting fed up with funding Ian Smith and Machel of Mozambique and the other African leaders were getting fed up with the burden of the Patriotic Front fighters and others who were based on their territory and who invited raids by the white Rhodesian forces. Machel, whom we met in the course of our travels round southern Africa, I found very impressive. If he said he would do something he did it. Nyrere was not very impressive in my view. He would say one thing in a meeting and then telephone the American Ambassador to say he’d had second thoughts. He was very tricky. Nkomo and Kaunda were fine; the latter would burst into tears on occasions. Dr Banda was alright. I think subsequently he proved not so good, but from my point of view he was agreeable to what we were trying to do.

ML: Banda was..?

JG: Malawi. Then Gaborone was a very nice place to be and they were sensible. On one trip we had an aeroplane at our disposal and Owen decided he must go to Leopoldville. We flew in without permission or anything and a jeep came along with a gun on it. We were not sure if it was going to shoot us up or welcome us, but it was alright, we talked, or Owen talked. Then he said, "Right! We've got to have somebody here." He looked around and picked on his political adviser and said, "You stay". He had no arrangements. I think the Belgian Ambassador, or maybe the French was very helpful and gave him money and everything, so he was able to stay, but I don't think he was able to do anything. He was certainly not happy to have been picked.

Owen was very difficult to work with. Office meetings would drag on and at the end of them you wouldn't really know what had been decided. Then the Private Secretary, Stephen Wall, would tell us what to do. We used to put up papers, "next steps in Rhodesia<sup>2</sup> or "whither Rhodesia?" as a sort of brief for the meeting or agenda. I remember Owen once tapping the paper and saying, "I haven't read this, but I don't agree with it". I suppose some Secretaries of State like the argument then the conclusion in a submission. Some like the conclusion, then the argument. Of course if you're busy that's the quicker way of doing it. I suppose he knew what our conclusions were without reading the argument.

When the Viscount was shot down I went into limbo. The PUS came up to me and said "We've got two posts coming up, for which we think you are qualified, and you've had a rough time, effectively living abroad without the perks as it were; Iran and Egypt. Which would you prefer or would you like to leave it to the Board?" Thinking that Michael Weir my good friend from MECAS days and colleague, who was the other candidate and had learnt Farsi in the RAF, would probably like Tehran, which would be my first choice, I said, "Leave it to the Board". The board decided on me for Tehran and Michael for Egypt. I have subsequently established through his widow, that he didn't bear a grudge. He was very happy and he enjoyed Egypt. He was newly married and had a small baby and Tehran would not have been all that convenient.

### **IRAN 1978 -1980**

Iran was in the process of blowing up. That was in the year of 1978. The cinema burning in Abadan, was it? Which was blamed on the Shah. The expulsion, at the Shah's request, of

Khomeini from Iraq to Paris, where he had much freer access to the press and everything, so that was a big error on the part of the Shah. And troubles were brewing, burning of cinemas and almost daily demonstrations of enormous numbers of people. On the 5th November 1978 our own embassy was occupied. The offices were burnt, particularly the commercial wing.

ML: Were you there then?

JG: No. I had been appointed. I was due to go and relieve Tony Parsons just before Christmas. But by that time it was quite clear that the Shah was going to have to leave Iran and so it was decided that rather than withdraw Tony in December, which might look like rats leaving a sinking ship, he should stay to see the Shah out. The Shah left on something like 14 January 1979 and Tony left a week later. I met him in London and I flew out on about 22 January. I was the only passenger on a Boeing 707 and I slept on the floor because I have never found those chairs all that comfortable. We had to land at Kuwait, because there was no fuel in Tehran. While we were in the air Tehran airport was closed. The crew were very cagey but I finally found out the airport was closed, so we had to stay in Kuwait and they went off. I had friends in Kuwait and I stayed with the Ambassador. I was getting a bit desperate. I was beginning to think I had better hire a dhow and go by sea to Bushire or somewhere and hire a donkey. But the airport opened again in a week's time and I arrived on 31 January 1979, a fortnight after the Shah had left. As I was driven from the airport my first impression was how little traffic there was because there was a shortage of fuel due to a strike in the oil fields and how orderly the people were. The Iranians queuing for cooking oil would bring a can or a bucket and thread a rope through the handle so they had a place in the queue. Then they could go away and go about their business and as the oil supplies came in your bucket moved up the queue. They were very well organised and the streets were pretty well deserted.

