

Memoirs of L.A. Hill

Part 1

Youth

War

Nurnberg Trial

Chapter 1: Early days in Athens and Constantinople

I was born on Christmas Eve, but my birthday is 6 January. How come? Well, I was born in Athens, and at that time the Greeks still used the Gregorian calendar, which was 13 days behind the Julian one, which we used. It also meant that I was born in 1917 according to the Greek reckoning of that time, but in 1918 by the British one. I was duly registered in the British Consulate at the Piraeus as having been born on 6 January 1918.

My father's mother's family had lived in Turkey for over 100 years. They were British, and sent each generation of boys back to England for their education before they returned to Smyrna, and later Constantinople, to enter the family importing and exporting business, J. W. Whittall and Sons. My paternal grandfather had gone out to Turkey as manager of the Glamorgan Coal Company, had met my paternal grandmother, and married her when she was still only 14. First my father was born of the union, and after him another son, who died at the age of ten, and three daughters.

My father went to Cheltenham College and then what is now Imperial College, University of London, after which he was found a job as manager of the Standard Oil Company in Macedonia, which was then still Turkish. As a result of the Balkan wars of 1911-12, however, he found himself working in Greece.

When the war broke out in 1914, the Americans were still neutrals, and therefore the Standard Oil Company had no compunction about supplying German U-boats in the Eastern Mediterranean with fuel. As my father did not feel he could do this, he resigned and joined British Intelligence in Greece, with the job of collecting information about the whereabouts of German U-boats, and preventing them getting fuel. His chief was Compton Mackenzie, the famous author and later Governor-General of Canada, and my father was given the rank of Lieutenant, RNVR, as a cover for his activities. He was so ignorant of things naval that, when he was in Malta on official business he had no idea what to do when he passed an admiral in the street; but on the way to Malta in a flat-bottomed naval vessel, he was the only one not to get seasick when they ran into rough weather.

My mother was Greek, but she was born in Leipzig in Germany, and brought up there during her early years, before moving to Athens with her parents, brothers and sisters. Her family had been fur merchants in Germany for generations, but originally came from Arcady in the Peloponnesus. When my mother's father died, he left all his children with good properties in key positions in Athens, my mother getting a substantial block of shops and flats in Odos Ermou (Hermes Street), which runs down from the middle of Constitution Square, and is the equivalent of Oxford Street or Bond Street in London.

* Mother and her siblings used to do the Grand Tour of Europe quite often in the winter. They relied on Greek to allow them to exchange personal remarks about people they met abroad without being understood, but once they had a nasty shock when a very Teutonic-looking gentleman they had been commenting on in a tram said to them in perfect Greek as he was getting off, 'Goodbye, ladies and gentlemen. Please give my regards to our motherland when you return.'

Rationing was tight in Greece at the time, and my ration-card, entitling me to an adult's ration right from the beginning, came in useful. Born in a period of food-shortage I came to know starvation at an early age owing to the stupidity of a doctor, who persuaded my mother to give me quite inadequate food during my early months. Many years later, when the spectre of starvation renewed its acquaintance with me, I felt it as an old and sinister enemy, which I had to meet with great determination and conscious effort if it was not to drive me into a panic and make me lose my self-mastery. I can still remember crying lustily as a baby when I smelt my Nestlé's milk heating on the nursery stove.

In spite of the misguided doctor's efforts, I was a sturdy baby, and whenever I met my Greek first cousins in the Royal Park in Athens, had to be prevented from doing them bodily harm by over-boisterous games. Their mother, my aunt Lily, found me an impossibly enthusiastic chatterbox, and had to beg my mother to keep me away from her.

For the first few years of my life, I was looked after by 'Dada', a Greek nurse from the Aegean island of Siphnos. She was a very good, kindly soul, deeply attached to me, whom she called her 'pasha', and later to my brother Dick, who was born 19 months after me. Because she was uneducated, she was perfectly able to identify with the interests and feelings of small children, and had infinite patience with us, enjoying the things we enjoyed - quite the opposite of my well-educated and highly sophisticated mother and Aunt Lily, who were bored to distraction by us.

Shortly after I was born we moved from Odos Pindarou, where I had been born, to my mother's house in Hermes Street, quite close to the royal palace. We children occupied the top floor, and there Dada sang us the haunting island lullabies which have left me emotionally very responsive to Near Eastern and Indian music.

For many years I believed that Greek music had been taken to India by Alexander the Great during his Asian conquests. It was not till 1959 that I learnt better, when I shared a sleeping compartment in the train from Lucknow to Delhi with the great sitar player, Ravi Shankar. He explained to me that it was Alexander's army that had taken Indian music to Greece, not vice versa.

The war having ended, my father ceased to be a lieutenant RNVR, and went to Constantinople to succeed his father as manager of the Glamorgan Coal Company there. We were now on

family ground among the Whittalls, La Fontaines etc who formed an enormous clan, living mostly in a big family enclave on the Asiatic side opposite Constantinople, which centred on the magnificent house of my great-grandmother, Lady Whittall. We occupied my grandmother's house, which was at the entrance to the enclave, with Great-Uncle Kenny's house opposite us across the drive, and numerous other great-uncles, great-aunts and cousins further down.

Sir James Whittall, my great-grandfather, was already dead. He had had the greatest respect for the Turks, always saying that they were nature's gentlemen, whose word could be trusted absolutely. They tended to be country gentlemen, despising trade and administration, which they left to their Greek, Jewish and Armenian minorities. My father always said that a Jew could outwit several Greeks, but that an Armenian could do the same to any number of Jews.

Grandmamma, as we called my great-grandmother, was small, but a lady of great spirit. During the revolution against the Sultan of Turkey, a vizier of his took refuge in Grandmamma's house, and when the police came to arrest him, she went out, bristling in every one of her 62 inches, and sent them away with a flea in their ear. The vizier later managed to escape by boat from the bottom of Grandmamma's garden.

One of Grandmamma's servants was an enormous, very

black negro, who had been a eunuch in a harem before the Revolution.

One of my earliest memories of Moda, where our family enclave was, is of the Allied occupation of Turkey after World War I. I remember seeing British troops marching along the streets of Moda and down to the pier; and once my British flapper aunts took me along the Bosphorus for a couple of days to visit the battleship, HMS 'Iron Duke'. I remember that, for the first time in my life, I became conscious of being British, and felt an enormous pride in belonging to a country which had a ship like that. Ever since that time, British power, both naval and of other kinds, has declined more and more, to my great chagrin.

My brother Derek was born in Moda in February, 1922. Dick and I were told that the angels were bringing us another brother, so we put out some toy bricks, which we treasured highly, to give them. Our first sight of Derek was disappointing; he looked quite black.

The Greco-Turkish war and Smyrna massacre of 1922 drove us back to Athens for a time. Again we stayed in the house in Hermes Street, but my memories of this stay are much clearer. Our top floor nursery suite had a terrace with a view on to the Acropolis not far away, and a low, mysterious barred window through which one could see empty, acrid-smelling wine bottles and some fascinating little blocks of wood let into one of the walls, which, to our fertile imaginations,

were doors leading to the abode of the elves.

We were by now speaking Greek much better than English, so an English governess, Miss Simpson, arrived somewhere about this time to supplement Dada, who had come back to look after Derek. Simmie, as she was generally called, was thin, pinched and much too crushingly restrictive. Among the practices she introduced were prayers. Every evening we had to kneel beside our beds and pray for Mummy and Daddy, Granny and Grandfather and so on, finishing with 'the poor Russians'. I was thus introduced at an early age to the sufferings of the people of the USSR under Lenin, Stalin etc. Later, when we had a Russian emigré as tutor, I learnt more about the atrocities, so was not at all surprised to learn, much later in my life, that Lenin and Stalin had been responsible for the deaths of far more of their citizens than the number of Jews, gypsies etc. that Hitler had managed to kill off - a number exceeded only, as a percentage of the population, by another Communist, the infamous Pol Pot of Cambodia.

Our floor was connected with the rest of the house below by a proper staircase, and also by a narrow, dark, winding servants' one, which we children normally used. On the way down, there was a fearsome suit of armour to be encountered on a landing. Once, at least, this was too much for us, and we arrived at the bottom of the staircase shrieking with fright.

The rest of the family must have slept somewhere, but all I remember of 'downstairs' are an impressive dining-room and drawing-room, with elegant doors and ornate Victorian furniture and fittings, dominated by large and arresting crystal chandeliers.

We sometimes used to be allowed down to have tea there, and on some of these occasions Yerassimo was a fascinating visitor. He was an old man with white hair who had somehow lost his money and was therefore often invited out to meals with luckier friends. He told the most amusing and fascinating stories, and loved to put sugar on his bread and butter, an exciting habit we were never allowed to indulge in.

In the summer of 1923 there was a drought in Athens, so Dick and I were packed off to Aunt Lily's house at Patissia, which was then almost in the country. There we could play with our first cousins, Alexi and Dimitri, who were about a year older than us, visit the goats, and watch the horse turning the water-wheel, plodding around the circular track with its eyes blindfolded, thus raising the precious water which was then carried along little mud channels, first to one row of fruit or vegetables and then to another, according to which little mud sluice the gardener opened.

The weather was as intensely hot as it always is in Greece in summer, but we were all used to it. After lunch we were made to take a siesta - much against our wills: the servants used to tell us that there were snakes out

at that hour, and that they would get us if we went out. But even this restriction on our liberty was nothing compared to the relief of being away from our acid governess, who had stayed in Hermes Street.

The refugees from Turkey began to stream to Athens at about this time. When we went for walks in the Zappeion, we could see dirty, ragged human beings of all ages clustered forlornly in and around the temple, looking all the more shocking to us by contrast with the whiteness of the marble and the classical beauty of the building's form. A delousing truck held us wide-eyed for a long time.

But next door to the Zappeion there was the Royal Garden, where one could play in the welcome shade of the orange trees and drink in the scent of their blossoms when they were out.

Then there were occasional visits to the Acropolis, where we seldom came across another soul in those days. There Mother showed us how to make fine little dolls out of the poppies that grew in profusion, and we could play 'oil and vinegar' by putting water in hollow fragments of marble.

My first big, desperate love affair came when I was five. I know that that was my age at the time, because it was shortly after Derek's first birthday. The object of my affections was a pretty little Greek cousin of about my own age. I remember one day going down to bathe at Phaleron with her and our mothers, and her balloon blowing away out

to sea; and I also remember clearly my feeling of despair at not being able to swim out and get it back for her. When I told my mother about this incident many years later, she remembered it, and could tell me the name of the cousin, who was then a happily married housewife in Athens.

Occasionally there was a great to-do when the King and Queen of Greece drove to the Cathedral in state on some important public holiday. Hours before, there was a bustle in the street, and then there came the great moment when the evzones, in their white or blue petticoats, depending on the time of year, their red caps with black tassels, embroidered jackets, long white stockings and pompommed red shoes took up position lining the street. The procession passed our house, and what a thrill it was to see the King and Queen bowing to left and right while the crowd cheered! I was disappointed that they did not wear crowns, so I asked one of my relations whether we could ask the King to tea with his crown. He agreed immediately, and next day someone did turn up, but alas only with a paper crown, which did not fool me for a moment, and was one of the first big disappointments of my life.

It must have been some time in 1923 that we left again for Constantinople. Alas, we had to leave Dada behind and take Simmie along with us. As we grew older, she took to spanking us more and more, often for the most trivial reasons. She was probably venting on us innocent victims her bottled

up venom against males in general; we learnt later that she had been jilted by a lover in England during the Great War. She certainly succeeded in giving a few strange twists to my character.

One of the most significant events of my early childhood happened on the way up to our house from the paddle-steamer that took us from Constantinople to Moda. Granny and Grandfath were living in the house too, and came down to meet us. I must interject here that I was already the proud possessor of a small cuddly toy rabbit with shoe-button eyes, and of a slightly larger and rougher-haired dog with black and yellow glass eyes. The great event that happened on our way up to the house was that Granny gave Dick a toy monkey with real soft fur hair on its head.

The fact that she simultaneously gave me a Tiger Tim doll was unimportant, because both Dick and I instantly fell in love with the monkey, whom we named Henry at sight. He immediately stepped into the central role in the imaginary world Dick and I shared. We used to tell joint stories at night after we had been put to bed - under the mosquito net in the summer - and in these Dick now always took the part of Henry the hero, while I provided the secondary roles, such as Tiger Tim, and the episodic background. I soon also began writing stories about Henry and the others in exercise books, illustrating them with cartoon sequences.

I had too unquestioning a devotion to Henry, and

too well-developed a sense of property, ever to question his right to the permanent role of hero, or Dick's always to represent him. I thus developed a lack of initiative and sense of inferiority which I did not face up to consciously until many years later.

During this stay in Moda we became more conscious of the venerable hub around which our vast family revolved, namely Grandmamma. Every August she would hold a birthday party in the garden, where one would meet Great-Great-Aunt Maria, great-uncles and great-aunts, cousins of all kinds and ages, most of the rest of the British colony in the Constantinople area, and some of the members of other foreign communities, plus Turks, all eating exciting little sandwiches or walking about with large plates of ice-cream.

On such days Grandmamma's garden was too full of grown-ups to be much of a place to play in, but on ordinary days it was a paradise for little children. It was divided into an upper and a lower garden, the former running from the spacious house to a sharp drop, protected by a thick, low hedge, over which one had a stupendous view over the Sea of Marmara to the minarets of Constantinople on the skyline beyond. It was not until I was about eight that I became conscious of the beauty of this view, which I had previously taken for granted.

One of the most spectacular inhabitants of Grandmamma's garden was the old lady who had been Granny's governess

many years before. She was in her nineties, and always wore a big brooch at her throat. As the skin hung down in many folds under her chin, I was convinced that the brooch went through these, and used to stand transfixed, staring at this 'phenomenon'.

To get down to the lower garden one had to follow a steep, winding path leading down between hedges to a narrow plain beside the sea, containing a tennis-court, thickets of canes and some fig trees. The water's edge was concreted to form a path on which one could walk to the next-door garden, which belonged to Great-Uncle Edwin, Grandmamma's eldest son. This too consisted of an upper and a lower garden, but there the lower garden was an exciting wilderness of weeds and trees, and there was a sheer precipice of rock separating it from the higher ground. A tunnel had been driven through this rock, so that one could get up to the top by climbing up some flights of stone stairs in the bowels of the earth, in almost total darkness part of the way, with the puffing and reek of an electricity-generating plant on one side, and the reechoing caverns of the laundry-rooms on the other.

In spite of this fearsome gauntlet, we used to love Uncle Edwin's garden. The upper garden was not so exciting, as it consisted mostly of lawns and flower-beds which we were not allowed to tread on. However, at one shady spot there was a beautiful lion's head spouting water into an ornate basin, which we always made a pilgrimage to when

we visited the garden.

In the lower garden, we could do as we liked. At one end, the one away from Grandmamma's garden, there were two old boats, separated from the rest of the garden by a brick wall with a gateway through it. We used to climb into these old boats and pretend to be bold pirates, and later, when we were 8 or 9 years old, could even make plans for floating them.

Like most of the family, Uncle Edwin lived to a great age. He was a keen hunter, roaming the Turkish countryside regularly with his shotgun, shooting birds, hares etc. When he was over 90, he was heard to complain that the Turks had widened the ditches between their fields, because he was now sometimes failing to reach the other side when he jumped them.

I particularly liked going to tea with his brother, Uncle Kenny, who lived on the other side of the drive leading down to Grandmamma's house, opposite ours. He had pet marmosets which had the run of the drawing-room and often came to perch on us while we had tea. This was probably why I developed a particular affection for monkeys, which I later satisfied when I was in Indonesia by keeping a pair of young crab-eating macaques.

Great-Uncle Willy I remember as a terrible tease. Once when I met him in the drive outside our house, he asked

me whether I would like a chocolate. When I answered that I would, he said I could have one if I licked his boots. That was my first example of British facetiousness - a pretence at humour which hides a vicious intent - and I reacted to it by bursting into tears - quite the wrong British response!

My father once asked one of his uncles to stand godfather to one of us - probably Derek - and was met by the response, 'Oof, another silver christening mug to fork out for!'; at which my father indignantly retorted that he was going to buy the mug himself, and that all he wanted was one of the two godfathers that were obligatory for a christening.

Two important alterations now took place in our household. Mother at last realised that Simmie was doing more harm than good (she once bathed us herself, and saw my bruised bottom) and got rid of her. She subsequently became tutor to the Greek royal family, including the present ex-King of Greece and Queen of Spain. And we moved out of Granny's house to a three-storeyed one in the adjoining small township of Kadiköy, which was several minutes' walk from Grandmamma's garden.

We were not left long without someone to look after us: Marie, a Greek children's nurse, who had some experience with British families and therefore spoke passable English, took over command of the first floor of the new house, which became the nursery. As a respectable Greek widow of the old school, Marie always wore black. She was a kindly, though

occasionally irritable woman, who really became very fond of us and did her best for us. As she could not really be expected to educate us in the same way as an English governess Mr de la Roche was brought in.

He was a Russian emigré, one of the many upper and middle class refugees who had streamed into Turkey during and after the 1917 revolution. He lived in Constantinople and came over every morning on the ferry to teach Dick and me English, French and arithmetic. We soon got very attached to him, as he was a kindly and interesting man, who did his best to make classes something to look forward to instead of a drudgery. One of his brainwaves was to have reproductions of English coins (which we had never seen in the flesh) made on thin cardboard, yellow for sovereigns, white for half-crowns, florins, shillings and sixpences, and red for coppers. What child could resist buying and selling imaginary goods with these colourful coins, even if it did mean adding and multiplying and subtracting and dividing to work out the bill! When I went to my prep school in England at the age of 11, I discovered that I was outstanding at mental arithmetic. I probably owed this to Mr de la Roche.

He always had a cup of sweet Turkish coffee for elevenses, and after he had gone home at about lunch time, Dick and I used to dilute the dregs with water and drink them. We were not allowed coffee normally.

Meanwhile, Mother had been teaching us German, which

we had first begun to pick up by listening to her conversation with our Greek uncles and aunts, which were mostly conducted in that language, with a liberal admixture of Greek, French and Italian words when the German one had slipped the speaker's mind. I do not remember ever having had any trouble with learning four languages simultaneously from the age of 7 or so onwards, and I am sure that, before puberty, a child's brain can store away any number of languages effortlessly and as perfectly as the people it learns them from.

Later Dick and I passed on from Mr de la Roche to a little school which a distant relative, the British parson in Moda, opened in Granny's house - the one we had previously lived in. There was a motley array of children of varying ages, nearly all related to us, including cousin Daphne La Fontaine, whom I admired secretly because her feet actually reached the floor when she was sitting on one of the school chairs. I must have learnt quite a lot from Mr de la Roche and the parson, because when I went to my prep school in England I was well advanced for my age, leaving aside German and Greek, which were not on the curriculum there, and Latin and algebra, which I had not been taught in Turkey.

We used to be given sandwiches to take to school with us in the mornings, but we seldom ate them. The trouble was that, to get to our old house at the gates of Grandmamma's garden, we had to pass Great-Uncle Hugh's garden, and Great-Uncle Hugh had a huge dog with long, soft hair, called Kitso, whom we loved, admired and venerated deeply; inevitably

our sandwiches would go to Kitso as humble offerings to a superior being, until one day another Great-Uncle caught us at it and reported us to Father, which led to an unpleasant scene.

I must have possessed the elements of a critical faculty at this time: our parson-teacher was telling us one day about the nouns which do not take 's' in the plural, and one of the examples he gave was 'grouse', whereupon I immediately protested, 'But Mummy often says that Daddy grouses!'

We used to go to Sunday school in the English church in Moda. It was one of the rare chances of meeting two girls whose father was English and mother Russian. Both Dick and I were attracted to Nana, the younger of the two, who was Dick's age. She used to demonstrate the Charleston to us, accompanying it with suitable singing. I was even more attracted to the elder sister, but as she was 14 and I only 10, I could only worship her from afar. Ever since then, I have found Slavonic girls extraordinarily appealing.

One Sunday, when we were rehearsing Christmas carols and I was singing more lustily than tunefully, the parson politely asked me to stop, which made me blush to the roots of my hair, conscious as I was of the object of my devotion a few pews away.

The church was also the scene of my first close consciousness of death. I was taken to the funeral of an

old lady whom I had known quite well, and I still remember the horror of realising that death was inevitable, and, as I did not believe in heaven and hell, the even greater problem of wrestling with the concept of absolute nothingness.

When Father acquired the yacht I don't know, but it played an important part in our lives during our last few years in Turkey. It was a large, pleasant-looking yawl called the 'Puffin'. It had an inboard motor in case the wind gave out, and was roomy enough to sleep the four of us and the boat boy (Derek was too young to come on longer excursions).

We often used to go out for the afternoon, or, at weekends, for the day. The Sea of Marmara was a lovely place for yachting. There was almost always a breeze, either directly on to or off the coast, so that one could sail along it without having to do much tacking. There were pretty little places down towards the Dardanelles where one could bathe or walk; at one, in particular, there was a spring of pure, cold water coming out of an iron pipe on the beach a few feet from the sea.

Then one could always go to the Princes Islands off the coast, rough, steep, sparsely inhabited places except for the last island, Prinkipo, where rich Constantinopolitans had summer villas. Sometimes we even went up the Bosphorus, but I did not like that so much, as I felt hemmed in by the hilly shores on both sides of the isthmus.

Once or twice we went to the tiny Isle of Dogs out in the Sea of Marmara, a grim and desolate place which filled me with a horrible fascination when I was told that thousands of dogs from the city of Constantinople had been dumped there years before to die of thirst and starvation, as the Turks had religious scruples against killing them directly. Two of the Whittalls had died of rabies as children, so we were brought up to keep well away from dogs.

For years the streets of Constantinople had been plagued by packs of wild ones, each pack having one street as its territory. If a dog strayed into another territory, it was torn to pieces, unless it was a bitch on heat, or a 'super-dog', one of the very strong males, at the peak of their powers, which none of the others dared take on. Also there were often rabid dogs, which were too mad to know where they were running, so that they would get into another pack's territory and be torn to pieces.

One of the spots I remember vividly on that coast was a tomato paste factory. As one sailed past, one had the wonderful aroma of the sun-ripened tomatoes cooking slowly to make the paste we loved.

Ours was not the only yacht in Moda harbour. Among others, Great-Uncle Kenny's stood out because of its imposing size and large crew. There was also a big and very beautiful Danish yacht which used to appear and

disappear, often accompanied by a smaller one with equally attractive lines, which was also Danish.

Our boat boy sometimes used to dive for giant mussels at the bottom of the sea, which he then used to open and eat. They were called 'pinnes' in Greek (plural of 'pinna'), but in those days I had never heard the English word with which I might have confused it.

Once, on the way back from a trip in the yacht, Father allowed Dick and me to ride behind the yacht in the dinghy, but while we were not looking, he and the boat boy tied a long length of rope to the dinghy's, and let it trail in the water. When we looked round, we were alarmed to see the yacht quite a long way away, and no sign of the rope, which was under water.

I was the only member of the family to fall into the sea. Dick once fell into a goldfish pond in Grandmamma's garden, but I actually fell off the yacht. We were moored off the shore, and I was sitting with Mother having tea when Father came forward from the steering cockpit. He made a playful grab at me, and I jumped up and ran towards the bows, only to trip over a jib sheet and pitch over the side. I had not yet learnt to swim then, and I can still recall the feeling of sinking, with my nose a few inches from the smooth white side of the 'Puffin', against which I clawed ineffectually. Kadir, the Turkish boat boy, who was baiting a fish hook for Dick in the stern, came forward

on hearing Dick shriek and fished me out by hanging over the side and stretching an arm down.

One arm of Moda Bay ended in a point with a lighthouse called Fanaraki, and opposite this, at a distance of a few hundred yards, there was a heap of rocks rising above the water, on which one could often see seals.

Further along the coast one would pass the peculiar Turkish fishing nets which are attached to long poles stuck in the bottom of the sea and forming a circle. A gap is left in the circumference and a man squats in a little seat on top of one of the poles, ready to close the gap and summon his mates when a shoal of fish enters the circle.

Dick became an excellent sailor, winning cups in Singapore and Hong Kong and finishing up with a round-the-world type of yacht in Greece, but I never took to the sport, chiefly because my first and only teacher, my father, was an impatient man with no ability to instruct successfully - at least not his children.

Sometimes we used to go bathing in the mornings during the summer holidays. Either Marie or Mr de la Roche would take us down to our dinghy in Moda harbour - the one that usually trailed behind the 'Puffin' - and Kadir, or earlier our Greek boat boy, would row us down the bay to Kalamish or Fanaraki. Sometimes Dick or I would row for a bit and enjoy it enormously. Once a dolphin swam under us while we

were on our way back from Kalamish, and frightened us considerably. This often happened in the 'Puffin', but in the dinghy it was a more dangerous matter.

Once we saw nuns bathing in the sea at Fanaraki, and were surprised to find that they were fully clothed in their habits and headdresses.

At Fanaraki too there was an abandoned goods yard of the old Hejaz railway, made famous by Lawrence of Arabia. We used to play on rusty old goods wagons there, which probably started my love affair with trains.

Occasionally we took the ferry to Kalamish instead of rowing there. This was a paddle steamer which did the rounds from Galata Bridge in Constantinople to Haidar Pasha on the Asian side, which was the terminus of the Hejaz railway line, Kadiköy, Moda, Kalamish, other points along the coast and Prinkipo. We were always fascinated by the engines in these ferries, and would stand and watch the pistons working until it was time to disembark.

Both at Kalamish and at Fanaraki there were bathing establishments with cabins on piles above the water, where one changed into one's little black bathing costume. There were usually a lot of people there, but one could easily ignore them. Learning to swim from Mr de la Roche was rather frightening, as he sometimes took one out of one's depth and made one swim back, but it was nothing like as terrifying as Father's method, which was to tie a rope

round our middles and throw us off the 'Puffin' when it was right out at sea. I have still not taken to diving, probably because of this drastic and terrifying series of duckings.

Mother was very afraid of stepping on seaweed, so whenever she thought I had had long enough in the sea and ought to come out, I used to take refuge in one of the patches of seaweed that grew here and there in the beautiful white sand, so that she could not catch me.

We were brought up to eat a very fresh raw egg every morning as elevenses, and when we went bathing during the summer holidays we always took our eggs with us. A borrowed pin would produce the hole at each end - one tiny, and the other bigger - without which sucking an egg is too difficult, and we would enjoy our sucking with a pleasure I still get from really fresh raw eggs.

As many of the office workers in Constantinople were Christians and Jews, Father worked only a four day week, Friday being holy to the Moslems, Saturday (the Sabbath) to the Jews, and Sunday to the Christians. In winter we could therefore go for weekend walks on any of three days with Mother and Father. The countryside around Moda tended to be bleak and rugged, but this never struck me as unpleasant. In fact, probably owing to my having got used to this sort of landscape from an early age, I used later to feel homesick for it when I was amidst the lush green of a country like

Switzerland - or even more, Indonesia.

In my young days the ordinary soldiers in the Turkish army wore ragged uniforms which were reputed to be made of paper, an idea which intrigued us as boys. The officers had a reputation for cruelty, and the minorities, Greeks, Armenians, Jews etc always tried to get out of the compulsory military service. Once when we were on one of our walks with our parents, we were approached by a man whose mind was clearly deranged. He kept on begging us to help him avoid military service, and Father had considerable difficulty in shaking him off.

On weekday afternoons we normally went to Grandmamma's garden to play, and there we usually met relations of our age. Roly and Percy were brothers, and cousins of ours. Roly's legs were useless as a result of infantile paralysis, but he was a couple of years older than me, who was the next in age, so he took command when we formed an 'army' with toy air rifles. I was second-in-command, and Dick, Percy, Derek and another cousin by the name of Sidney were our 'regulars'. Our knowledge of army drill and tactics was naturally less than rudimentary, but we enjoyed ourselves enormously.

However, this martial ardour did not prevent me being a cry-baby. At one of Grandmamma's birthday parties, I let down the family and the British Empire badly when a little Italian boy much smaller than myself invited me to fight him, and I responded by bursting into tears. Mother was

terribly ashamed and scolded me, but the whole way I had been brought up was calculated not to make me a bellicose child, or even one capable of defending himself. Father seemed to realise this when he threw a snowball at me on one of our weekend walks and I sulked and cried, but he did not seem to know how to remedy the situation.

Mother was careful to instil in us the rules of polite behaviour, and insisted on our talking about 'ladies' rather than 'women'; but this backfired on her once, when a beggar woman rang the front door bell. I answered it, and then called to Mother, 'There's a lady to see you, Mummy!' Mother quickly adjusted her hair and did her face before hurrying down to greet the 'lady'. She was very annoyed when she discovered who she was!

Having been brought up abroad, I had no idea of the mysteries of cricket, but nevertheless tried to teach my younger brothers the game one day when Granny took us down to the tennis court at the bottom of Grandmamma's garden by the sea. Unfortunately, I believed that the batsman stood behind the wicket, and leaned over it to protect it from the bowler's deliveries. I still remember Granny's scorn that an English boy could be so ignorant of the national game.

Every year the Turkish navy held a regatta in Moda Bay, to which we were invited, and when I was about nine, I was taken aboard a Turkish naval vessel to watch the races

between rowing crews and other events. One of the curious memories that have stuck in my mind is that of the lifeboats in which the races were rowed being made to turn right over and then bob up the right way again. On one occasion, I was invited to go off with my brother Dick for a trip round the bay in a small, fast Turkish vessel, but was too timid and afraid of the Turks, no doubt as a result of fearsome tales of the Turkish occupation of Greece told me by our Greek servants, to leave my parents' side for such a 'treat'.

The indoctrinations by Greek servants also made me intensely proud of the valour of the Greeks in the wars of liberation, and this pride was bolstered many years later by the bravery of the Greek army against the Italian attack in 1940 in Albania, only to give way to dismay when I saw this same Greek army running away, officers first, when the Germans attacked.

In Turkey the drums of Ramadan did not help me to be less of a coward myself. For a month all good Moslems had to fast from sunrise to sunset. They were not even allowed to drink anything, even in the heat of midsummer. A drummer would make the rounds at dusk and dawn, proclaiming to the Faithful that they could begin, or had to cease, eating and drinking. These drummings would give me the most terrible nightmares, during which I lay stiff and unable to move, while terrifying creatures threatened me. A more common nightmare used to begin regularly by an old hag in black sweeping down

and seizing me, to carry me off, stiff and unable to move, into a nightmare realm where varied misadventures would befall me. I did not manage to stop this unpleasant series until one night I fought and beat the old woman in black, after which she never returned. I have sometimes wondered whether Marie, with her black clothes, was the inspiration for my nightmare hag.

Thunder was another potential source of terror, but early in my life Mother cured me of this by telling me that it was the sound of God driving his chariot over bumpy clouds. As this sound was very familiar to me from the carts which rattled over the cobblestoned roads of Moda and Kadiköy, I accepted Mother's story quite happily, and thereafter loved the sound of thunder.

On the whole, Marie was pleasant enough, but she was a terrific gossip. Grandmamma's garden was really too dull for her, so she began taking us to places which she found more congenial. When we protested, she said she would take us to other places than Grandmamma's garden as a punishment when we misbehaved. We finally had to appeal to Mother, who had not known that Marie was not taking us to Grandmamma's garden, and was annoyed because she thought we might pick up something nasty in the less salubrious places we were being taken to.

One of these was a garden café overlooking Moda Bay. It was perched on a small promontory which fell abruptly

to the sea, and below, there was a bathing establishment with an area divided off by high partitions for women. One could often see naughty old gentlemen leaning over the railing at the edge of the garden, looking down at the bathing belles in this enclosure.

This café, which we called Little Moda, was not as bad as some of Marie's other haunts. One could play about in the garden, and two small Italian children were sometimes brought there by their mother. I was deeply impressed by the charms of the little girl, and being terribly shy, went to great trouble to get a photograph of her by stealth, with an old Kodak camera Father had given me. I was caught at it, whereupon the Italian mother posed for me with her son and daughter, to my great embarrassment. I was only eight or nine at the time, but already capable of a very powerful and agonising passion, which was not made any more tolerable by extreme shyness.

The other magnet that drew Marie was her own house down at Kadiköy. That was really an ordeal, as we had to sit in the dark, stuffy little parlour occupied by her tenant, and listen to endless conversations on topics which left us completely cold. Marie had had two sons, but the elder had been drowned. Now, in exasperation, I said to her one day that I hoped the second would be drowned too. Like all lower-class Greeks, she was fundamentally very superstitious, and I do not remember ever having seen words take quicker and deeper effect. She was shaken to the core and entirely

disorientated. I was immediately sorry for what I had said when I saw what it meant to her, but it took me a long time to console her.

Marie had learnt English as a young girl, when she had been an assistant nursemaid in an English household, but her English was far from perfect. One day, Mother heard me talking about our nursery 'jistadraw', and asked me how I spelt the word. 'J-I-S-T-A-D-R-A-W,' I suggested. Mother laughed and said, 'You mean chest-of-drawers!' Marie's pronunciation had misled me.

Enemas and suppositories were very popular in our young days. Constipation was considered a great danger, and it was thought that the best way to get medicines into one was from below, not above. This is still very much the case in France today. With hindsight, after all the publicity about child abuse today, I suspect that some of the treatment with enemas and suppositories that we received was prurient. I remember, in particular, one afternoon in the garden at Little Moda when Marie took Derek's shorts down and demonstrated to another nanny the 'correct' way of inserting a suppository, of which she providentially had a supply in her handbag.

Very rarely, we used to go to Constantinople. We were never taken sight-seeing there, as it was still not very safe, and kidnappings occurred. We used to take the ferry from Kadiköy and land at the Galata bridge. From there we usually used to go to Father's office, which looked out

over the sea, and then to the 'Tunnel'. This was a small underground railway which connected Galata with Pera higher up. There were two lines, and as one train come down the other went up, the two being connected by a cable running round a drum at the top.

When we went to Constantinople, it was always for shopping but it had become a family custom to go to a German café for our elevenses, and instead of our raw egg we had hot chocolate with whipped cream. I can still remember the sheer joy of drinking the sweet, rich, piping hot chocolate through the smooth, cool, sensuously satisfying cream, and the acute problem of how to leave a bit of cream to the end as a last titbit. It often crossed my mind that I would like replenishments of cream several times during the process of drinking the chocolate, just as one put more sugar on one's yoghurt each time one finished a layer, but I never dreamt of asking for more. Somehow it did not seem to be part of the ritual.

On the way from Kadiköy to Galata Bridge, the paddle steamer called at Haidar Pasha, the terminus of the Hejaz Railway, and sometimes we used to get out there and go up to Scutari, where Florence Nightingale had nursed the wounded of the Crimean War. In the British cemetery there we used to visit the grave of my Uncle Leslie, who had died of typhoid at the age of 10 after eating raw mussels which he had pulled off the landing-stage at the bottom

of Grandmamma's garden.

Father had had typhoid too, and so had Granny. It had caused her to lose all her hair, but luckily it had grown again.

Sometimes we used to go for carriage drives at weekends. There were no taxis in Moda in those days, but there were several carriages which one could hire, comfortable four-seaters with a hood one could raise if it rained, and room for another passenger on the box beside the driver. Of course, this latter seat was the coveted one, and Dick and I used to take turns at sitting in it. Sometimes Mikhali, our favourite driver, would let us hold the reins for a bit while he flicked his two horses gently with his whip. One of the only three times in my life that I have sat on a horse was when Mikhali put me on one of his for a photograph.