That evening my staff had organised a call on the Minister of Foreign Affairs and there was a tank at the gate and he said, as I handed in a copy of my credentials, "You do not need to wait. You can operate straight away," which was a fairly common courtesy elsewhere. That was a Wednesday, and then on the Thursday I called on the Prime Minister, who was also guarded by a tank at the door. He was Bakhtiar, the Prime Minister nominated by the Shah before he left and he said that they had no money and they would have to cancel the defence sales, the tanks and the armoured fighting vehicles and so on. Then on the Friday my



Information Officer, Gordon Pirie, gave a lunch at which there were various journalists present for me to meet. Everything seemed reasonably quiet though nobody knew how it was going to develop. Well it developed that night with a riot in the barracks involving the technical grades of the air force and the Imperial Guard. The air force men managed to break into the armoury and they acquired weapons and then they began to spread in the streets, going from police station to police station, at each one capturing arms. Friday was the weekend. On Saturday I had an appointment with the number two at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and because there were riots and barricades on the streets, my driver, who lived in the upper compound in Tehran Gulhak about six miles away, hadn't been able to get down. So I set off for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on foot. In the streets there were jeeps rushing to and fro with white bloodstained bandages, firing in the air. I had arrived the previous Wednesday and didn't really know my way, so I stopped and asked a protestor, who was very polite and said "it's the second on the right". I got to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and there was a tank and this chap Zelli was in a very reflective mood. He said, "We've had it too good. There was bound to be a revolt against our prosperity." He, poor fellow, was later arrested, but I think he survived. So I got back to my office. That was the 10th February. On the Sunday we had an armed mob at the gate. We had a platoon of the army to protect us, but the mob was trying to talk them over. I agreed to let in two chaps, a man and his bodyguard. He was called Lahouti. He became quite well known as an Imam and a leader of the Revolutionary Guards. He came in and we talked and I got him to sign a bit of paper, for what it was worth, to stick on the gate saying that foreign embassies were sacrosanct and shouldn't be attacked. By which time the mob had converted the platoon and they left borrowing bits of civilian clothing. Actually the army command had already given in. I got the house staff to bring over tea for Lahouti and his bodyguard and the bodyguard kept saying, "Have you any bullets? I need bullets; I've run out of bullets."

Before that we had on 6 February received a letter from Bakhtiar's government cancelling, or asking us to suspend the defence sales. We had taken that as cancellation but it all needed negotiations to tie things up and arranged because with big contracts you cannot just cancel it like that. My staff had been in touch with the opposition and with Bazourgan and I had called on Bazourgan, who at that time was working from an office above Air France. He said he had to cut the meeting short because he had another appointment and that other meeting was with Khomeini, who appointed him as Prime Minister. So we had theoretically two prime ministers, one "controlling" theoretically the security forces and the other the

economy. The oil workers and civil service were all on strike. Then after the fighting broke out on 9 and 10 February and the army ordered the troops to go back to barracks, Bazourgan took over and Bakhtiar went underground allegedly disguised as a woman and fled eventually to Paris. The Shah being in Egypt. Even with the new government, the major point to be settled for us and for the Americans was the defence sales. So a lot work went into that in the spring of 1979 and it was going along alright when in November the “students” following the line of the Imam invaded and took over the American embassy. So all bets were off and we stopped talking about defence sales.

But before that, and this is the story I heard from one of our visitors at that time from the MoD for the defence sales talks. They were staying with us and we had given a little dinner party for them and the American equivalent. The Americans had had to go home at about 9 o'clock because of the curfew and we were sitting on a lovely spring night with the windows open when we heard a burst of machine gun fire. One of our visitors said, “I would have been under the table”. But we were sitting quite quietly and Meg, my then wife, who died, got up and said, “Shall I draw the curtains?” We knew that they were not firing at us. Stray bullets occasionally landed on people’s patios.

ML: Did you see that film Argo about the Americans who were helped by the Canadians and were eventually smuggled out?

JG: Yes indeed. It annoyed me a lot. Because one moment it said the Brits and the New Zealanders turned the six who were not caught away. In fact I had been back in London for a Heads of Mission meeting and the morning I was due to talk to the meeting about Iran and the revolution I got a summons to the Permanent Under Secretary, who said, “We want you to leave your conference and come and sit in on the Lancaster House Rhodesia talks, because you know the people and the chap, Tony Duff, whom you handed over to eighteen months ago has had to go into hospital for an urgent operation.” So I was still in London when the American embassy was occupied on 4 November. On that day the American Chargé, Bruce Laingen, was in the Foreign Ministry and he’d been told that he couldn’t be protected if he went out. He rang and managed to get hold of the Head of Chancery, David Miers and say there are five or six Americans loose in Tehran not in the embassy that has been occupied, can you rescue them? Two of our staff who were in Gulhak, Martin Williams and Gordon Pirie, set out to look for these Americans. They didn’t have very clear directions to where they were. At one moment Martin stopped and used a public telephone to ask for advice.

But he did find them and drove them up to Gulhak, the upper compound. Gave them dinner, put them in a next door house, which happened to be empty and where his wife had made up the beds. That was on the 5th November. While it was going on our own embassy was occupied again. The chaps came over the wall at six in the evening and said they were looking for arms. They gathered all the families and staff who were living in the lower compound together in one house and searched the offices and insisted on David Miers, who was there, opening the registry, where two of the staff had been burning papers and then they left about 11 PM. No one really knows why they came or why they left. But Martin and Gordon looked after these Americans and in the night a group came looking for them to search the compound. They managed to be dissuaded from coming in by the Pakistani Head Guard. All the lights had been put out so he said, "There is nobody there"; which was very noble of him. In the morning it was mutually agreed that the British embassy was not the safest place for the Americans and so they were driven by Martin to another house, which one of them knew, and the two weeks later Martin drove them to the Canadian embassy where they stayed for a matter of weeks until mid- January.

When our embassy was occupied I sent a note to Lord Carrington, who was Foreign Secretary, and it crossed with a note from him. I said I want to go back and he said you will want to go back. So back I went and got there on Wednesday 7th, I think. I knew where the Americans were, but I didn't want to know any more. The less I knew the less I could give away. The Canadian Ambassador and New Zealand Ambassador came to me at one point and said they had rented a house for these Americans and they wanted to furnish it and could they borrow our truck to furnish it. I agreed and said I could do better. I could provide it with bogus number plates. That was a big error, because the number plates had been provided by Savak and they had them on their record. It worked for the truck, but the Canadian Defence Attaché borrowed them and he was nearly caught. He just had to put his foot down and drive.

Later the Canadian and New Zealand Ambassadors came and said that the landlord of the house they had rented for the six Americans wanted to see the passport of the fictitious British business man in whose name they had taken it. This was much trickier. Very much against my better judgment, but not wishing to give the Americans and Canadians away I agreed to issue a letter to the effect that this passport, the property of the British Government, was in our hands and was not for release. With the successful extraction of the Americans the passport luckily ceased to be an issue. The Defence Attaché came to me and

said he had a light machine gun, which had come to him legally for demonstration to the Shah's army, but which now was an embarrassment. The Foreign Office had refused to allow it to be sent home by the diplomatic bag. We agreed that in the circumstances the only thing to be done was to bury it. I expect it's still there.

Then the Papal Pro-Nuncio came to me and said he'd got a non-confidential diplomatic bag that the American driver had fetched from the airport, while the embassy was being occupied. He'd put the bag in a ditch. Then he'd thought better and given it to the Pro-Nuncio. So he came to me and asked what he should he do with this diplomatic bag? Would I take it over? So I said yes and luckily the Iranian driver got cold feet and handed it over to the Iranians. It was a non-confidential bag, so probably just private letters. So I don't think it was serious. But what was serious was that the students who were occupying the embassy were putting together pieces of shredded papers from which they got a lot of names of Iranians who'd been regarded by the Americans as cooperative and friendly and so on. So that in a way shifted the priority on security grounds. Protecting Iranians was more important than protecting secrets we did not have.