One Christmas Dick and I received a present which fascinated us. We called it the Push-and-Pull-Thing. It was a four-wheeled, two-seater children's go-cart, with handles which the two users pushed forwards and backwards to turn the wheels and drive the thing forward. Usually I sat in the back seat and steered with a foot-rod connected to the front axle, and both of us pushed and pulled to propel the vehicle. We even used to take it along the main road to Grandmamma's garden, and we once worked out plans for turning it into an armoured car for use with Roly's 'army'. Dick later became a regular officer in the Royal Tank Regiment

and I have sometimes wondered whether the Push-and-Pull-Thing had anything to do with this.

The only car I remember in Moda was Grandmamma's Rolls. Occasionally she and Great-Great-Aunt Maria would call at our house in it and take us for a drive into the country - a great thrill for us. The driver was a pleasant young Turk called Kamil, who looked after the two old ladies marvellously. Although both were around 90 years old, they were still bright and intelligent and could talk and write without any difficulty. When they took us out in the car, they would invariably stop at Haji Bekir's, the marvellous confectioner's in Kadiköy, and buy us some Turkish delight or some of the Haji's other famous and delectable sweets.

The first time Derek rode in Grandmamma's Rolls, he was terrified by the dizzy speed of 20 miles an hour, and howled vigorously.

However, we did not have to leave our premises for amusement. Our own garden was large and varied enough. There was the flower and vegetable garden, with a summer-house in one corner, a greenhouse in another, and a big magnolia tree in the centre; and there was the 'round place', actually a rough, uncultivated square of land raised a yard or so above the rest of the garden and lying along a blank side of the house.

Beside the summer-house there grew lovely-smelling white jasmine, which we used to thread on pine needles to

make little bouquets to present to Mother. In the greenhouse, which had lost most of its glass, there grew rather inferior grapes, which were nevertheless more exciting for us to eat than the much better ones we had at table, just because they grew in our own greenhouse. There were always several empty packing-cases in it too, which cats used as maternity homes and nurseries. The place teemed with stray cats, especially as our cook loved and fed them.

The magnolia tree was easy to climb and produced magnificent waxy, white, heavily perfumed flowers.

Once Dick was tempted by a red pepper growing in the vegetable garden, and bit into it. His subsequent howls of anguish brought the whole household running to investigate.

But it was the round place which was our real preserve as children. It was usually covered with weeds, in which our black tortoise would hide most successfully until he decided he would like something more interesting than weeds to eat. Besides lettuce and all the other usual salad vegetables, he was very partial to grapes and to wistaria flowers. So impressed were we by the taste of so venerable and beloved a member of our circle of friends for this flower that we took to eating it ourselves, and with considerable relish at that, as it is sweet and perfumed. Once when I was eating some wistaria, there was a bee in one flower, which stung me painfully on the tongue.

Torty, as we called our tortoise, was quite tame, and allowed us to stroke his head without demur. I have since found that one can stroke any wild tortoise's head with no difficulty if one starts from behind, stroking only the small bit of nose protruding from the shell to begin with. Gradually the tortoise puts its head out to be stroked properly.

One day when I was feeding Torty, I decided to try an experiment. I put a ladybird under a lettuce leaf, and then offered it to Torty. He ate it, and then made the wryest face I have ever seen on an animal.

The round place was also the scene of a confusing incident with the opposite sex. Having no sisters, I had no idea how girls were constructed, so when one who was playing with us asked where she could have a pee, I pointed to the shelter of a bush. However, when I saw her crouch down, I became alarmed and shouted, 'No, you can't do that here!'

Father had the bright idea of installing a sand-pit for us on the round place, but it did not last long, because cats discovered that it was an ideal lavatory.

The round place was also the venue for our one attempt at a firework display one Guy Fawkes Day. However, a damper was put on the proceedings when an old Irish lady, who was a friend of Mother's, and also a staunch Catholic, disapproved strongly.

One day Father climbed up to trim a plant on the garden railing, but slipped, and his signet ring caught on one of the spikes. It ripped his finger right open, after which he never wore a ring again. I followed his example, and have never had a ring of any kind on any of my fingers.

One of our neighbours was an Armenian girl of about 18, I suppose. She had been in one of the massacres that the Turks used to carry out periodically to keep their minorities in their places, but had escaped with her life.

Occasionally we used to fall ill. Colds, coughs and 'temperatures' were the usual troubles. Mother was very hot on diagnosing fever. We used to get very impatient when she put her hand on our foreheads, as this was often followed by a long session with an old-fashioned thermometer, which one had to hold still under one's arm for an awfully long time. Fever meant staying in bed and living on milk and fruit juices - an awful fate. As one began to convalesce, one started on rusks, and yoghurt with masses of sugar.

When we had colds, Mother used to 'cup' us. This consisted of dipping pieces of cotton-wool into surgical spirit, putting them into special glass containers called 'vendouzes' in Greek (although Mother often used ordinary small drinking glasses instead), setting the cotton-wool alight, and then quickly putting the 'vendouzes' on our bare backs. The fire went out at once, but created a vacuum, which was supposed

to draw out the impurities in one's body which were causing the cold. The 'vendouzes' used to adhere to one strongly, and make a glugging sound when they were pulled off.

We were never subjected to bleeding, however. This was done by cutting the skin before applying the 'vendouzes', so that the 'impure' blood was sucked out.

When we had a fever, we were sometimes given powdered quinine, dissolved in water. Strangely enough, I liked the bitter taste. Many years later, after doctors palpated my spleen and found it enlarged, which led them to deduce that I had had malaria, I asked my mother whether this was in fact so. She immediately became agitated and angry, feeling that I had accused her of neglecting us as children. She flatly denied that I had ever had malaria.

One morning when I was ill in bed, a new servant-girl brought up my breakfast. I had never seen her before. She was fourteen, and had big, dark, sultry eyes. I immediately but silently fell violently in love with her.

Mother always suffered from severe migraine for five days during her monthly period. She could eat nothing during this time, and mostly stayed in bed, looking dreadful. These attacks went on until she had the menopause, despite her trying all sorts of remedies, including leeches behind the ears. They were supposed to suck out the 'bad blood' which caused the migraine. After they had gorged themselves on it, they fell off, and were then gently 'milked' to empty them

of the blood and then put on again.

Mother had a terrible fear of cockroaches, and as a nasty little boy, I used sometimes to tease her with them, but once one of my jokes literally backfired on me: I was chasing her, holding a large black cockroach between thumb and first finger, laughing with wide-open mouth, when the cockroach squirted a nasty fluid out of its stern into my mouth.

Once a diamond brooch of my mother's disappeared, and the Turkish police were called in. They suspected the Greek servants, and put the fear of God into them, as a result of which a curious incident occurred: our fat cook persuaded me to search for something in a patch of ground ivy outside the kitchen window, and lo and behold, I found the missing brooch!

My mother had quite a lot of nice jewellery. When I first became conscious of it, I asked her whether the stones were real, and when she answered that they were, I remember being very surprised that my mother could afford such things.

Actually, Granny was the one who had really beautiful and valuable diamonds. When she was about 90, she lived in London, and used to march around with a necklace, earrings, bracelet and brooch with really big diamonds in them, but no thief believed that an old bird like her could possibly be wearing real stones in that way.

We had no bathroom on our nursery floor in Kadiköy. We used to bath in a tin tub, the hot water being brought up from the kitchen in the basement in jugs and buckets. One day I decided to carry a bucket up myself. When I had almost reached our floor, I slipped and fell, the scalding water poured over my ankle, and the bucket then fell on the blister this formed, bursting it.

I had several painful days and nights as a result of that scald. The Italian doctor who lived in Moda and was our GP came to see me several times. When the ankle was getting better, he asked me to come to his surgery in Moda to have it dressed in future. I very seldom went out alone in Turkey. I had once been sent out to buy a block of ice and some rough salt to make ice-cream, but this excursion to the doctor was rather a rarity. I had to run the gauntlet of nasty, noisy little street boys on the way.

When I got to the doctor's waiting-room, there were already several people in it and I was asked to wait. I sat there for some time looking at magazines, and by the time my turn came, my foot had gone to sleep completely, so that when I stood up, it gave immediately and I fell down.

The doctor did not know much English (when he met us while he was out riding he always used to say 'Good morning goodbye' in one breath), and he immediately thought

my foot had gone bad again, and could not make head or tail of my explanation that my foot only had 'pins and needles'. He even offered to send me home by carriage.

Very rarely, we used to be given castor oil. Dick was always better at taking it than I was. I have a virulent hatred of the stuff and even the thought of it still makes my stomach queasy. I was convinced that we were given it as a punishment for having been naughty, and it was only much later that, on being asked, Mother categorically denied this.

It was actually rather surprising that we did not catch any serious diseases in Turkey considering one of our filthy habits. We loved water-melon, but were never allowed to eat ordinary melon as children, as it was considered too indigestible. However we occasionally found pieces of it which had been gnawed and then thrown away, and we would pick these up and eat what parts were still adhering to the rind. When I told Mother about this many years later, she was horrified.

We were never allowed to buy food from street vendors because of the danger of typhoid etc, so we used to gaze longingly at them as they passed us, chanting the - to us - delectable wares they carried in big round trays on their heads. One of the sweets which captured our imaginations most, but which we never ever tasted, was 'keten halva', which was soft, spun sugar like long locks of women's hair

- the candy floss of today.

Until towards the end of our time in Turkey, our lighting consisted of paraffin lamps. Then came the exciting day when we had gas lighting installed.

Very rarely we were taken to the cinema. I remember seeing several Charlie Chaplin films, and the first version of 'Ben Hur'. Occasionally, too, Father gave us a magic lantern show, using big slides, some of which could be made to move. For example, by turning a handle, a fountain would be made to spring; or by pulling or pushing a lever, part of the picture would disappear.

Our favourite series of slides told the story of a hunter who went tiger-shooting. He was chased by a tiger, but managed to put a barrel over it. When its tail came out of the bung-hole, the intrepid hunter tied a knot in it, after which he let the tiger run away, dragging the barrel behind it. Some years later, the hunter comes back, to see all the progeny of this tiger running about with little barrels on their tails.

I suppose it was these magic lantern shows that developed a fertile imagination in me. Once, when we were bathing on an isolated beach, some goats came down to the sea, and I told my parents that I had seen one nanny goat lie down across a little inlet to allow her kid to cross it by walking on her body.

We were sometimes invited to children's parties, and sometimes gave one ourselves. We were always made to play games such as Postman's Knock, and I hated them because I was very shy, and usually finished up in tears.

One of the stranger amusements at such parties was a shocking coil. We had to form a line of children by holding hands. Then the child at one end of the line had to hold one terminal of the shocking coil, and the child at the other end the other, whereupon a shock went through all the line, accompanied by much oohing and aahing, and often some shrieks. The shorter the line of children, the more powerful the shock, so the more adventuresome would get together to form shorter and shorter lines until they could no longer stand it.

It was towards the end of our time in Turkey that I became conscious of being considerably short-sighted, like my mother and Aunt Lopie, but unlike my father, who had excellent eyesight. Mother and Aunt Lopie used lorgnettes, often with devastating effect, but I was put into glasses for reading and study.

I also had my first visit to a dentist when I was in Turkey. His surgery was in Kadiköy, very near Haji Bekir's sweet shop. There may have been some connection. I had very poor teeth, perhaps because of my inadequate diet as a baby. When I was 18, I saw a set of false teeth in the surgery of a dentist in Salonica, and commented on it. The

dentist said to me grimly, 'By the age of 40, you'll be wearing the same.' But by sheer determination, two visits to the dentist every year, and much pain in the days before efficient analgesia, I have managed to avoid anything loose in my mouth, although I have numerous crowns and two bridges.

Chapter 2: Interlude in Salonica

I was ten and a half years old when we left Turkey for Greece again. After their Revolution, the Turks began to get down to reforming in earnest in 1928. They forbade the wearing of fezes, abolished the Arabic alphabet (just when my mother had finally managed to learn it) and introduced a phonetically highly efficient Latin one, and emancipated women to such an extent that by 1945 there were even female judges in Turkey.

However, they also decided to get rid of as many foreign merchants as possible and run their own commerce themselves. The long-established J. W. Whittall & Co survived, but as the Turks started to mine their own coal, the Glamorgan Coal Co., and with it my father, had to go. The new Turkey was a far cry from the era of Capitulations under which he had been born, when every Britisher in Turkey had extra-territorial rights, and thus could not be touched by the Turkish police or courts.

Before joining the RNVR, my father had, as mentioned above, been manager of the Standard Oil Company of New York in Northern Greece, with his base in Salonica, and that is the post he now returned to.

Leaving Turkey was a terrible wrench. We were going from a place we knew and loved to a destination we did not know at all; we were leaving all our relatives and playmates

to go to a place where everyone would be a stranger. It was our first uprooting since the time we had become old enough to appreciate such things, but I had already had experience of that terrible feeling of loss when one parts with someone one loves, probably never to meet again: I had a girl cousin called Patricia whom I loved deeply with a calf love which I could not express in any way at the time, and one day I heard that she was leaving Turkey with her two elder sisters for school in England. Our last goodbyes in Grandmamma's garden, beside the gate leading into Patricia's grandfather's (my Great-Uncle Edwin's) garden, filled me with intense sadness, and when, the next morning, I heard the mournful hooting of a big ship on the Sea of Marmara, I felt sure it was the one taking Patricia away. Ever since then, the sound of a ship hooting has always filled me with a deep but 'indefin sadness.

However, children's memories are mercifully short. Our sadness could not long outweigh the novelty and excitements of life on board ship. Going through the Dardanelles, with the land close by on both sides, then across the Aegean and past the tip of Mount Athos was entertaining even for an adult. But we children could get enjoyment out of much less promising material - portholes, for instance, and the overwhelming rush with which the lavatories flushed when one pressed the levers.

A fascinating and ever-changing scene was provided by the steerage passengers whom one could look at from the

Beggars in rags, often with terrible sores and bodily deformities, could be seen everywhere, and even many of the peasants and artisans were very obviously extremely poor. But the sun saved them from being hideous and sordid, and it is chiefly these two latter qualities that could bring home to me the disadvantages of poverty. In Greece and Turkey people could get along quite comfortably on very little food, living in whitewashed mud huts, wearing ragged clothes and normally going barefoot, because the sun kept them from losing too many calories, plentiful dirt-cheap fruit and vegetables gave them vitamins, and the sun warmed their bodies and their houses and kept the rudimentary sanitary arrangements and piles of refuse from becoming too great a danger to health.

Thus, although the poor were all around one, a child, even if sensitive, was not so deeply aware of the possible misery of their existence as he would have been if he had toured the slums of an English industrial town of those days, where it was the grey hideousness and grimy sordidness that would have struck him forcibly and unforgettably.

Exciting as a ship journey was for a small boy, I was unfortunately a bad sailor from an early age, and after racing around for some time enjoying every moment, I used to get progressively paler and more inactive until I was sick. Of course, I did not know that this was seasickness, so that the whole thing was puzzling as well as disappointing.

boat deck. I had always been very easily moved by the sight of people who seemed obviously hungry. Who knows if this might not have been a result of my own early starvation? One day, when we had been having tea in the garden of Granny's house in Moda, a little boy, I think it was the washerwoman's son, had come and stood a few yards away, watching us eating our cake. After a few moments I had burst into tears and wept bitterly, even though Simmie had given the boy a piece of cake.

Now on this ship none of the signs of poverty impinged on my unconscious, so I merely regarded these people abstractly as 'the poor', of whom I had seen many, in a rather superficial manner, among the refugees in Athens and then in Turkey. I did not feel any pity for them, because I had never been taught to regard them as worse off than I was. They just lived a different life, as far as I was concerned, a life about which I knew very little, and which I had not therefore reached the point of analysing. This ship gave me an opportunity to observe some of their habits, but I cannot say I was any the wiser at the end of the journey about the relative happiness or unhappiness of the poor man's life compared with my own.

There was much more real poverty to be seen in Turkey and Greece at this time than one ever saw in England. It was normal to see labourers at midday with a quarter of a big loaf of coarse, heavy black bread and a handful of olives or grapes, or a couple of tomatoes, to help it go down.

One of my clearest memories of those trips between Constantinople (or Istanbul as it now came to be called) and Greece was that we used to have tomato jam for breakfast and tea. I have never had this anywhere else, nor even imagined that such a thing could exist until I actually saw and tasted it, but it was very pleasant.

Whereas we had boarded our ship in Turkey from one of the numerous large rowing boats that plied for hire in the harbour there, the ship moved to a wharf in Salonica harbour, and we walked straight down on to terra firma.

In countries like Greece, it has always been very important to know the right people. As they say, it's not what you know but who you know that counts. If you have the 'mesa', as they are called, you can get round any regulations. But I was very surprised at something that happened as we disembarked. Father was always the soul of rectitude, going out of his way to pay the last penny of taxes, for instance; but Mother was a real wily Greek, with a mind of her own. She had wrapped yards and yards of silk round her under her dress, to smuggle it in, and now the Customs authorities asked her to go into a cubicle to be searched by a woman officer. A rapid appeal to the acting manager of the Standard Oil Company, who had come aboard to welcome us, solved that problem. He, as a Greek in an important job, with considerable powers of patronage over the provision of jobs, agencies, fuel supplies etc, had no trouble in discourag-

the Customs authorities from searching Mother.

We were taken straight to the Mediterranean Hotel, a few minutes' walk from the port, and looking out over Salonica bay to the mud flats of the Vardar river in the distance. The Mediterranean was the best hotel in Salonica, and was really very comfortable and interesting to us children for a short period. Going up and down in a lift, and being able to choose what we wanted to eat in the restaurant downstairs, were very great sources of amusement.

We were introduced to Meringues Surprise for the first time - large meringues containing whipped cream and ice-cream - and they at once became our favourite pudding during our stay at the Med.