My memories then are that the EU Ambassadors met every day to consider what instructions we had, what we should do and what information we had and that was very helpful. The German Ambassador had very good contacts. A lot of the revolutionary Imams had been trained in Germany. The Americans, of course, wanted sanctions. The British Government were a bit reluctant. The Bank of England were very reluctant to freeze assets and I think I thought it wouldn't do any good anyway, they'd be quite impervious to sanctions. I think over the long term it has worked in recent years, but I think at that time in the short term it wouldn't have made any difference. Then there is the question whether the Ayatollah Khomeini had actually sanctioned it or thought it up? Was it his initiative, this occupation? I think we subsequently settled on the view that he hadn't been involved in advance, but had given his blessing afterwards, particularly when he saw it was hitting a favourable note in public opinion.

My wife managed to get one of the guards to take in a sewing kit to one of the American women held. When they were released her mother wrote and said how grateful she had been for that. I and several other western ambassadors were able to visit the Chargé d'Affaires and his two mates who were held in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They were technically not prevented from leaving, but told they couldn't be protected if they did leave. So there they

lived in a ballroom. Again, my wife sent in a little set of water colours and I know that got used as we got a Christmas card from Bruce Laingen and one of his paintings. We were able to take them things and we took messages. Every now and then the press got wind of what was going on. The head of the Protocol Department was a brave man and let us go in with these things, but when the press got hold of it he had to stop it temporarily and then start again.

In the context of the occupation of the American embassy, at one point I managed to get an appointment to see Ayatollah Beheshti who was not holding an official position, but was generally thought among the diplomatic community to be the power behind the throne. He was well educated, in Germany I think, and he was a powerful figure. I thought this was an ideal opportunity to try to bring home to the Iranian authorities the appalling situation of their occupation of the American embassy: their failure to eject the alleged students who were occupying it. I said to Beheshti that the Americans were really angry and insulted and he merely shook his head and said, "If we have a third World war, we'll go to heaven."

### **American rescue attempt**

Among ourselves in the diplomatic corps we all considered the possibilities of a rescue attempt, without being any way privy to American thinking or planning on that. After my meeting with Beheshti in the morning I came back and found a telegram from the Foreign Secretary, Lord Carrington, telling me and all my UK staff and dependents to come home at once. It was a total surprise. It seemed to me a blue sky. Nothing too untoward on the horizon. But on the following day, the Tuesday we packed up and went. We'd been more or less living with suitcases ready to go, in case something blew up. On the Tuesday evening I went into the Foreign Office and the Private Office said they did not know why I had been summoned back. The PUS said, "I don't know why you've been called back." And the Private Office said the Secretary of State was too busy to see me. The same thing happened on the Wednesday and on the Thursday. And the Thursday night the Americans tried their rescue attempt which ended disastrously for them. On the Friday Lord Carrington saw me and said, "Right, now you can go home". He explained that the previous Sunday Cy Vance, the American Secretary of State, had flown over to London and had told the Prime Minister and himself of the American planned rescue operation and sworn them to absolute secrecy. Carrington said that he reckoned that if it was successful, our embassy might well be taken in lieu, so he thought it was wiser to bring all the UK staff home. And then, rather than tell me

a lie, because he could not give me the true reason, he thought it better not to see me. So back I went on the Friday or the Saturday and on the Saturday Beheshti went on Iranian television and said, “The British Ambassador warned me”, which illustrates the dangers of speaking without instructions and without full knowledge.

### **Iranian Embassy siege in London**

Then, of course there was the occupation by Iranian dissidents of the Iranian embassy in London. There again, we in Tehran calculated that if it went wrong we might well be taken by an angry mob in revenge. So we operated from a flat for a day or two in Tehran and then I was summoned back to London, allegedly to give advice to the COBRA meeting in the COBRA room. COBRA was at that time rather a new idea. So back I went to London. I arrived and didn't find any real role to play. I wasn't consulted about the wisdom or otherwise of the rescue attempt by the SAS. Probably just as well. But when it was a success I was summoned and told to telephone the Foreign Minister in Tehran and tell him that we had got his staff out without casualties. So then again I went back to Tehran and we were rather blue eyed boys after that. A small mob arrived at the gate. A friendly mob! I went to the gate to see them and I was presented with a bunch of flowers. It didn't last, I'm afraid to say.

One or two other memories: when I first arrived there, a man called Qotbzadeh, who later became Foreign Minister, was Minister for Culture and radio and broadcasting. Doing my rounds of the ministers under Khomeini I called on Qotbzadeh and knowing that the Shah had always complained bitterly about the BBC, that it favoured Khomeini, I thought here at least I will find somebody who has a good word to say for the BBC. The first thing that Qotbzadeh said was, “The BBC favoured the Shah!” So I decided that they must have got it just about right.

### **Anglican Church in Iran**

Then tragic events began to develop over the Anglican Church in Iran. The bishop was an Iranian, who had as a boy converted to Christianity and had married the daughter of the Anglican bishop, who at that time had been British. Hassan Dehqani-Tafti and Margaret, his wife. They were in bed in their house in Isfahan when some thugs burst in on them in the early morning and sprayed the bed with machine gun fire. Margaret threw herself over her husband and got a bullet through the arm. There were eight bullets through the Bishop's

pillow and miraculously none of them hit him. His son, who had been brought up as a Christian and had been at Oxford came back to Tehran and had a job and was driving back from work when another car drove up and edged him into the ditch and they shot and killed him. So the Bishop who was attending an Anglican conference in Cyprus was advised not to go back. So he never went back to Tehran. He was in exile in Britain, where the Bishop of Winchester appointed him as suffragan Bishop of Basingstoke. Years later the Winchester Cathedral clergy met and decided that Hassan could be buried in the cemetery of the Cathedral. The Dean wrote to him and gave him this news and he replied, "I can't wait!"

I left Tehran in June 1980, in good order as it were, having proposed a successor and leaving Arthur Wyatt in charge. By that time the UK embassy staff was down to about five or six. My predecessor, Tony Parsons, had told me on my visit to London in April that the powers that be thought I was too highly paid to be in charge of only 6 UK staff. I protested but it was no good. Soon after I left and started work in London as DUS the three church workers were taken prisoner, eventually to be released after Terry Waite came in and mediated. One of them, Jean Wadell, had earlier been attacked in her flat, tied to her bed and shot through the stomach and left, effectively, to die. She would have died but was saved by the heroic nursing of Margaret Dehqani and later when she had recovered she was one of the three who were held prisoner for a time.

By the time I left we had totally reversed the security instructions as to papers. We kept two running files, one of which was carried by the Archivist and one I carried around. They were housed in boxes with a self-destruct handle, should it be needed. The running files ran to about a month's papers. This was really a precaution taken in the light of what had happened in the American embassy, where the "students" had pieced together shredded documents, so it seemed to us that the fewer documents we kept the better.

I achieved one small but important victory over the administration. I learnt belatedly that when an officer's wife was evacuated on the ambassador's order, he was immediately regarded as "unaccompanied" and his overseas allowance was cut, just at the time that he had to meet the extra cost of housing his family in the UK. I was appalled and argued that this ruling would put an unfair burden on an ambassador who would have to weigh the risks of the situation against the financial loss to his staff. I am glad to say that my arguments won and staff received compensation.

## **DUS FCO 1980 -1982**

I got back to London and there I was appointed Deputy Under Secretary with oversight of the Middle East, Afghanistan and Iran. As far as we were concerned the Iranian situation came to a head in August, following a riot by the Iranian students in London against the American embassy. Our police had arrested about eighty rioters. These all in court gave their name as Mohammed or Ahmed, which doesn't get you much further, and some went on hunger strike. I was very worried that, as a result of the hunger strike, one or more might die in our hands. You can never tell with a hunger strike. If it is strict death comes fairly quickly. If it's orange juice and water it can carry on. The Minister of Foreign Affairs in Tehran, by that time Qotbzadeh, warned our Chargé, Arthur Wyatt, that our embassy couldn't be protected by the Iranian government. So I went to the Home Office and asked if they couldn't just deport these students, who'd been arrested. The Home Office said, no, they couldn't do that. It would raise a great storm by the Human Rights movements and they couldn't, under the law, just deport them like that. The Minister whom I saw was called Tim Raison, whom I had known for quite a long time, from school. So I went back in August to the Minister on duty, Ian Gilmour whom I had been with in the army, and recommended that we should pull our staff out. I think I made a big error. I suggested we should put our relations under the care of the Swedish embassy. I think with hindsight I should have just recommended that our staff should have come out, but remained ready to go back when it all cooled down. I thought it would be no great problem, but when it came to the point, none of the arrested students died and the thing blew over as far as we in London were concerned. But when we tried to get our staff back the Iranians, scenting a conspiracy on our part, refused to allow them back. So we were stuck with a British Interests section in the Swedish embassy that lasted for several years. It was not a very clever thing to have managed to do.