A day or two after our arrival, we were driven out to the house we were to live in. It was outside the town, in a largish garden containing pine trees. To get there, we had to run the gauntlet of a taxi strike. our car was obviously not a taxi, although it had a chauffeur, yet stones were thrown at us on several occasions by angry shouting men.

I never saw my father drive a car, although he claimed to be able to do so, and Mother had never tried. They always had chauffeurs.

The house we were taken to seemed pleasant enough to us children, though we were still awed and somewhat dampened

by the unfamiliarity of everything. But for some reason which I forget we finally did not move into that house. After a few days in the hotel, we moved to the upper floor of a house some five minutes from the hotel by car, again on the sea, from which it was separated by its garden.

Opposite the hotel was a quay, where picturesque kaiks unloaded gravel and sand, water-melons and crates of grapes, and every conceivable merchandise besides. Some of these kaiks were big, broad, brightly painted craft with rakish gaffs on their short masts, and a roomy hold. Many had the names of saints as protection against mishaps. They plied between the little ports along the heavily indented Greek coast and the islands. They all had their port of origin underneath their name, and one could saunter along the quay, letting one's mind wander to the romantic little harbours, rough sunparched coastlines, dazzling indigo blue stretches of the Mediterranean, and occasional terrifying storms which these names conjured up. Usually the kaiks were unloaded by stevedores, who ran up and down incredibly steep and narrow planks with heavy bags or crates on their backs, and an empty sack on their shoulder as protection against chafing.

There was no quay at the end of the garden of our new house, but one could often see kaiks being poled along, a stone's throw from the shore, when there was a complete calm. They were provided with enormously long poles - small trees - with which their crews punted them along by starting

in the bows and running along the whole length of the kaik, pushing against the sea bottom.

The sea was so dirty opposite the town that we never even thought of bathing there, and as we had no yacht or even dinghy, we did not get any bathing in Salonica that summer.

The house we occupied lay between a small army barracks and a stonemason's yard. The ground floor was 'occupied' by the landlord; that is to say, he and his family lived in the basement and kept the ground-floor rooms spotlessly neat and tidy to receive guests in - a habit which is rather current among the lower middle class in many countries.

Father worked in an office at the far end of town, where the great tanks belonging to the Standard Oil Company, Shell and Steaua Romana, the Rumanian company, were situated. We went out to see the Standard Oil installation a few times. A lot of the office staff were Salonica Jews, but the office boy, Antoni, was a Greek, and the manager of the actual installation, as against the office, was an Armenian called Mr Medjikian. Salonica contained a large Jewish population before the German occupation in 1941-4. They had migrated there from Spain in the 15th Century, when Ferdinand and Isabella had driven them out. They still spoke Spanish, but an ancient form with a considerable admixture of foreign words, and some earlier pronunciations, such as 'f' instead of 'h', so that, for example, modern Spanish 'hijo' (son)

was 'fijo' (compare Latin 'filius').

Antoni, the office boy, was a dark, cheerful, volatile little man of very low IQ, always very anxious to please, glad to see us children whenever we visited the office and to ask us rapid, nervy questions while fussing about, ordering lemonade, coffee or Turkish Delight for us. Greek offices had the pleasant custom of having a little café attached, or at least within easy reach, from which little boy waiters could take orders. Guests were usually offered the choice between Turkish Delight, lemonade and Turkish coffee. When relations became strained with the Turks again after the Second World War because of Cyprus and oil exploration off the Turkish coast, the Greeks began to call Turkish Delight and Turkish coffee Greek delight and Greek coffee. A Greek first cousin of ours who scorned such prickliness began to flummox waiters by calling for 'Byzantine' coffee.

To go to the office, we used a Company car, and we did the same for the afternoon drives out into the country which we now began to take regularly. One of the chauffeurs used to take us where Father had decided, we would walk for an hour or so, and then be driven home in the car again.

The next great event after we had entered the new house was going to school. There was an American, a French, an Italian and a German school in Salonica, but no British one. The American and French ones were run by missionaries, and the Italian and Germans ones, even at that time, were

there for propaganda purposes.

Our parents decided to send us to the German establishment, as this was at the time the best, and we both spoke good German. We were taken along to see Herr Huf, the headmaster, before the beginning of term. The school was in a modern three-storeyed building and contained classes for children between the ages of 6 and 14, as far as I can remember. Mother made sure that Schriftddeutsch (Gothic script) was not used in the school, a mistake really, as I had to get acquainted with it later at Cambridge, and it stood me in good stead for my intelligence activities during World War 2. It was decided that we should temporarily be put in a class with somewhat younger children, as all teaching was in German, and our written command of the language was not very advanced. We already knew one pupil at the school, the daughter of some American missionaries in Salonica whom we had met soon after our arrival.

The first day of term came, and Leonida, one of the Company chauffeurs, duly took us to school, where we arrived late. From that first day onwards, Leonida nearly always landed us up late for school. He always assured us that we were in time, but either the school clock or his watch must have been inaccurate, because we repeatedly had the embarrassment of sailing in in the middle of a class.

When we arrived on that first day, we were directed by the form master, a kindly but Prussian-looking man by

the name of Herr Sauerwein, to two seats on the right wing of the class. We did not land up at the same desk, however. I shared mine with an Armenian boy called Agop. He immediately asked me my name in a whisper (in Greek), but could not make head or tail of my answer.

It was the first time I had come up against the fact that as simple a surname as mine seemed to be could present enormous difficulties to a Greek. It was a long time before I was able to work out the reasons, which were that Greek has no 'h' sound, no 'i' sound as in 'bit', and no dark 'l' sound. I then transformed 'Hill' into 'Kheel', the 'kh' sound corresponding to the German 'ch' in 'ich', and the 'l' being the clear 'l' in, for example, 'let'.

During the morning break we went down to the playground, a small, gritty yard with a couple of mulberry trees and a sandpit. As is usual with new boys at any school, we were surrounded by a throng who asked us all about ourselves. There was Willy Krallis, the German boy in the brown velvet corduroy suit with shorts, and an Austrian cousin of his, a tall, slim, fair, transparent boy in a strange black suit that reminded me of pictures I had seen of artists in the Quartier Latin of Paris, except that it had rather long shorts surmounting long black stockings like a woman's. Little Jews and Armenians with dark, very bright eyes formed most of the rest of the male part of the class. On the left flank of the classroom, the opposite side to Dick and me,

there were about seven girls, including Ursula, a German, and Erika, an Austrian.

We all used to go home by tram at midday. Sometimes there were afternoon classes as well, and then we did the trip by tram both ways. We used to like tram rides, Dick and I. We had special school ticket books, containing four tickets for each day of the term, so that one could go to school and back both in the morning and in the afternoon without having to bother about carrying money.

We had to walk a few hundred yards from school to get to the tram line. If one went a bit further, one came to a tram terminus, where one could be sure of a seat. This terminus was just a spur line leading off the main line up a side road. Certain trams would turn up here, leave their trailing coach, pick up the one left by the last tram and go off again in the opposite direction. We would get into the solitary trailing coach and wait for the next tram to turn up, go through its manoeuvres, and then carry us off home.

One day some of the little boys with us took the brake off the trailing coach as it waited to be collected. Since the side road sloped down towards the main line, the coach started off merrily towards the points at the bottom, where it would probably have come off the lines, or even run into a tram or car passing by along the main road. Luckily, however, a tram conductor was near by,

waiting for the next tram, and jumped in, put the brake on again and slapped the little boys lustily.

Our morning lessons were German, Greek, French, Mathematics (Arithmetic and Geometry), Geography, History and Singing. German was taught by our form master, Herr Sauerwein. We learnt no formal grammar, but just read aloud, wrote little essays, did dictation and learnt poems by heart; in fact we learnt German as if we were Germans. Herr Sauerwein also taught us Mathematics and History.

Greek was taught by a woman who limped rather badly and had the huge black eyes which so many Greeks have. We used to read a modernised version of the Odyssey with her. Dick had never learnt to read Greek properly, so he was rather stumped in these lessons.

French was taught by a dark, volatile German (probably originally from Alsace or Lorraine) with a very reasonable accent. He was the only master who ever gave us detention. One day we had forgotten to do our homework for him and had to stay on after school and write it out. Father was terribly annoyed with the school for interfering with his lunch arrangements, and Mother was worried at the thought that we might have been run over or something.

Geography was taught by a tall, slim, fair young Prussian who was sarcastic and did not like us because we were British.

Singing was great fun: we used to do it on the landing outside our classroom, where there was a piano. We used to sing various well-known German songs in unison - high, shrill voices of little boys and little girls of various nationalities going through the folk-songs and ballads of the German Empire and the Weimar Republic.

The afternoon classes were Divinity and PT; they only took place twice a week. Each religion had its own Divinity class. A Greek priest came to teach the Orthodox, a Rabbi the Jews, etc. We Protestants, a mere handful, read the Bible in German with Herr Sauerwein, and told the Bible stories in our own words.

However, this did not last long: with the thirst for useful linguistic knowledge of the German, Herr Sauerwein began turning these Divinity lessons into English ones for himself, with me as the teacher.

I did not like PT. It seemed to me a stupid and undignified performance done in company with other people. I have never minded being regimented if I was doing something I liked, such as military drill, pushing in the scrum at rugger, taking part in a tug-of-war, or - particularly - rowing in a crew; but gymnastics by groups of people doing everything in unison only filled me with embarrassment.

On some of the afternoons we spent at home, we had French lessons from a very charming and attractive girl called Jeanne, whose father was Greek and mother French.

We spent a year in Salonica that time, and various events stand out in my memory from that period. At Christmas our school was to give a stage show. Each class was to give a little performance, ours being a song and dance show, with us dressed as gnomes. The refrain of our song ran 'Kirla, kirla, hop, hop, hop.' I got terribly depressed and tearful because Mother would not make me a costume for the play, though, as far as I can remember, none of the other children were going to do more than wear long red sock caps. I cannot actually remember the performance: I believe I had flu and could not go. However, I went to one rehearsal in a theatre in town, which was my first introduction to a stage. It was most exciting going round the wings and dressing-rooms and down a steep wooden staircase to the lavatories under the stage.

We were also invited to a fancy-dress ball during carnival by Mrs Iliades, a friend of Mother's, whose two daughters (much older than us) and son were at the German school too. I was dressed in an old white naval uniform of Father's, much cut down, of course; Dick wore a prettily embroidered Russian Cossack outfit with a little fur cap, green satin shirt outside his trousers and long soft boots; and Derek went in a pierrot's costume.

I still did not like parties at this time. Preparing for them was exciting, but the party itself was always a disappointment. I used to get bored, as I was never able

to take any interest in the gay, lighthearted chatter; and when I was bored, I used to cry, but being too young to rationalise much, I could never explain why I was crying when kind grown-ups asked me. In later years I found exactly the same thing at parties, and often regretted that I could no longer decently take refuge in tears. It would really relieve the atmosphere at the normal cocktail party if people cried when they got bored.

One afternoon, we arrived at the school to find a big fight in progress in the playground. 'Come on!' Willy shouted. 'We're having a battle - Jews against Gentiles!' 'OK,' I answered. 'Which side are we on?' I was genuinely unconscious of the difference at that time.

Another big passion of my short life to date developed at the German school. Erika, the little Austrian girl, was slim, darkish blonde and pretty. She was a cousin of Willy Krallis and the Austrian boy in the black suit. I was too shy to speak to her much, but we used to travel back home from school on the same tram. Usually she was with Ursula, the little German girl, who used to get off at the stop before ours, after having ceremoniously shaken hands with all of us. We did the same with Erika before getting off opposite our house, and then the tram would go on, carrying her away into the unknown depths of Salonica, where lay her home.

She and others soon realised that I was strongly

attracted to her, and older girls, including the Iliades, attempted to bring us together more. Thus I occasionally talked to Erika in the playground about unimportant matters, while I blushed scarlet and my heart raced painfully. Years later I learnt from an aunt of hers that Erika too was attracted to me, and that she used to be teased about this by her cousins at home.

I never met Erika out of school. We did not give any children's parties in Salonica, as we had done in Turkey; and Mother, in whom I confided, was not in favour of encouraging such a hopeless romance. Finally I got typhoid in May or June 1929, and it all ceased abruptly and finally.

When I first fell ill with typhoid, Mother thought it was just another attack of flu. When typhoid was diagnosed, I was rushed off to the Dan Sanatorium, and Dick and Derek were quickly inoculated. I had a room to myself at the sanatorium, but Mother always slept in another bed in the same room. I was there for a month, during most of which I lived on milk and orange-juice. At first Mother used to take her meals in the room, which I liked, because I enjoyed the smells even though I could not eat too, but then the matron put her foot down and Mother ate elsewhere.

As I knew that my Uncle Leslie, with whom I shared a name, had died of typhoid in Turkey at about the same age as I was then, I was rather apprehensive.

I had to have camphor injections twice a day, and they were put in one of my arms and legs in rotation, so that I should not have to be pricked in a place which was already sore. One day I had a mammoth injection of something. A bottle was hung up and a rubber tube connected to it. At the other end of this tube was a hypodermic needle, which was then stuck into me and allowed to remain there until the bottle was drained. What it was all about I still do not know. Occasionally I was wrapped in a wet, tepid sheet to lower my temperature. It was then about the hottest period of the year in Greece.

While I was at the sanatorium a young boy was brought in who had had incense from a church rubbed into wounds by a religious quack to 'cure' them.

As I began to convalesce, I was given soups and gruels, all entirely saltless. Then came the day when I could sit up and take notice. I loved to look out of the window and watch my beloved trams passing in the distance: they were my link with normal life outside. Sometimes Mother would describe the sanatorium garden to me, as my room was too high up for me to see it, and I would picture to myself the time when I would be able to go out there. Mother thoughtfully brought me a rosary of beads, the sort one sees men playing with in Greek and Turkish cafés to pass the time, and I would click them for hours on end. I still do this when I have to kill time. It is most effective. Mother would also read

to me, and I got a lot of amusement out of some transfers which I had won in a 'Daily Mirror' competition.

I do not know why, but I did not see Father during the whole of that month in the sanatorium.

Then came the time when the matron began to talk about my returning home. She was an attractive, young, efficient woman, unlike the nurses. The nursing profession was unfortunately held in very low esteem and was very badly paid in Greece at this time. It was recruited mostly from failed domestic servants, and the girls were untrained, crude, and mostly unsympathetic towards the patients. Hence, partly, Mother's decision to help nurse me herself.

A day was tentatively fixed for my return home, but when it came, my temperature was still not quite satisfactory, so the matron said I would have to stay. I was so depressed about this that she finally decided it would be better for me if I went. So Leonida appeared with a stretcher, beaming all over his plump face, and carried me down to the car with the help of one of the hospital porters, and I was at last on my way home. Getting up the steep, winding stairs to our flat on a stretcher was a bit of a job, and more than once I was afraid I was going to fall off; but they managed it, and I was put to bed. I lay there another few weeks, slowly getting back my strength. After a bit I practised walking again, at first with very little success. Then came the time when I could go out into the country

with the others on our usual afternoon drives.

Leonida had taken part in the Macedonian campaign during the Great War, and when we drove to places where battles had taken place, he used to describe them to us. Sometimes we would see broken-down trenches or old shell caps lying about on the ring of hills close to Salonica, which the Germans and Bulgars reached in their first assault on Salonica, before the Allies had really got organized. The treachery of the garrison of an easily defensible frontier pass had let the enemy through, but they were soon driven back again to the Struma valley, where fighting continued for years until the Allies finally overran the powerful heights held by the enemy. Cool, calm little cemeteries reminded one of those who had come here from different countries to fight in the broiling, enervating, malaria-ridden heat of the Macedonian plains in summer, and the bitter cold of the unprotected, wind-swept mountains in winter. Little did I know that I would one day be fighting on these mountains myself.

The casualties from malaria in the Great War on this front were terrific. Even in 1929, the populations of whole villages in the swampy plains had the yellow, parched, lack-lustre look of sufferers from chronic malaria, but after World War 2, much was done to combat this state of affairs by canalising the big rivers, draining the marshes and spraying standing water with DDT.

Chapter 3: Kniephof

In August we set out on our first great railway journey, in spite of the heat. We were fascinated by the dining-car; the sleeping compartments were not so novel, as they were much like the cabins we had known on the ship from Turkey to Salonica. Our first stop was Belgrade, but we did not have time to get out there. At Budapest, however, we were allowed five hours, and made full use of the time. I have since come to like the Hungarians very much and to love reading books about their country before 1944, and I find their music intensely moving. I also came to know several lovely Hungarian girls, and was fascinated by their volatile temperament, one moment ecstatically happy, and the next in the depths of despair.

But this five hours in Budapest in 1929 was my only direct experience of Hungary until many years later. We took a taxi from the railway station across the Margaret bridge, looked around Buda, and finished up eating ices in an open-air café before returning to the train.

Our next big stop was Prague, where we arrived early one morning. There we had to change trains for Berlin. We had time to eat some little Frankfurter sausages at the station - the sort that are fished out of a pot of piping hot water in pairs, and served to you on a cardboard plate with a roll and German mustard - but no time to see the town. I was not to see Prague again until fifteen years

later, when I was to wander around it as a fugitive.

Our train to Berlin was a come-down after our comfortable sleeper. We travelled in an ordinary second-class coach, arriving in Berlin in the afternoon. On the way we followed the Elbe for some distance, and were impressed by the greenness of the landscape after Greece, Yugoslavia and even Hungary, which were all sunburnt, and by the number of little summer colonies along the river, all consisting of tiny chalets with German or Saxon flags and neat little gardens.

I have forgotten at which station we arrived in Berlin, but we drove from there by taxi to a pension near the station from which we were to leave for Stettin. This was the first of many visits I was to pay to Berlin, a city which I grew to love and to feel more comfortable in than any in England, probably because I had unconsciously absorbed from Mother a German way of looking at things, and certainly a German sense of humour, which had nothing in common with British facetiousness.