## **Terry Waite**

For me as Under Secretary in London Iran was a major worry. Terry Waite, whom I mentioned, earlier was sent out by the Archbishop of Canterbury to try to have the three church workers released. I remember saying to him, "We will give you all the support that you would like, but my advice would be outwardly to be totally independent of the British Government. I think that did help him.



## Arms exports

The Soviet Union was in Afghanistan at the time. In September 1980, I having been in office about three months, Iraq attacked Iran and, to begin with had quite a big military success sweeping across Ahwaz the Arab populated area and the issue of supplying arms to both sides came up. The Iranians had paid for one ship, the “Kharg”, which we were building for them. It was a sort of landing support ship. We had not broken relations all this time despite the failure to get our Embassy staff back to Tehran, and I remember telling the Iranian Chargé that we couldn’t release the Kharg unless we got a letter, an assurance from the Iranian government that the ship would not be used except for civilian operations. This was a bit of a bluff in a way. It was not really a warship, but it was no doubt armed and it was designed for support of military landing operations, so it would have come in handy when, in the course of the war the Iranians landed at Fao, the Fao peninsula in southern Iraq. Various points came up. I remember an application to export engines for Jaguar cars to Iran. But it turned out that Jaguar engines were the power for Scorpion armoured fighting vehicles.

ML: And Chieftain Tanks, I believe.

JG: We stopped that. The Iranians had suspended, effectively cancelled, all their military contracts and when they were at war with Iraq they wanted them revived. And we said “You can’t do that”. And anyway now you are at war and we are neutral so we can’t supply them. So they did not press the tanks, but an application came up from the Department for the export of I do not know how many firing pins. Firing pins are not lethal weapons they argued and recommended approval, but I said, “You can’t fire a gun without a firing pin”, so we didn’t supply them. I was not aware that we were supplying anything to Iraq. If we were I think it came later. There was later the Scott enquiry into the export of machine tools to make weapons.

ML: But that was after the end of the fighting between Iran and Iraq.

JG: That was after the armistice.

## Arab / Israel

As always, the Arab / Israel issue was very much top of the agenda and I reasoned that one of the obstacles to getting the two sides to talk to each other was the refusal of the PLO under Arafat to recognise Israel as a state. And I worked out a way that might finesse that by

getting the PLO to say, "If we reach an agreement, we will honour it", which effectively would mean recognition of the other party, without actually saying it in advance as a precondition. Soon after I had taken over in the summer of 1980, I planned a trip round the Middle East in November / December, starting in Lebanon with a view to talking to the Lebanese but also trying to get in touch with Arafat, who was based there. Then I was going on to Syria, Jordan and Israel, all part of my parish. I got to Beirut and there the embassy, Ben Strachan, I think it was who was Ambassador, had arranged a meeting (very cloak and dagger. I was to go somewhere at 10 o'clock at night where I was to be picked up and taken somewhere else) and I ended up talking to Arafat. I put my idea to him, what I called "conditional recognition". He said that recognition was the only card he had and he couldn't play it in advance. I said, "I'm not asking you to play it in advance. But unless you show that you have the card in your hand at the end of a successful negotiation, you won't be in the game. The Israelis won't talk to you unless it is clear that if agreement can be reached it will involve recognition". He said "No, it's too difficult". I think he was frightened of a possible assassination. Then I went on to Syria and had talks with the junior Minister of Foreign Affairs and then to Jordan and in Jordan I got a telegram that my father had died, so I had to cut short my tour and fly home. As I was booked to fly from Israel I had to cross the Jordan River. In those days you had to get out of your car on the Jordan side and walk across the Allenby Bridge carrying your suitcase and be picked up by a car on the other side.

I might add that my conditional recognition card with Arafat had been very much cooked up with my American opposite number. A man called Nick Veliotis, who later became American Ambassador to Egypt. He was in favour of anything to get it moving, but what with Arafat rejecting it out of hand and then in the summer of 1981 Israel invaded Lebanon, so really all bets were off for the time being.