We were met at the station by Aunt Lopie. She was an elder sister of Mother's and Aunt Lily's, who had married a German naval officer, Adalbert Zuckschwerdt, before the Great War. The latter had found her in the Far East with her husband, but she had managed to get a Greek passport in her maiden name and return via the USA to Greece, with only one hitch at Gibraltar, where the ship she was travelling in was stopped and Aunt Lopie

was searched by the Royal Navy, even down to having the soles of her shoes ripped open to see if there was anything hidden in them. She spent the rest of the war in Greece, and helped to look after me during my first year or so. Later she visited us in Turkey several times, and was always very popular with us, as she loved children and used to teach us gymnastics and read Hans Andersen's fairy tales to us in German. She had no children herself, so was a doubly kind and beloved aunt to us. One of the things I remember very clearly about her is that she used to get us children to walk on her as she lay on the ground to massage her back.

Uncle Adalbert had had to leave the German Navy in 1919 because it had been drastically cut down by the Treaty of Versailles, and now he had the shooting rights over a large area in Pomerania, including Kniephof, an estate owned by the descendants of Prince Bismarck, who had himself lived there during parts of his riotous youth. Uncle Adalbert and Aunt Lopie rented a wing of the very large manor house there, and we were to spend the summer with them before going to school in England.

We left Berlin for Stettin in a third-class carriage with Mother and Aunt Lopie. Third-class carriages had wooden seats in those days, which were a novelty to us children. We arrived at Stettin after dark and changed trains for Naugard, but the new train was so crowded that we had to

get into the guard's van with a mass of colourful and fascinating Pomeranian peasants. We were very tired by the time we arrived and were driven home by Uncle Adalbert.

We spent three summers and one Easter holiday at Kniephof, and we came to love the place dearly, so that every time we had to leave to go back to school we would cry most of the way back to Berlin. Kniephof was a little hamlet populated by the peasants who worked on the Bismarck estate. There was an alcohol factory in the village, using potatoes to make schnapps, but no church and not even a shop, which shows how small the place was. The manor house was surrounded by lawns, and had an oval drive leading to the stone steps of the porch. The Bismarcks always used horse-drawn carriages, but Uncle Adalbert had a car.

On entering the house, one first came to a large and imposing hall two storeys high, with a gallery running round it at the level of the first floor. To get to Uncle Adalbert's wing, one turned left through an ornate doorway. If one went straight on instead of turning left, one came to the Bismarcks' sitting-room, drawing-room and dining-room, leading to a verandah on the other side of the house. To the right were offices and the apartments of the bailiff etc. Upstairs were the family bedrooms, nursery and so on, and above those a huge attic. Below the ground floor there were kitchens, cellars, laundry-rooms etc.

On entering Uncle Adalbert's wing, one came first to

his study, and then to the drawing-room, followed by the dining-room and a spare bedroom. Upstairs (one could get there by a private staircase), there were three bedrooms, one Aunt Lopie's and Uncle Adalbert's, and the other two spare ones, but these were inextricably tangled up with the Bismarcks' system of bedrooms. However, as we were all friends, no one worried. We had no bathroom (though the Bismarcks had one), so we bathed in a folding rubber thing like a children's paddling pool in one of the bedrooms.

Herr von Bismarck was dead; he had died of TB and there were harrowing photographs of his dead body in some of the rooms. Frau von Bismarck, a tall, slim blonde with long plaits twisted up into a crown around her head, was very kind to us and very efficient at managing the estate. She had six children, all very blonde and Teutonic-looking. Klaus and Otto were too old to come into contact with us much, and anyway were away most of the time. Mädinge, a plump, jolly girl who was next in age, was also too old for us, but we often came across her, as she helped her mother in the house. However, the three we really knew were Günther, Anne and Gorri, who were more our age. They were attractive children and we used to play with them a lot.

Besides the members of the family, there were always a lot of hangers-on and guests. The Bismarcks were keen on learning languages, and did in fact all speak excellent English. Usually they had an Englishman staying in the

house to give them conversation practice. One holiday they also had a dainty little couple to teach them dancing, and these two gave several exhibitions of dancing, which we were invited to. The estate bailiff was a tall, lean, bullet-headed Prussian whom we did not like and who, I suspect, did not like us.

Aunt Lopie had a maid-of-all-work, and Uncle Adalbert a secretary, a very pleasant and entertaining young lady called Fräulein von Korff. We were very surprised when Aunt Lopie informed us that we would have to address the servants - both hers and the Bismarcks' - with the polite 'Sie' and not the familiar 'du', as one always did in Greece.

Uncle Adalbert was at that time agent for an American silver-fox company. Mother and Father invested in it and lost some money. Uncle Adalbert had always been interested in the good things of life and was an expert on oriental carpets and various objets d'art, so the ground floor rooms were well furnished with carpets, heavy antique furniture, paintings etc. He was also an expert shot, and the walls of his study were covered with trophies, mostly red deer heads or horns, but also some stag heads and birds. From his time in the South Pacific he had a crocodile skin and some exotic horns and birds. The downstairs lavatory contained a collection of primitive masks, clubs and carvings, most of them very fearsome-looking.

Uncle Adalbert had a rough-haired dachshund dog named Mentor, and a large rough-haired schnauzer bitch, Harpa, which was very well trained and could point and retrieve. The dachshund had won large numbers of prizes and had been world champion for several years by this time. Uncle Adalbert was an expert on these dogs, and had been largely instrumental in bringing them up to a high state of perfection after they had suffered neglect during the Great War. Harpa lived on a little rug in the study, which she never dared leave as long as Uncle Adalbert was in the house, but Mentor was allowed to wander about the house with red, bleary eyes as he was getting on in years. One of his favourite amusements was to roll in very old, very smelly things he found lying about outside - for instance discarded pieces of ham.

Mentor was in great demand for breeding purposes, and once I helped Uncle Adalbert smuggle a young bitch in from Sweden to be covered by Mentor. We went to the docks at Swinemünde, boarded a small freighter, and came ashore with the bitch under Uncle's coat.

The garden and estate were the great attractions at Kniephof. Sometimes Uncle would take me shooting roe deer or beating for partridges, and once or twice he took me wild boar shooting (I was never allowed to do any shooting myself). Once Mentor was put down a foxhole, and after a lot of muffled barking and squealing, a fox shot out of another hole, to be pounced on and despatched at once

by Harpa.

But usually we used to go out alone or with Mother or some of the Bismarck children. The country was very flat (I like plains), with plenty of coniferous woods and little streams and ponds. At the end of the lawn behind the house there was a little stream crossed by rustic bridges, and beyond that a wooded park to the left, and a meadow to the right. There were storks in the meadow in summer, and we several times tried to catch one by creeping up through the long grass, but in vain.

There were two places where we could bathe, a large and muddy carp pond, which was our usual place, and a swift-flowing, chilly stream called the Zampel, where we used to bathe just above and below a weir. The mud in the pond never used to deter us, and we used to play about in it, swimming a bit or climbing on to long, straight tree trunks which floated in it. The Zampel weir was great fun: one could get right behind the curving sheet of water, and sit in a dank, rather slimy hollow, looking out through the roaring water before one. We also used to fish for stickleback in the Zampel or one of its small tributaries, hooking them on an ordinary bent pin with the help of a worm. So greedy and competitive were these little fish that we could even haul them out without their being hooked, as they would not let go of the worm till too late.

One surprising event connected with the Zampel

is that one day Mother insisted on me and my brothers removing our bathing costumes and posing for a photo in the nude in a nearby meadow.

The nearest place to Kniephof with a shop was a little village called Iarchlin, where relatives of the Bismarcks had another estate. There was also a church there. We occasionally used to visit the shop to buy household goods, and we were always bought a lot of sweets on these occasions, usually by Aunt Lopie, who spoilt us. There was a strange game of chance in that shop which I have never seen elsewhere. There was a square board with rows and rows of holes in it. Over this was stuck a thin sheet of paper. One paid 20 pfennigs, which entitled one to punch through the paper down into one of the holes. This released a ball, which fell down into a slot, from which one could retrieve it. One then got a prize which depended on the colour of the ball. Most of the balls entitled one to a 10 pfennig bar of chocolate, but there were others worth more, the best being boxes of quite good chocolate creams. One of us did actually win one of these boxes once.

Iarchlin was also the place where a small fair was held at harvest time. The main attraction for us children was a roundabout with wooden horses to sit on. It was turned by human muscle power, and if one took three turns pushing, one was allowed one free ride. The motive power was a capstan in a cramped circular booth in the middle of the roundabout.

There was also a harvest festival in Kniephof, which ended up with much dancing and drinking in a barn to the sounds of a band. We children were allowed to drink Malzbier (malt beer), which had little or no alcohol in it. I remember that, at one of these village hops, I asked a young lady whom I found very attractive to dance a waltz with me, and she literally swept me off my feet when she discovered that my knowledge of the waltz was rudimentary, and spun around with great skill and speed until I was giddy.

Sometimes we used to go to Naugard, the nearest market town, to the shops or the dentist. It also had the railway station from which we knew we would have to leave for school, so we viewed it with mixed feelings. However, there again we used to be bought sweets, and there were also cafés where one got lovely pastries. One of Uncle Adalbert's hunting cronies was a doctor in Naugard. He was called Dr Pieper, and it was rumoured that he was in the habit of shooting rabbits with a machine-gun. I was once taken to him with an inflamed ingrowing toenail, whereupon he gave me a local anaesthetic and then cut a piece of my toe off. Besides being very painful when the anaesthetic wore off, this operation had no permanent effect, as the toe soon grew back into its old shape.

On the way to Naugard one passed another estate, where the von Puttkamers, who were related to the Bismarcks,

lived. Herr von Puttkamer was a nice, deaf old chap who sometimes used to shoot with Uncle. His wife was a rather harassed but kindly little woman who talked a lot. They had four sons, all very blond and German, with whom we used to play. Once we all watched a pig being slaughtered on the estate farm. It was strung up by its heels, and then had its throat cut. The von Puttkamers were rumoured to be very badly off - genteel poor of the Weimar Republic.

Before going to England at the end of that first summer in Germany, we spent some days in Berlin at Fräulein Bergh's pension. This was a large flat in a good quarter of Berlin where one could rub shoulders with all sorts of flotsam and jetsam of the old Imperial Germany - retired generals, penniless baronesses, old people who had been hard hit by the war and inflation and had had to retrench drastically. We all sat down at a long table for meals, and we children were objects of some curiosity for the very inbred permanent residents.

Fräulein Bergh was an old friend of Aunt Lopie's, which was why we used to stay at her pension when we were in Berlin. She was tall, gaunt and aristocratic, but always very kind to us children. The rooms were comfortable, we were central and living was cheap, which was an important factor when three of us had to be fed, clothed and educated during the Great Depression of the early Thirties.

One of my most vivid memories of the pension was when

I came there on holiday from my preparatory school one year, on the way to Kniephof, and, having learnt a few of the facts of life at school, asked Mother whether I had been circumcised. She at once became very upset and angry, and told me never to ask her such questions again.

Other memories of those stays in Berlin were ice-cream parlours with revolving red and white spirals in their windows rather like our barbers' poles; a kind of cheese called 'Totenfinger' (dead men's fingers), which in fact looked like corpses' fingers so mouldy that they were covered in small hairs; and a penny-in-the-slot machine with a model of the so-called 'Stadtmusikanten' (town musicians), the ass, the dog, the cat and the cock, who set out to earn their living by singing, and so frightened some thieves that they ran away, leaving their loot behind. When one put one's ten-pfennig piece in the slot, one heard a bray, a bark, a mew and a crow and then received a few sweets.

One of our big treats whenever we went to Berlin was to be taken to La Scala, a wonderful variety theatre, rather like the Lido or the Folies Bergère in Paris today, but without the nudes. One of the spectacular acts I still remember was a man who attached enormously long coloured chalks to his fingers and thumbs, and then wrote on ten blackboards with them, each finger and thumb writing a different message simultaneously on one of the boards.

We occasionally went to the cinema too. I remember seeing

Charlie Chaplin's 'City Lights' with my two brothers, but without Mother or Aunt Lovie. Even in those days I found mawkish sentimentality embarrassing, so during one of the most treacly of Charlie's scenes I began to laugh, much to the indignation of the tearful Germans around us, who turned towards me and said, 'Nichts zu lachen!' (There's nothing to laugh about!').

Chapter 4: To prep school in England

Father joined us towards the end of our time in Kniephof that first year, so we left for England with both our parents, after tearful scenes on leaving Aunt Lopie. We travelled to the Hook of Holland by train, arriving about midnight, very tired and achy, in spite of (upholstered) second-class seats. It was by now early September 1929, and the sea was rather rough, but we had cabins, so I had no trouble from seasickness. I have always found that, provide I could stay lying down, preferably on my left side, I could survive any amount of rough seas, and eat heartily at the same time.

Next morning found us having breakfast at some unearthly hour before landing in a cold and gloomy-looking England. Those first few hours I spent in that country were a fair sample of my subsequent impressions of it. I was in England off and on for the next ten years, although I only spent just over eight years of that time actually in the country.

Besides the gloomy weather, the thing that struck me most on the way to London that first day was the ugliness of the rows of uniform houses, growing greyer and grimmer and more hopeless-looking as we approached London.

We were going to Stubbington House Preparatory School in Hampshire, so we went down to Southsea straight away. Granny and Grandfather were now living there in a pleasant flat overlooking the sea, but we stayed in a boarding house.

The next week or so was spent in buying school uniforms, trunks, tuck-boxes and all the other paraphernalia schoolboys needed. We wore grey tweed jackets and shorts in winter, grey flannel ones in summer, regulation striped shirts with white collars, grey stockings with two cherry-red rings at the top, black ties with red stripes, black caps with a red deer (the school crest) on the front, black boots for outdoor wear and black house-shoes for indoors. For Sundays we had short black jackets and waistcoats, grey striped trousers and a stiff Eton collar, which was very difficult to put on with half frozen fingers on a chilly Sunday morning. In summer we also had straw hats with a black and red ribbon, and for rain and cold weather we had navy blue raincoats and overcoats. Then there were, of course, all kinds of sports clothes - blazers, cricket shirts, long white flannel trousers, football shirts, shorts, stockings and boots, gym shoes, and so on.

One day we went out to see the school and the headmaster, a terrifying and depressing business, though the school grounds were attractive, with beautiful lawns and handsome old trees. The headmaster, Sir Montague Foster, was old and of uncertain temper, but he was pleasant enough to our parents and ourselves that day, trying to put us at our ease in his large, well-furnished study. However, the whole thing was too much for us, and we wept copiously.

I was eleven and a half, and Derek only seven and a

half when we went to Stubbington. We were all put in one cubicle in a dormitory to start with, so that we were able to be together at night, at least. None of us was ever caned, and I think that Dick and Derek, at any rate, went there young enough to adapt and enjoy their last years, especially as they became prefects and got into school teams. But I was only there seven terms before I had to go on to public school, and I was already too old to adapt. I was never the remotest good at sports or games, physical training or singing, as I lacked the three and a half years' background that the other boys had. It was taken for granted that I knew the rudiments, which I had never in fact been taught.

Beatings were quite frequent at Stubbington. Sir Montague was one of the old school who believed in the motto 'Spare the rod and spoil the child.' Once during my time at the school there was a 'pub' (public beating) in the gym. Two boys had been caught bullying, and were held over the horse by the PT instructor and the sergeant while Sir Montague caned them in front of us all. Boys were also caned in the headmaster's study, for not doing well in work, for example. Once there was an announcement after morning prayers which caused some hilarity: 'Ellam and Terry to report to the headmaster's study after this.' They were two boys, but we interpreted their names as 'elementary' and thought it very funny. There was a lot of word play and punning in the school. For Latin we used the 'Shorter Latin Primer', which could be changed into the 'Shortbread-Eating Primer' on

the cover of the book by a few added strokes of the pen.

As my brothers and I spoke English with a trace of foreign accent, we were unmercifully ragged, called 'dagoes' and made to say things in Greek, at which our persecutors would roar with laughter.

In work I did well. The classes had peculiar names. The bottom one, where Derek started, was called C; then came B, Ab (where Dick started) and Aa (where I started). This ended the Lower School, and then there began the Middle School, consisting of IIIb, IIIa, IVb and IVa. Upper School was Vb, Va, Lower Sixth and Upper Sixth. It was not necessary to go through all the classes: if one was clever, one went through the a classes (Aa, IIIa, IVa etc), whereas the less bright ones went through the b's. In my seven terms I went from Aa to Lower Sixth, doing very well, and winning form prizes, on the way. The Upper Sixth was for scholarship and navy candidates almost exclusively. I was very often top of my class. We used to have weekly mark-sheets, giving one's marks for each subject and the total, which we used to have to send home each week when we wrote home on Sundays.

I had never done any Latin before I went to Stubbington, and in Aa I was supposed to have done some already, so I was immediately put to learning the declension of 'mensa' (table) by heart, without any explanation of what Latin was, why one should learn it, how 'mensa' fitted in, why one should ever need to say 'O table!' or anything else.

Luckily I have always had an excellent parrot memory and enjoy using it, so I soon became reasonably good at Latin.

I had quite a good French accent when I went to Stubbington - better than any of the masters or mistresses - and managed to keep it almost intact, despite ragging from the other boys.

I was particularly good at mental arithmetic, and enjoyed showing my skill off in class. There was a system of stars and stripes in the school, and I often received a star for this mental arithmetic. However, I had learnt no algebra before, and found this rather perplexing at first, as it was very unimaginatively taught, like the Latin.

My worst subject was geography. Never having lived in England before, I was totally inorant of the layout of the railway network in that country, which seemed to be the main topic of our lessons.

As we had no close relatives in England who could take us for the Christmas and Easter holidays, my parents arranged for us to go to North Devon as paying guests of the Corletts. The father was a gross, hard-drinking retired naval captain, the mother was a kindly little thing with grey hair, and there were three children, the elder son being away in the navy most of the time. The daughter, Moy, who was several years older than I

was, was at a leading girls' public school, and the younger son, John, was at Stubbington with us, though a year older than me.

I arrived late for those first Christmas holidays owing to a tonsils operation which was carried out in a nursing-home in Southsea. I was in bed convalescing in Granny's flat on Christmas Day, but left soon afterwards. The Corletts lived in a rambling old farmhouse right out in the country, about half an hour's walk from the little village of Bradworthy. It was not a bad place for children. We were well fed, slept all three in one room, and were allowed to run about and amuse ourselves, or were taken in the car for pleasant drives or to beagling and foxhunting meets. Football boots, wellingtons, mud and frost typify those winter holidays in my memory. I suffered from bronchial cattarrh, chilblains and boils during most of those two first winters I spent in England, but then my protesting system must have given up in face of the inevitable, and I very seldom had any trouble after that.

There were some beautiful old trees in the extensive grounds of the Corletts' estate, and I enjoyed climbing them, especially the yews with their springy branches. I used to climb as high as I could, then edge my way out to the ends of the branches and let go, bouncing on the lower branches as I fell until I reached the ground.

Quite a bit of our time was taken up in watching

people killing things - or trying to kill them. Moy had a pony and was a keen foxhunter, and we used to be taken to follow the hunt in Captain Corlett's rickety old car. John had an airgun, a terrier and a spaniel, so we used to watch him shoot rabbits, or accompany him out beagling, when we ran about in circles on wet ploughed fields in our football boots, trailing a voluble little master of beagle hounds whose Devonshire accent was so broad that we could not understand a word of what he said, and whose hounds never once caught a hare while we were there.

Occasionally we used to attend when ricks were threshed, and then mice and rats were killed by the dozen with sticks and stones or by wildly excited dogs. We once saved a family of baby mice, so young that they had no hair on their pink skins and their eyes were not yet open. We fed them on milk and tried to keep them warm, but they soon died.

There were plenty of barns about, in which John set rat traps. When any rats were caught, they were taken out on the lawn and released so that the terrier and the spaniel could chase and kill them.

Then there were the moles. There were hundreds of them about, and John used to trap them, skin them and use their pelts to make coats.

Derek has since become a conscientious vegetarian, and I have never done any hunting, shooting or fishing,

with the exception of the Kniephof sticklebacks. Dick, I believe, later did a bit of shooting when there was any going. When asked whether I have ever done any shooting, I always answer, 'Only people.'

Another regular event of life at the Corletts which left no deep imprint on my mind or habits was church. Every Sunday morning we would troop down to the church in Bradworthy in our best clothes, sit through the usual hymns, psalms, prayers and (if we were unlucky) sermon and then troop back very hungry to the Sunday joint. I used to feel rather guilty about my lack of enthusiasm for church, both at school and during those winter holidays. When we were in Turkey, we had read the Bible regularly with Mr de la Roche and at the parson's school, and we had frequently gone to Sunday school in Moda at the English church, but in Salonica we had had nothing but our so-called 'Divinity' classes with Herr Sauerwein. Nevertheless, I did not find myself at all backward in the divinity classes we used to have nearly every morning at Stubbington. But no one ever really tried to explain religion to me, any more than they had tried to explain Latin. Interesting and even fascinating as the Old Testament stories were, they did not seem to fit in with being a good boy, doing one's lessons, not lying, loving one's parents and the other ideals that were held up to one. The New Testament seemed more relevant, but no one ever filled it with real life for me; and the great problem of why an all-powerful and

all-knowing God created the sort of human beings who inhabit the real world was always nagging at the back of my mind, although I did not put it into clear form until much later. Presumably an all-knowing God knew exactly what He was creating when He created Man, and knew exactly what monstrous cruelties he would perpetrate.

The next event that stands out in my memory after our first holiday in North Devon is the measles epidemic at Stubbington. There was soon no more room in the sanatorium, so several dormitories were turned into sick bays. I took a long time to develop the spots, so I was put in a cubicle by myself, and at about midnight one night the matron, a dark-haired girl whom I thought very attractive and felt a sort of calf-love for, came and gave me a hot whisky and lemon, the first time I had ever tasted an alcoholic drink. I got the spots in due course, and was put in a large semi-darkened dormitory with a lot of other boys, and fed on watered-down milk and barley water, which I hated.

Those of us who were convalescent were allowed proper food at lunch time, and one day, while I still had a temperature, I was given fish pie by mistake, and ate it all with great pleasure and with no bad results. On getting back to class, I was received very badly by my classmates, who had had a wonderful time while most of us were away, and resented having to get back to work

again.

The abscess in my ear came during the summer term. I had already been to the sanatorium several times with catarrh and boils. It was a pleasant little house a few minutes' walk from the school, and was run by a kindly and efficient woman whom we called 'Sister'. In winter we used to have open fires in our bedrooms in the San, a servant coming in to stoke them during the night. I thought this was the height of luxury, especially as our dormitories in the school were perishingly cold, and the sergeant (a retired Marine NCO who used to scrub our hands with a brush and soft soap periodically) who brought hot water round in the mornings for us to wash in sometimes had to break the ice in our jugs first.

Another luxury in the San was a proper flush toilet. At Stubbington we sat over holes in a wooden bench, and did our business into sawdust, which was then shovelled out by an invisible man at the back, sometimes while we were actually performing.

The abscess in my ear was operated on late at night by a specialist from Southsea, with the school doctor acting as anaesthetist with a pad of cottonwool instead of a mask. I had an awful nightmare after passing out. I dreamt that I was down in hell. There was a pinpoint of bright light in front of me in the blackness, and I knew that it came from a magic lantern like Father's, and that

behind me, on the screen, there was a message from the devil to all the boys in hell, where I was. I was, however, the only boy there, and I was struggling not to be forced to turn round and see the message, which would seal my doom; but every time I struggled, I became more deeply and hopelessly tangled up. I finally came to, to find myself struggling with Sister, who was sitting on my arms to keep me from falling out of bed. The doctor tried again, and this time the ether and chloroform worked properly.

When I came to Lady (Tryfosa) Foster, the headmaster's wife, came to visit me. She was a tall, slim, gentle lady who used to come and see the boys in the dormitories or the San from time to time. She had two children, the son being a mster at Stubbington, and later headmaster, and the daughter making herself useful about the headmaster's wing of the building. It took me some time to recover from the operation, and I was not allowed to take part in the school sports that term. I was in any case useless at running and jumping, but had hoped to be in my Section tug-of-war team.

The school sports were always a great event for us. The school was divided up into four Sections for the purpose of competitions, each named after a prominent Old Stubbingtoni - Scott (the explorer), Huddart, Wauchope and Montague. New boys were drawn for by the head boys of the various Sections, and Dick had been drawn by Wauchope, Derek

by Montague, and I by Huddart. Each Section had its own colour, green for Scott, red for Wauchope, yellow for Montague, and pale blue for Huddart. On sports day each boy wore a white vest trimmed with his Section colour, and there was a Section competition as well as the individual prizes and parents' and old boys' races. Half-way through the sports there was always an excellent tea, with sandwiches, many kinds of cake, strawberries and cream and ices.

There was, of course, a Speech Day in the summer term, at which a prominent person presented the school prizes; and the two other big social events of the year both came at the end of the Christmas term. They were the school concert and the fancy dress dance. At the former there were two short plays, one by the senior and one by the junior school, and songs by the various forms, by the choir and by the school en masse. We had practised these songs in singing classes for the whole term, so that we were usually well drilled, if lacking in expression. The fancy dress dance was always great fun. We usually went in Greek evzone costume, but never won any prizes. Both the concert and the dance were accompanied by large teas, which we used to look forward to for weeks.

My parents decided to send us to Canford School after leaving Stubbington. The latter had mainly prepared candidates for the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, in the past, but relatively few went there in my day. I took the

Common Entrance examination for Canford, and left Stubbington in December 1931, after an undistinguished career there. However, I did well in the Common Entrance exam, except for a howler in Latin, when I translated 'mulier' as 'mule' instead of 'woman', never having come across the word during my time at Stubbington. I also must have done unaccountably poorly at mathematics, as I was put in the bottom set for that subject in my form at Canford for the first term and a half.

Our last holidays in North Devon were overshadowed by the serious illness of Captain Corlett, which necessitated our leaving the house before the end of the holidays. I went to Southsea and stayed with Granny until the time came to go to Canford, and then set out full of trepidation in the large Rolls Granny used to hire for trips.

Chapter 5: Public school

I was at Canford for four and a half years. The buildings and grounds were very attractive. The estate had belonged to Lord Wimborne before the school bought it, and had stretched from near Wimborne in Dorset down to the sea at Canford Cliffs. The school owned a smaller area, though even this was adequate, the rest of the former estate consisting of moorland. The main building was a large country house, to which various wings and separate buildings had been added. It was dominated by a tower, from which the school flag flew. Only a few yards behind the school ran the River Stour, on which I spent many pleasant summer afternoons. In front of the school, lawns and clipped yew trees led down to the playing-fields, which stretched away for a mile and more.

The chapel, which stood alone in the grounds, dated back to Saxon times; and John of Gaunt's kitchen, which had been converted into a library and debating society room, was also very old. The theatre building, which was also used for PT, films, chapel, lectures and big examinations, had been built very recently, as had a three-storeyed building between it and the main school, which contained classrooms and dormitories.

I was allotted to Court House, which lived some ten minutes' walk from the main school at the other end of Canford village, though one was not allowed to pass

through the latter to go there until one was a prefect. It was pleasant to get away from the main school in the evenings and at weekends, though the junior common room in Court House was noisy and overcrowded. I disliked that mass living and was not happy until I got a study about two years after going to Canford. There were few studies in the house, and those were mostly occupied by prefects. There were always two to a study, but our house was better off than others, in which there were even fewer studies.

The members of the junior common room had to take turns to clean it, in pairs. For this a broom had to be borrowed from the domestic staff of the house. One had to go to a door, knock, and wait for one of the housemaids to come. Then one had to ask politely to borrow the broom. There was one girl who was particularly sour and disobliging. When one asked her for the broom, she would answer, 'Sister says you can't 'ave none', Sister being the person we called Matron, who was in charge of the domestic side of the house, as well as being responsible for treating our minor ailments.

Some of the wittier boys, when confronted with this refusal, would ask, 'None what?', and back would come the answer 'None broom', much to the hilarity of all, who were waiting out of sight for this unique piece of English grammar.

I went straight into the top form of the Middle School, Shell A. The division of the school into forms was even more peculiar than at Stubbington. The Lower

School consisted of the Third Form at the bottom, the Lower Fourth, the Middle Fourth and the Upper Fourth. Then the Middle School was all Shells: Shell C, B & A were the language side, and Shell 3, 2 & 1 the science side. The Senior School was composed of Vc, Vb, Va, in all of which one took the School Certificate exam, Va being for the clever people; and the Lower and Upper Sixth, which were for the Higher Certificate and University Scholarship candidates.

Within the Shells there were 'sets'. If you were good at French, you might be in French Set 1; if you were bad at Maths, you might be in Set 3 for that, and so on. So a set might contain representatives of Shells A, B & C. I was in the top set for everything except Maths, but I worked up to the top set in that too in a term and a half. There were some really clever boys in Shell A. Till then, Canford had not been noted for its brains. It had rather catered for sons of the landed gentry who were not bright enough to get into Eton etc. It had only been founded in 1923, and was trying to develop a personality. Riding was gone in for on quite a large scale, especially in Court House, which was close to the riding stables, run by a retired army captain who had been an instructor at Weedon. There was also a royal tennis court, the only one owned by a school in those days. That too was very close to Court House.

I was no good at games. We played hockey in the

Easter term, which was when I joined, cricket in the summer, and rugger in the Christmas term, and dduring part of the summer term we had sports - running, jumping and throwing things. Often we used to go for organised cross-country runs instead of playing hockey or rugger. I hated those runs more than I hated hockey and cricket, and that is saying a lot. I think that my shortsightedness might have contributed to my problems with ball games.

My first two terms I was still too young to join the Officers Training Corps, so I had to do PT with other young boys on Wednesday and Friday afternoons. That also I disliked.

That Easter holidays, 1932, my parents, worried about the rise of Hitler, had arranged for us to go to Letchworth in Hertfordshire instead of Kniephof, to stay with a widow who was a distant cousin of Father's, Kathleen Morriss, as paying guests. We were very disappointed, as the year before, Aunt Lopie had come to England and fetched us to Kniephof for the Easter holidays. We had travelled in the German liner 'Europa', which was an experience in itself.

We had been told that Mrs Morriss was a vegetarian, and that Letchworth was not far from London, so I had the worst forebodings. I went to King's Cross by myself, and was met by Miss Rebecca Bennett, Kathleen Morriss's partner, and taken to Letchworth.

We spent all our holidays at their house, Maryland, for the next three years, as my parents would not let us go to Germany during that time because of the riots and unrest which accompanied Hitler's rise there. As a result of this disappointment, I developed a bitter dislike of Letchworth, which was, I think, shared by my brothers. This was very unfair, as Mrs Morriss and Mistress Rebecca, as we called her, did their best for us and were both very kind and understanding. The fact is that I detested staying in England, and my dislike became focussed on the particular locality I was tied down to. I did not want to go anywhere else in England: I just wanted out. After leaving school, I returned to Maryland again and again with the greatest pleasure as a haven of rest and mental recuperation, though I had not yet got over my dislike of living in England.

Maryland was a semi-detached house on the very edge of Letchworth Garden City. Like all the houses in the residential quarter, it had an ample garden, but it also had the added advantage of being on the edge of the green belt, so that nothing could be built beyond it. The country round about was too intensively built over and cultivated for us, who loved wide open spaces where one could ramble for miles without seeing a house or having to avoid continual ploughed fields, but the garden was lovely. A lawn, lots of fruit trees,

well-kept flower-beds with a profusion of flowers such as one only seems to see in England, are a joy to an older person, but to restless children with the memory of miles and miles of warm hills and ravines, isolated seashores with only a few hamlets visible in the far distance, or the woods, streams and meadows of the Northern European plain, a neat, compact English garden was a prison.

Not, of course, such a prison as school. I used to think and talk about Canford as a prison. It probably did me a lot of good to go through a course of discipline and regimentation, but I hated and resented it just as I hated and resented the English countryside with its neatness and lush greenness. Probably if I had gone to Scotland, or the Lake District, the Yorkshire moors or the Welsh hills, I would not have had so jaundiced a view of the British countryside, but Hampshire, North Devon, Hertfordshire, Kent, Surrey, Sussex and Cambridgeshire, which I alone knew, were not my cup of tea.

The main aim of the British public schools had been to make everyone think and react along the same lines, so that if, for example, a soldier, a civil servant, a doctor and an engineer met on the North West Frontier, each would be sure that the others would tick in the same way as he did, so that long explanation and discussion would be unnecessary. Misfits like the poet Shelley did not last long in such a system. But as the

British Empire shrank, the need for such mental and moral regimentation disappeared, and already in my day the public schools were groping towards relevance to a new world, in which divergent intelligence would be a more useful national asset than the convergent variety. We needed to produce people like Frank Whittle, the inventor of the jet engine, who was scorned by the Establishment boffins when he came up with his revolutionary idea, and had the greatest trouble in having it tested.

I moved up into the Upper School at the beginning of the new school year in September 1932; I went straight into Va with most of the bright boys of Shell A, and began to work for the School Certificate, the equivalent of the modern O Levels. At the same time I joined the OTC, donned the rough, hot, hairy uniform and began to be drilled by Sergeant-Major Edwards, a veteran of the World War, who looked after the school armoury and pretty well ran the Corps, in spite of the masters who officered it. I took to the Corps quite easily, and did not mind that particular kind of regimentation unduly.

During the summer term in which I took the School Certificate, someone in my dormitory got chicken-pox, so another boy and I, who were the only two in the dormitory who had not yet had it, were sent to the school sanatorium for quarantine. We were not allowed to mix with any of the other boys, but otherwise could wander

wherever we wanted, so that we had a fortnight's good holiday in beautiful weather.

After my bad start in mathematics in the Shells, I had discovered that I had a great aptitude for the subject, so in the middle of my second Easter term, I had started a subject called Additional Mathematics, which entailed a paper in Statics and Dynamics and another in Geometry, Algebra and Trigonometry in the School Certificate. We were taught by a hard-faced and forbidding-looking man called Corbett, who had been a tutor at the Royal Military College, Sandhurst. He was sarcastic and terrifying until one knew him well, but then, if one was good at mathematics, he was charming and helpful. While I was in the sanatorium, which was quite close to Court House and the bachelor masters' lodgings, Mr Corbett gave me extra tuition in Additional Mathematics in his study, and thus helped me to pass well in it.

My partner in the San, Hodgson by name, was known as a rather wild type. He had occasionally teased me in the Junior Common Room, whereupon I had always looked black and suffered in silence, as I did whenever I was bullied by boys who resented my brains. On one occasion he had advised me in a very kind and reasonable voice not to sulk. I think that that started a new phase in my life. I decided that I should try to control my feelings more effectively, be pleasanter to people

and more cheerful myself. I therefore built a shell around myself, which I let no one penetrate.

In the San Hodgson soon got up to mischief. He managed to get hold of an airgun, with which he took pot-shots at some pigs in pens behind the San, and then he decided to raid a neighbouring greenhouse for peaches. This time I joined him, not so much for pleasure but because I wanted to be pleasant and not a wet blanket. We got up at about midnight one night, put on clothes over our pyjamas, climbed out of a window and down a drainpipe, crossed a small cemetery and stole some of the peaches, with which we returned to the San. The peaches were unripe and unpleasant to eat, but it was the principle that counted.