### **Afghanistan**

The other issue we were all facing was the Soviet war in Afghanistan. There again it seemed to me that one had to try to give the Russians a means of escape. It was quite clear that the war was costing them and unpopular and they would want to get out if they could without too much loss of face. I think it must have been in the Spring of 1981, Lord Carrington went to Moscow for talks and put this idea forward how to give them an exit.

ML: And what was the plan? Can you remember?

JG: I can't remember the details, I'm afraid. It went to Ministers and had been approved as an idea.

### **NATO 1982 - 1986**

Then in the late autumn of 1981 the Office came to me and said they wanted me to be a candidate to go as Permanent Representative on the North Atlantic Council in Brussels. I remember saying that surely I had only been in the post about a year and if we were at all serious about the Middle East, Arab / Israel and all that, it was too soon to move me. I subsequently discovered that it was part of an inter-departmental battle between the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Defence. They had also put up a candidate to succeed Sir Clive Rose. The Foreign Office wanted to keep that post in their hands and I was a handy possible candidate. My opponent, or rival, was Michael Quinlan, a very distinguished civil servant in the Ministry of Defence, who had served in the delegation in Brussels, and knew the scene very well. He was a highly qualified candidate for the job. In response to my plea that it was too early to move me Clive Rose was asked to extend his tour for six months beyond his retirement age and as a result I went to Brussels in February 1982.

### **The Falklands War**

Very soon after I arrived the Argentines invaded the Falklands. While NATO, of course, was not directly involved almost all our military assets were assigned to NATO, so we had to clear their withdrawal to deal with the Falklands situation. We had no problem, because at the time it did not seem as though the land threat was any serious worry. We met in the Council quite often and it was discussed in general terms. Luns, the Secretary General, was very much on our side. The French were quite difficult, though they were helping us with training the Harriers on the way south to the Falklands. They were also helping the Argentines with the Super Etendard aircraft and with the Exocet missiles.

ML: They didn't actually supply more while the war was on did they? They had already supplied them.

JG: I don't think they supplied more, but they did supply technicians to see that they were being properly maintained and properly installed. But I am not an expert on that side of it and that to some extent is hearsay as far as I am concerned.

ML: I was in Libya and Qadafi, of course, wanted to supply the Argentines, but they had some maritime Exocets, which were not much use to them. They needed the air launched ones.

JG: It is certainly true that the French air force laid on exercises with our aircraft going south as they passed by on the little carriers. The French did exercises with the Harriers as preparation for dealing with the Argentine French aircraft. The French had been very clever. They were supplying arms to Iraq and at the time it was even rumoured that they were supplying pilots to fly them. But I do not know about that. I remember that at the end of the Falklands war, Luns, the Secretary General, had been very helpful to us and so we used to leave it to him to sum up the discussions in the Council. This got round the problem of a formal vote with the French and some others no doubt finding it difficult to support NATO positions by consensus. I remember Luns saying to the Council, "Just imagine if the Russians had sailed a fleet from Vladivostok and carried out an opposed landing on a small island off New Zealand how gloomy we would be about such a display of the Soviet Union's ability to project power five or six thousand miles away."

ML: Yes. It certainly did a lot for British street credibility. You must have basked a bit in the reflected glory of that victory.

JG: I think we did really. Then the time came for Joe Luns who'd been a great friend for our country to leave. I think probably he left it too late really because people were getting a bit bored with him. So who to take over? And by that time of course Lord Carrington, who had resigned as Foreign Secretary over the Falklands business, was an obvious candidate. We had to try and persuade him. Not too difficult. He was bored with the commercial world. He was working with Weinstock, who really ran it all. I remember going over to see him at his house in London and he said, "Would I have to live in Brussels?" And I said, "Yes, I think as the Secretary General you would have to live in Brussels, but you could come home for weekends." In the event that's what he did. He did not like the house Luns had had and NATO found another house for him and spent some money on doing it up. I was in a rather difficult position, because my instructions from the Foreign Office were not to spend more than a minimal amount of money on the new house. Peter Carrington, from his weekends at home when he would meet the Prime Minister at Chequers or wherever, would return and say, "The Boss tells me I can have anything I want". So I had to square that circle. Needless to say, he was a tremendous success as Secretary General.

## NATO Exercises

Subsequently NATO had regular exercises; sometimes involving movement of troops; sometimes paper exercises. The Council would meet and discuss tactics and strategy. And one exercise that has been in the press more recently was called Able Archer. It appears that at the time the Soviet Union seriously took it as a possible bluff, developing into an attack on them. I wasn't aware of that at the time.