Several times we went up on to the moors and bathed in the nude in a reservoir there. I have always found it a luxurious feeling to have the water flow over one's whole body without any clothing to impede it. How wise the Russians were to bathe in the nude on all occasions in their country! There is a wonderful photo of the last Czar doing this.

The summer term of that year saw another turning point in my character. Till then I had been useless at games. I was no good at running, ball games bored me, and I hated getting hurt in boxing and rugger. But now something more my line was started - rowing on the Stour. A few

old boats, tubs, pairs, whiffs and phunnies, were bought from Eton College, and one of the best heavyweight oars there had ever been at that time, the Reverend J. B. Collins, who rowed 6 in the winning Cambridge boat for four years, and had become school Chaplain, was there to coach us. I slogged away at it that first summer, never getting beyond a tub or a whiff; but the foundations were laid and, anyway, it was a vast relief to get away from cricket.

At the end of that summer term I went to my first and last OTC camp. One had to attend one camp to be allowed to take Certificate 'A', the OTC examination without which one could not get much promotion. To get Certificate 'A', one also had to pass practical and theoretical tests, after which one could wear a red star on one's sleeve. I passed at an unusually early age, and had the rare distinction of wearing the star without any NCO's stripes for a time. In most cases, cadets were already junior NCOs before they passed.

Because of my shortsightedness, which meant that my glasses made things smaller to enable me to focus, I was hopeless at shooting, but our House captain of shooting was determined that we should continue to win the House cup for the greatest percentage of first-class shots, so I received a lot of coaching on the .22 range, and managed to get my first-class-shot badge every year.

Often I noticed that the captain happened to be in the position next to mine while I was doing my test, and I had a strong suspicion that he put a few well-aimed shots on my target to help.

The OTC camp at Tidworth Pennings was really rather unpleasant: we lived in bell-tents, had to sleep on the ground in blankets without sheets, lived on unpleasant and indigestible food, and had to wash up in greasy water when we were orderlies. The actual exercises were quite interesting, though I cannot say that we cadets learnt much. We watched some demonstrations by regulars, inspected a tank and an anti-tank gun (I did not know then that anti-tank guns would play a very important part in my life at one period), did night exercises and saw a colourful and impressive daylight rehearsal of Tidworth Tattoo.

One day, when we were advancing during an exercise, I began to run down a steep slope, carrying my rifle and with my pack on my back, and suddenly realised that my feet could not go fast enough to prevent me falling headlong. However, luckily the bottom of the slope arrived before I pitched over, and I was saved.

I quite enjoyed the night exercise. My German master, who was a captain in the OTC, made me his runner, so I ran about delivering oral messages during the early hours of a lovely summer night.

On the way back to Letchworth in my uniform, I got

into the wrong half of the train at King's Cross, and landed up in Biggleswade, where I had to wait for several hours for a bus to Letchworth. I was very embarrassed when a group of young girls saw me and began to sing 'There's something about a soldier', which was one of Cicely Courtneidge's hits at that time.

Mother always used to come over and live with the three of us at Maryland in those summer holidays. Sometimes Aunt Lopie used to join us and bring with her an aura of the Germany we longed to revisit. After Hitler became Chancellor, Dick, our cousin Geoffrey, who was Kathleen Morriss's son, and I parted our hair on the right side, painted small moustaches on our faces, dressed as nearly as we could in Brownshirt's uniform, and welcomed Aunt Lopie with Hitler salutes.

Geoffrey was about Dick's age and was interested in the same technical subjects - wireless, engineering and so on. He was fair, thin and had a long nose, went to a Quaker co-educational school in Letchworth, but was not in great sympathy with his mother's ideas on vegetarianism, tee-totallism, pacifism etc. In fact he broke away from them, joined the Air Force during World War Two and was drowned when a ship in which he was crossing the Channel hit a mine.

Among other paying guests, all children, were two Indian girls for a time, and later there were two Indian princes,

a black boy from East Africa, a German boy, and various little English girls, mostly delicate or problem children. Kathleeen Morriss and Rebecca Bennett had a reputation for kindly and understanding treatment of children who were looked upon with impatience or dislike by the normal English family, so we met the most interesting children. Actually, one of the Indian girls later became an anti-British firebrand, but I am sure this was through no influence of Maryland's. Her younger sister was wonderful at Kim's Game, in which a whole pack of cards was laid out face down, and one had to take turns to try to pick up two of the same kind. I have since found that small children of between five and eight years old seem to have an uncanny memory for things of this kind.

I passed School Certificate with six credits that summer at the age of fifteen and a half, which was considered very precocious at Canford in those days. Several other boys of about my age passed at the same time, and this created a problem in the school. Up to then, only the odd exception had ever passed at so low an age, so it had been possible to give privileges to all the members of the Upper and Lower Sixth, who were known collectively as the Sixth Form. But when a lot of us young boys entered the Lower Sixth, the older, less clever boys became alarmed, and persuaded the Headmaster to change the names of the two top forms to the Lower Sixth and the Sixth, so that we

were excluded from privileges.

As I began to work almost immediately with boys in the Sixth, who were a year or two older than me, I was attached to that form towards the end of my first term in the Lower Sixth, having nothing to do with the latter thereafter, except that I shared their lack of privileges.

Because of my cleverness, I tended to be picked on by bullies, and particularly by one of the prefects, who beat me a couple of times. Such beatings took place after house prayers in the evening. Sometimes the prefect would announce at the end of prayers that he wanted to see such and such a boy (or sometimes more than one) in his study at ten to ten, and sometimes he would send for his victims when they were already in their pyjamas in their dormitories. For a beating, the boy had to wear trousers, sometimes over his pyjamas if he already had them on, and another prefect had to be present as a witness. The boy usually received four or six strokes with a gym shoe. It did not hurt much, but the indignity and unfairness of it used to make me cry. The housemasters and headmaster also used to cane boys sometimes for more serious offences.

At boxing, I was a cry-baby too, through the sheer frustration of having to fight boys who had been taught how to box, whereas I had never had any training in this skill.

The French master of the Sixth form, who was also senior modern language master, was a type of schoolmaster of which I have not yet met another example. He had wide literary and cultural interests, and was not afraid to take up class time in the Sixth broadening and deepening our minds. We would discuss the arts, history, literature and philosophy of various epochs, so that a real thirst for knowledge was aroused in me, plus a healthy scepticism. I had already found Descartes' 'Discours de la Methode' in the school library before I got into the Sixth, and had devoured it eagerly, but now my reading was guided and systematic. That small set of ours - we were only four at first, but were joined by a younger boy the following year - owed an inestimable debt to Mr Cook. I was lucky to have those other, older boys also, as they had already had a year of it, so that I was mentally stimulated by them too. One of them later became a Socialist MP and was knighted, but I lost touch with him and the others during the war. The new recruit to our class was killed in the war, I believe.

I was taught German by Mr Y. E. S. Kirkpatrick at the time. He was a fat, jovial man who inspired one with enthusiasm for his subject too. I was quite a bit better at German than at French, owing to Mother, the German school in Salonica and the holidays at Kniephof. German poetry also appealed to me in a way no French or English

poetry could, with the exception of parts of Isaiah and the Psalms in the Authorized Version of the Bible.

Mr Kirkpatrick was an enthusiastic organiser of German plays. I took part in 'Wilhelm Tell' and was to have played roles in 'Faust', but unfortunately the boys who had the parts of Faust and Mephistopheles did not learn them properly, so the play was cancelled. I also played small parts in a Spanish play and some French ones, in one of which I was a horse which communicated in code by tapping with its foot. I always enjoyed acting in these plays, although I was too stiff and reserved to make a good actor.

Dick joined me in Court House in September 1933, and immediately showed a great aptitude for rugger. He got into the house team his first term, which was a remarkable achievement and left me way behind. He had played a little rugger at Stubbington, and now showed that he was very good in the scrum. The only reason why he did not get his house colours for rugger that term was that our housemaster considered him too young. Later he also distinguished himself at high-jumping, weight-putting and rowing, but he was never academically as successful as Derek and I were.

Somewhere about this time I was confirmed in the school chapel by some bishop or other, and one of the customs at this time was for the headmaster to invite

one for a private chat one evening, at which he told me the facts of life. The Reverend Canning, who was our headmaster, was an intensely shy man, and when he had seated me and given me a cup of tea, he said, 'I suppose you know all about the facts of life already.' 'Yes, sir,' I answered dutifully, and he then proceeded to get me to read aloud from the New Testament in Greek with my modern Greek pronunciation, which he found fascinating.

The headmaster was a remote figure whom we rarely had any direct contact with, but not so our housemaster. The first one I had at Court House was a pederast who liked touching boys' bottoms. He had persuaded the school to introduce inspections for 'tinia cruris' at the beginning of every term, which meant inspecting the area between scrotum and inner thighs for rashes (after his departure, this inspection was suddenly abolished). He also used to make a point of watching us having our communal showers after games.

Every Sunday he used to have a group of boys to tea, arranging things in such a way that each boy came once per term. The food was always ample and delicious, and the housemaster would encourage us to stuff ourselves, periodically feeling our stomachs to make sure we were eating enough. He always kept us until it was nearly chapel time, so that we had to run the mile or so to get there in time to avoid a beating for being late. He, meanwhile, drove down in his car.

We boys put up with this housemaster's antics for years, until a prefect got religion and reported him to the headmaster, whereupon he was quietly and rapidly removed, to be replaced by Mr T. G. E. Nash (TN to us), who was a great improvement. He was an efficient and hard-working French and German master, was very interested in rowing, and later became a good friend of mine. He married a very charming and beautiful young lady soon after he became our housemaster, and before long had a son. One day our house matron was saying something about the tiny size of the baby's waist, whereupon I measured the waistline of his panties and my own waistline, with my tummy pulled right in, demonstrating that I could have got into the panties myself.

That summer I got into the Second School Four as stroke. The First Four went to Marlow regatta for the first time, where they rowed in the Public School Fours race on fixed seats. Our Second Four rowed no races. I also represented Court House in the House Pairs race, stroking our pair while the head of house rowed bow. We lost our first heat.

About this time I got a study, on the strength of my academic achievements, and this was a great improvement.

The 1934-35 school year was very much a repetition of the previous one. I continued to work under Messrs Cook and Kirkpatrick for the Higher Certificate examination, the equivalent of A Levels today, also doing Latin under our house tutor, Mr Strain, and Spanish under Mr Cook and Senor Escarcena. I had begun Spanish while in Va, and enjoyed it very much, even though the teacher had not been much good. Now this charming Spaniard, who could not speak a word of English when he first arrived, made it doubly interesting. We nearly always also had a native German and Frenchman to give us conversation.

I won the school French and German prizes that year, and passed the Higher Certificate with a distinction in German, and just under that standard in French. I also passed in subsidiary Latin and Spanish. I had wanted to take Mathematics and English as well, but my teachers thought that this would be dispersing my forces too much. I was sorry, as I liked Mathematics more than literature and philosophy. I have always preferred studies that can be quantified exactly to those in which there is a lot of subjective waffle.

Every year we used to have Speech Day towards the end of June, when marquees were put up, parents and old boys were invited, and a good time was supposed to be had by all. I quite enjoyed it the first time, but thereafter found it dull and repetitive. There was always a cricket match, a riding display, speeches and

prize-giving, and a play in the evening. One year Prince George, later Duke of Kent, flew down to present the prizes. There was always a good cold luncheon and tea in a marquee, which were the chief attractions for many of the boys, but some of the boys I knew in Court House would slip away and bathe and sunbathe in a little forbidden stream out of bounds. I had to stay and collect my prizes, but I was not very interested in breaking bounds anyway, particularly as one of the main activities was apparently a competition to see who could ejaculate first in a masturbating competition.

Actually, it was not easy to break bounds until one was a prefect, as we were kept very busy most of the time, and on free afternoons we had rollcall, held in the junior common room, at which we had to line up in alphabetical order and be ticked off on a list by the duty prefect.

One was allowed to choose our speech day book prizes in advance, and once I had an argument about one of mine. I wanted Boccaccio's 'Decameron', but the master thought this too pornographic. 'Is one allowed to choose one's prize, or is one not?' I insisted. 'Well,' he answered uncomfortably, 'yes, one is.' I got my own way, but the book was put in another wrapper before the bigwig presented it to me.

That summer I got into the School First Four at

rowing. We got into the finals at Marlow regatta, but were then beaten by Winchester College. Our course at Canford on the Stour was only half a mile long, because at both ends after that there were weirs. It was also very winding. At Marlow, on the contrary, the course covered five furlongs, and there was only a long gradual bend in it. We usually travelled up in the Rev. J. B. Collins's fast Aston Martin with the oars tied on. It had had to be built specially to fit him, as he was a very tall man. The Cambridge boats he rowed in had also had to be specially long to accommodate him.

In Marlow we stayed in a small guest house called 'Remnantz', which had formerly been the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, and went out on the river in the morning and afternoon for practice on the day before the preliminary rounds.

It was rather terrifying paddling up to the start in our clean clothes, past the crowds on the bank, some of whom would clap us. Turning round, getting onto the stake-boat and waiting for the start of the race were a worse ordeal than waiting for a battle to begin, as I discovered later. I rowed 2 in that boat, with a short, curly-haired Italian named Martinez as bow. We went over to Bryanston School later in the term and were beaten by their 1st IV on sliding seats. They rowed in eights as well, and had had plenty of practice on slides, whereas we only changed over to them after Marlow. Later in the

term, however, we dead-heated with a crew from Poole on our own waters. In the house pairs, I rowed with my old partner in crime, Hodgson, but we again lost. As for sculling, I always neglected it, and was never the least bit of good. Once I actually fell out of a phunnie.

That summer we were at last to go abroad again, as by then things were quieter in Germany. So at the end of July 1935, I shepherded my two brothers across the Channel over to Ostend, and from there by train via Aix-la-Chapelle and Cologne to Munich, where Mother met us. It was our first visit to Munich, but we took to it at once. Mother had an economy drive on, and had booked into a small hotel near the main station while she was still in Greece. We stayed there for a couple of days till Father was due, and then moved to a more imposing hotel on a better street. Father used to have about six months' leave every four years. It was funny listening to him trying to cope with German, which he hardly spoke at all. We were particularly amused at his indignation that a shop advertised itself as a 'worst warren' (actually 'Wurstwaren', meaning sausage shop).

Mother took us to see the sights of Munich, art galleries, museums, famous buildings and so on. She was an indefatigable sightseer, and made me allergic to this activity. I have always been delighted to go and see something that was intrinsically beautiful, but thought it a waste

of time if it was only of historical etc interest.

I loved Nymphenburg, the palace outside Munich with a porcelain factory attached. The park and the little hunting lodges filled me with an intense sense of beauty which was compounded of elation and sadness - nostalgia for a graceful age that had disappeared. I was also fascinated by the War Museum in Munich itself. Uniforms and models of soldiers and battles have always attracted me strongly, and I still try to see the War Museums wherever I go.

There were the most delectable cakes and pastries in the cafés in Munich: Giraffentorte was so called because it was striped dark brown and a much lighter, ginger brown. That and other whipped cream concoctions melted in one's mouth, and then there were fruit tarts of unbelievable shortness and lusciousness, and always an enormous selection of everything, so that it was painful to have to decide, since one always had to turn down so many almost irresistible things, whatever one finally chose. It reminds me of the nagging wife who thought it was time for her husband to have some new shirts, so she bought him three for his birthday. When he came down to breakfast wearing one, she said angrily, 'And what's wrong with the other two?'

Four years after this first visit to Munich, I saw it again for the last time before the war reduced much of it to rubble, and then cakes were few and already full of ersatz materials.

We used to like going to a little vegetarian restaurant for supper. There, as a change from vast hunks of meat, one had fried eggs on spinach, polenta, salads and other foods I love. Helpings in Germany were always enormous - twice as much as anyone but a German could manage. That and the huge beer-mugs explained to me the pot-bellied mountains of flesh one saw so frequently in pre-war Munich.

One morning we left for Berchtesgaden by train. There we took a cab in the direction of the Königssee to a pension in a small place called Ober-Schönau. Unter-Schönau was a hamlet on the Berchtesgaden-Königssee railway line, but Ober-Schönau was nothing but a group of pensions like ours. All round were mountains, dominated by the Watzmann and Hoher Göll, steep masses of rock with jagged tops. Close by us there was a small tree-clad hill, which was the only one we climbed, despite the protests of our energetic German fellow-guests, who used to set out most mornings, wet or shine, with stout boots and knapsacks, to trudge for hours up neat, well-signposted paths to the tops of the higher mountains.

I did not enjoy that summer as much as I had the ones at Kniephof. For one thing, pension life is not the same as home life. Furthermore, I was waiting anxiously for my Higher Cert results; and we had a lot of depressing rain. It was probably the ring of mountains that made it rain for three days, then clear for the next three, then rain

again for three, and so on with monotonous regularity. We visited Berchtesgaden several times, looking at the pretty carved things in the shops, went on the Königssee two or three times, rowing or in a steamboat, walked a lot, and bathed in an icy swimming-pool at Unter-Schönau which felt as if it was fed by glacier water.

Father was still a great walker. It was his only form of exercise, and the whole family still enjoyed it, including my little mother with her short legs. As for the swimming, I was able to stand water of a coldness which later, after years in Iran, Indonesia and India, I rejected completely. Now even the Mediterranean in summer is too cold for me.

Aunt Lopie joined us after a time and was as welcome a member of the family as ever. Politics did not obtrude on us at all during that summer.

When we returned to Canford that September, Father's leave was not yet over, so he and Mother went up to Berlin, and from there in due course to Southsea to see Granny and Grandfather. This latter visit was accelerated by Grandfather's illness, which led to his death from a stroke soon after. About the same time, Grandmamma died in Turkey, Mother's sister Lily, the mother of my two Greek first cousins, died in Greece, and the mother of my only other first cousin, one of Father's sisters, who had married an Irish parson, died in Ireland.