ML: What would the date of that been?

JG: That could have been about 1984 or possibly 1985.

ML: Because I was the NATO Desk Officer a bit later I think and I think we did the last one of those exercises, which assumed a Russian attack on the West and reached the point where SACEUR had notionally asked for nuclear release and then whole thing had to be stopped because, as I understand it, the Italians had got so worried that [if] this would leak that we had even in theory used tactical nuclear weapons, that it all left the realm of make believe and started to get into the real world.

JG: The subsequent references to that sort of scenario in the press may relate to that, which I think was after my time.

ML: That would have been a bit later, probably about 1988.

JG: We were aware that the Russians were taking it more seriously than we were. But we were considering nuclear release.

ML: It was thought to be the only way to stop the Russian hordes wasn't it?

JG: I remember the deployment of INF [Intermediate Nuclear Forces] was a big issue for Governments at home, the Greenham Common time. The Defence Secretaries were first of all John Nott, at the time of the Falklands, and then Michael Heseltine and the Foreign Secretary too, used to come over for meetings. SACEUR, who was Bernie Rogers and SACLANC and others were continually pressing governments to spend more on military resources and I remember, Schmidt, the German, responding to SACEUR and saying, "I can put a million men into the field in a fortnight and remember we went to the gates of Moscow with fewer than a million!"

Another issue that came up during my time was SDI, the Strategic Defence Initiative, first proposed by the US at a secret briefing of the Council. I remember arguing that if a successful defence against strategic nuclear weapons could be developed it would have the perceived effect of nullifying the deterrence and make conventional war once again an option. Mrs Thatcher was able on a visit to Washington to persuade President Reagan to agree conditions that met our concerns on this score. The process illustrated one problem: that the US tended often to equate briefing with consultation. As the matter was usually sprung on us in the Council with no prior opportunity for other member governments to consider or give instructions, the procedure was not very satisfactory. That criticism apart, relations among the Permanent Representatives were warm and friendly despite occasional problems and even despite the local issues that caused relations between Greece and Turkey so much difficulty. It helped that the Greek and Turkish representatives were good friends.

NATO was much smaller then of course. It was before the Berlin wall came down. But Spain joined. There was quite a tricky negotiation on the terms on which they should join. And of course that brought in Gibraltar. I left in the summer of 1986 on my 60th birthday. I had had some qualms about going to NATO, because I had difficulty, from the outside, with the philosophy of Deterrence. But I found that it actually did make sense, and in my view, worked. Later on when both India and Pakistan developed nuclear weapons I remember a conversation with Michael Quinlan, who was a great expert on these matters, suggesting that the hostilities between Pakistan and India had not developed into a war because both sides were deterred by the possibility of a nuclear strike and he agreed.

### **A Diplomatic Service Spouse**

Looking back I was extraordinarily lucky in my wife Meg, who died later in 1991 after a car accident. I think in Baghdad and Tehran and the NATO Delegation we ran reasonably happy missions and she played an enormous role in that. I remember in Tehran she arrived two or three days after me and then it all blew up and I decided we should evacuate dependents and a lot of the staff too, and she made no difficulty over that, though much unkindly criticised by my predecessor's wife, Sheila Parsons. I certainly took the view that it wouldn't be reasonable to ask other members of the staff to evacuate their wives and not evacuate my own. So she went away about a fortnight after she got to Tehran, the earliest we could get permission for the RAF aircraft to come in. But then she came back in April and we didn't need to evacuate staff in quite the same way later. I remember her coolness when there was

shooting in Tehran. In Kuwait she developed a friendship with a Kuwaiti family, with a British wife who had a daughter with Downs Syndrome and the Kuwaiti and Meg brought about a movement to persuade the Kuwaiti government, who had money running out of their ears, to do more for disabled children. That was one success. Then in Brussels she encouraged the hospice movement. She worked with a Belgian woman and brought pressure on the government and I think the hospice movement took off from there. Years later when I was at Ditchley, some months before her car accident, I said, "I've taken you to some pretty awful places", I had Benghazi in mind, and her only reply was, "They're certainly places I wouldn't have gone to otherwise".

ML: Well, thank you very much. [The recording ends here.]