We went to Southsea instead of Letchworth for the

next Christmas holidays, and spent a short time with our parents there before they returned to Greece. We lived in a Southsea boarding house, which was not a cheerful place for us, particularly in mid-winter. The boarding house gave a Christmas and a New Year party, and we took part in a whist drive for the first and last time in our lives, each of us winning a prize, although in the case of one of us - I forget which - it was the booby prize. On the whole, we did not enjoy those holidays.

As a result of my visits to Aunt Lopie and Uncle Adalbert, I had come to admire Hitler. I had seen him pull the Germans up from the cynical, defeated, glum, degenerating people I had first known, to a state of self-confidence, discipline, enthusiasm and selfless hard work. I could not believe that that could be bad, and therefore I had pictures of Hitler and Hindenburg in my study at Canford and later at Cambridge, and kept them on my walls despite abuse from opponents. There was a flourishing Communist Society at Cambridge, but no Fascist one, as far as I know.

At Canford, I was made a house prefect during the Christmas term, and played once for the School Second XV at rugger on the strength of my rowing colours. Towards the end of the Christmas term I went up to Cambridge to sit for a scholarship. I had visited the town before as a sightseer, cycling up from Letchworth with Geoffrey

or my brothers, but now the casual, trippery atmosphere had gone for me. I went up with one of the other boys with whom I had been studying at Canford for the previous two years. He went to Clare, and I to Corpus Christi, which I had chosen because Mr Kirkpatrick had been there, and because it was one of the top five colleges academically. Most of the students had gone down for the Christmas vacation, and I occupied a comfortably furnished suite of rooms on the first floor of the New Court. I was unlucky enough to break a cup belonging to the regular inmate, and went to a lot of trouble to have it replaced, even though the design was no longer being manufactured.

After an interview with the College tutor, whom I told that I was entering only for Corpus that year, but if I failed I would try again for a wider range of colleges the following year (a piece of oriental cunning), I began the examinations. I was very shy and tongue-tied in the French and German orals, and it did not help that the French oral examiner had never heard of Canford, and confused it with Cranford. However, I managed to get a £40 exhibition, while others got the £100 scholarship and £60 exhibition. They did no better than I did in the BA examinations later. My mate who tried at Clare got nothing.

My philosophical scepticism probably helped me to get my exhibition: one of the questions on French literature dealt with Descartes and his famous dictum, 'Je pense,

donc je suis' ('I think, therefore I am'). It suddenly occurred to me during the exam that the great flaw in this argument lay in identifying 'je': what proof was there that the 'je' who is doing the thinking at this moment is the same as the 'je' whom one claims to exist? After all, all one's memories may be simply illusions. As this idea had never been published up to that time, it must have shown my examiners that I had a critical faculty of my own.

Exhibitions at Oxbridge were rare enough at Canford to warrant a school half-holiday and my election to the XX Club, a group consisting of the 20 'top boys' in the school, who were elected by a committee and had special privileges regarding dress etc. We wore royal blue caps with a white XX on the front, royal blue ties sprinkled with little XXs, and pale grey trousers. I never became a school prefect, though Dick and Derek did later.

One of my privileges that last year was to have brown bread instead of white at high tea, which was our last meal of the day. Few people were into brown bread yet in those days, but we always had it at Maryland, and I had a particular liking for it as a result of my Greek and German background. At Canford it was available to the privileged, but one had to ask the Cockney butler for it. He always echoed whatever one asked, and the senior boys beside me used to mimic him, especially

his way of pronouncing the vowel of 'brown'. He began to suspect that I was asking him for brown bread to mock his pronunciation, and thereafter I had great difficulty in getting it from him, although my motives were entirely innocent.

I did not like much of the school food at Canford, and my particular hates were little cakes with butter icing, which we had at teatime on Sundays, and fried fish for lunch on Fridays, both of which made me feel sick, as my stomach could not cope well with polysaturated fats. On Fridays I took to eating bread and salt instead of the fish.

By this time I had become a sergeant and platoon-commander in the OTC, wearing a smart red sash. Dick became a CSM in due course, and Derek an under-officer, the highest rank one could attain as a pupil.

That Easter term I was just as bad at hockey as I had been my first term. Five seasons had not seen the slightest improvement in my play. Towards the end of term, when the floods on the Stour had abated, I managed to go out in a pair quite often, but otherwise I refereed games of hockey between small boys, without being able to raise the slightest interest in whether they were improving or not.

One of my great friends in Court House was Michael White, the son of a Wills Tobacco heiress. He was extremely

interested in Italian music, particularly opera, played the piano very well, and did some composing in a florid, romantic style. I loved classical music too, and he used to play whole operas to a small coterie of us on the gramophone, invite me out at weekends to his family's beautiful house in Bournemouth, where his mother lived with her second husband, a Dutch ex-diplomat, and her children, and engage me in long and passionate arguments about many absorbing topics outside our work.

When our pederast housemaster was sacked, Michael was very upset, and left Canford soon after. He then wrote a rude letter to our new housemaster, TN, so that when Michael invited me out on exeat for the weekend, TN was not happy about letting me go. 'Why should I be penalised for the rudeness of someone else?' I argued. 'Do you think I would let myself be influenced by Michael?' TN laughed and let me go.

Derek joined Dick and me at Canford in January 1936, so that we were all together again for two terms before I went on to Cambridge. The Easter holidays we again spent at Maryland. We were in the habit of getting up entertainments every holidays there, to which we invited a few friends. Besides fancy dress dances, we used to give little variety shows, consisting of sketches, lantern sides, competitions and so on. I remember an In Town Tonight programme which we performed on a Punch and Judy stage with dolls as puppets,

into which we brought topical family jokes, and a shadow show, in which prizes were given for guessing the greatest number of characters depicted by the shadows.

We were lucky in having an interesting old character in Letchworth who took a liking to us, a Miss Lawrence, who owned a fantastic folly-like building called the Cloisters, which had pretty gardens and a small bathing-pool. Miss Lawrence was a rich philanthropist who hired bands to give free public concerts, engaged people to teach carpentry, pottery, printing and weaving, and had installations where one could practise all these crafts. Her swimming-pool, which one had to pay a penny to use, had proper deep and shallow ends, a diving-board, changing-rooms and a swimming instructress, who also taught pottery.

In the carpentry department we made little rush-seated stools, at pottery we produced, painted and glazed fruit dishes and a beer mug (my effort, which I continued to use for drinking beer and tea until it was broken in Indonesia some 20 years later), and in printing we made programmes for our entertainments. But weaving was my favourite craft. We produced scarves, and a length of tweed material for Mother, which she later had made up into a skirt for herself. Quite rightly, Miss Lawrence always made us pay for the materials we used.

I had had drawing lessons as an extra at Stubbington, and now set out to teach myself to read music and to play

the treble recorder. Drawing has always given me a lot of pleasure, and has enabled me to entertain small children and to draft illustrations for my books, which have then been turned into the real thing by professional artists. Music too has given me pleasure and mental relaxation, although I have always been sorry that I did not start to learn it earlier and more thoroughly.

It was at Letchworth that we learnt to dance too. Our teacher was a big, strong girl, the daughter of a leading suffragette. She had studied Natural Movement dancing as well as the ballroom variety, and gave us exhibitions, dressed in flowing Greek costumes, on the lawn at Maryland. We danced to a gramophone in the little bare room where she gave lessons above a shop in the centre of Letchworth, starting with the waltz 'When it's Springtime in the Rockies'.

My last term at Canford was a pleasant one, though exhausting. I no longer felt that I was in prison. I was second-in-command of the house, with a cheerful, easy-going but not intellectual chap of about 20 as head of the house and school prefect. I was house captain of rowing for the second year, school secretary of rowing, with the curly-headed George Martinez as captain, and stroke of the 1st IV. I really did not have the weight to be a good stroke of a four: in fact, lack of weight dogged the whole of my rowing career. When we had gone onto slides, I had discovered that my legs were disproportionately

short for my total height. I had apparently inherited my father's torso (he was over six foot), and my little mother's legs.

Our first race was against Imperial Service College at Windsor. We were driven there as usual by the Rev. Collins, and I was feeling car-sick when we arrived. Lunch did not help. We led quite a bit of the way in the race, but were too inexperienced a crew to know how to consolidate a lead, and were overtaken and beaten. Shortly after getting out of the boat, the car-sickness caught up with me.

The Rev. Collins's Aston Martin was a very fast car, and he used to take full advantage of its speed. Driving back to Canford in the dark, he hit a cat, and immediately stopped to examine it. As it was not dead, he decided to take it to the nearest vet, and asked me, who was sitting in the front seat trying not to be sick again, to take it on my lap. At once my Greek instincts asserted themselves, and I protested, saying I would get blood all over me. 'Then I'll pay for your clothes to be cleaned,' he answered frostily. I took the mangled cat on my lap, but by the time we had found a vet in the next town it was dead.

We did not do any better at Marlow Regatta than we had done at Windsor, being beaten in the first round. It was not till the house rowing competitions came along

that we triumphed. I had always had more house than school spirit. Court House was noted for this, as its inhabitants lived away from the rest of the school and felt much more of a closed corporation as a result. We went onto sliding seats for the house four races. The choice of the crew was easy: I put a strong, heavy German Jew, who had recently come to England as a refugee from Hitler, behind me as 3, my brother Dick at 2, and another chap called Lyle, who was only in his second season at rowing, at bow. We still had the previous year's cox, a small boy with the advantage of brains as well as light weight.

We had one close race; otherwise it was almost a walkover. It was, I think, a better four than the school 1st IV; at any rate, it had more team spirit, and one could feel that the work was smooth and harmonious. Feiler, the No. 3, was already in the school 2nd IV, and after the house races I got Dick and Lyle into it as well, which improved it a lot.

This was the first time that house four races had been held at Canford. There were also house pairs, which were junior to the fours. My first choice was two young chaps of about the same weight. However, they obviously lacked strength and stamina, so I took a sudden bold resolve, removed them both, and put in a huge but lazy and weak-willed man at stroke, and a small, tough, hard-working boy at bow. It looked ludicrous - this lump doing plenty

of work in a rather uncoordinated manner, and the little chap pulling hard to do his bit. The cox had to sit well over to the left to act as counterweight to stroke, but it worked. Stroke was very loyal and eager to do something for the house, so before each race I appealed to his house spirit and reminded him that the eyes of the world (i.e. the 60 boys in Court House) were upon him. In fact, that pair won all their races easily, so that we finished up with the house fours and house pairs cups, much to my satisfaction and that of TN, who had put in a lot of work coaching us.

When it actually came to leaving Canford, I was sorry to go. I had almost forgotten the miseries of the early years, and I really enjoyed the relative freedom, combined with responsibility, of my last year or so. I had been successful at work, I had no enemies during that last year, and plenty of acquaintances, though no really close friends. I had got on well with my masters, and I had found a sport at which I did well - rowing.

The latter was never accepted as a serious sport during my time at Canford. Cricket was what the headmaster relied on to give the school fame in summer, and there were not enough boys in the school (some 350) to make it profitable to split up into dry bobs and wet bobs with equal rights. Anyone who was any good at cricket found it impossible to transfer to rowing, and in general the athletic types were made to play cricket, so that rowing

did not flourish as much as it might have done. Rowing colours were not major ones, although we had a cap, blazer pocket and rowing vest of our own, which were on a par with second colours of major games.

In my last report, TN was generous in his praise of me, but said that it was a pity that I had not participated more closely in the leisure activities of the other boys. This amused me a lot: either he was unaware of what these boys got up to, which I was too fastidious to participate in; or he was much less straightlaced than we thought.

I must not end this period without mentioning Miss Oakley, the house matron. She disinfected and tied up cuts, took temperatures, gave cough mixture and did all the hundred and one other things 60 boys away from their mothers need. Her 'surgery' was comfortably furnished, so some of the prefects used to drop in in the evenings for a chat. She was always very worried that I might be rowing too hard, and put me on a course of Horlicks that last summer. The school doctor also tried to stop me rowing because he was worried about my strength to weight ratio, but I was determined to continue. I suspect that one problem was that I was simply not getting enough to eat, and this continued at Cambridge, where the very meagre allowance my parents put me on, even when supplemented by my exhibition, meant that I could not afford a decent lunch.

Chapter 6: Back to Salonica

That summer we were to go to Greece at last. It was seven years since we had last been there. During the summer holidays Mother had made us practise our Greek, often under protest; I am very glad now that she did. I had never studied ancient Greek at school although I could have chosen to do so: I had always been afraid that it would interfere with my modern Greek, as I had seen British classicists struggling comically and ineffectually to make themselves understood when in Greece. However, I was wrong: a knowledge of ancient Greek is an enormous help in spelling modern Greek, where many of the separate sounds have fallen together, so that, for example, there are six different ways of spelling the 'i' sound. Few Greeks today can spell their own language properly, but a foreign student of ancient Greek can, because to him each of the six ways of pronouncing 'i', for example, would sound different.

I had told Father the previous year that I was so keen to go to Greece that I was even prepared to travel in a goods truck. He had queried this, but now we were to travel hard - third class wooden seats across Europe. Years later, I did several journeys in cattle-trucks as the unwilling guest of the Nazis: I prefer them to wooden seats.

A route had been planned for us which had been followed by a British friend of our parents, Mrs Menzies, whose

husband was Imperial War Graves Commission representative in the Balkans. She had taken her two little girls and their governess across France, Switzerland, Austria and Yugoslavia to Salonica, but not in the famous (and expensive!) Orient Express, and we were to profit from their experiences.

I expect I was sick crossing the Channel: I usually was in those days, before I started taking pills to prevent that distressing complaint, which made me wish the ship would sink. We arrived at the Gare du Nord in Paris in the evening, had our luggage taken across to the Gare de l'Est by porters, and then went to the Hotel Transatlantique, a cheap, clean quiet place between the two stations which Mrs Menzies had recommended.

The French rate of exchange - 76 francs to the pound - was disadvantageous, so we had a modest but tasty dinner of grilled steak, chips, salad, ice-cream and beer, and then retired to bed. After a Continental breakfast the next morning, we went to the Gare de l'Est and, after our usual wrangle with porters (those at the Dutch Channel ports were the most grasping, but the Paris ones were not far behind), we boarded the third-class carriage which was to take us right through ^{to} ~~the~~ Belgrade.

It was an uncomfortable journey. We had sandwiches with us for lunch and dinner, as food in the dining-car was expensive. We passed though Basle and Zurich, deeply impressed by the beauty of the lake, went through Austria

at night and were in Yugoslavia next morning, feeling tired and haggard. The whole of that morning our heads nodded irresistibly with that irritating jerk when one wakes up just in time to prevent oneself falling over forwards. I thought it funny watching the other two doing it when I happened to be awake, but was too much in it myself to laugh. I finally managed to lick the problem by getting our school scarves, rigging them up in loops attached to the luggage rack above, and then adjusting them round our heads to support our chins. Several times we nearly gave other passengers heart attacks when they suddenly entered our compartment to see three young boys who had apparently hanged themselves in despair at the slowness of the train, which stopped at every obscure station. At the Yugoslav frontier our compartment was searched for arms when the police discovered that we were students. The word seemed to have a sinister meaning in that country, where assassinations were not rare.

On that trip I began to learn the Cyrillic script, as all station names, notices etc were in both scripts, so that both Serbians and, for example, Slovenes could understand them. I noted down on a piece of paper both representations of each letter I saw, so that, for example, I soon realised that H in Cyrillic script corresponded to N in Latin script.

We had lunch on Zagreb station after having passed through hilly country all morning. One could get cheap

food at the stations. I could already feel the approach of the Balkans. Soldiers in uniform were more in evidence than in any West European country. The officers, in those days when Yugoslavia was still a monarchy, wore smart white summer uniforms with broad gold Slavonic epaulettes and swords, looking a different race from the sunbrowned peasant soldiers in their distinctive soft grey caps, belted shirts worn outside their trousers and heavy, brutal-looking boots.

The weather got hotter as we went eastwards. Maize fields became more prominent features of the landscape, and I started to become happily excited despite my tiredness. We reached Belgrade at dusk. Though we had three hours before our train to Salonica left, we only had transit visas so, after our search at the frontier, we decided to take no risks and stayed in the station.

Dinner at the station restaurant was quite Balkan already. We sat at a little table out of doors in the rapidly cooling air and ate stuffed tomatoes and peppers cooked in olive oil. After all those years, it was like rediscovering a deeply loved and long-lost friend. I had not had a sun-ripened tomato for seven years. After that, we had water melon, another old love of ours which we had not had for years. On subsequent journeys through Yugoslavia on the way to Greece, this meal at Belgrade station became a ritual for me - the first taste of the

East. The following year I missed it, as I went by boat from Marseilles, but in 1938 and 1939, I had exactly the same meal.

Our parents had decided to let us travel second class from Belgrade to Salonica: the fare was low, and they thought there was a danger of infectious diseases in the third class, which was patronised by everybody. It was again a slow train, stopping at every station, and was the villagers' main means of transport.

We slept as best we could that night and awoke to find ourselves in scenery which might have been Greek. Little white villages perched on the slopes of rocky hills, burnt brown by months of strong sun, and looked down upon us as we passed. Olive groves and clumps of reeds along the river Vardar, isolated plane trees in the village squares, and rows of fruit trees standing amidst the irrigation ditches provided occasional green, but the predominant colours were the yellow of ripening maize, the grey of rocks and the khaki of sun-parched vegetation.

As the day progressed it grew hotter and hotter till, in that metal train, it was uncomfortably like an oven. We opened the windows, but the frightful smell of the lignite the locomotive was burning forced us to close them again. There were several tunnels after lunch, as we went through the steep, rough hills which often hemmed the

Vardar in closely, and the lignite smoke managed to force its way into our compartment even with the windows tight shut, so that we wrinkled our noses in disgust, tried to breathe through handkerchiefs and hated every moment of it.

We had a long wait at the Greek frontier. Evzones in their resplendent dress uniform marched up and down the platform, and the formalities were as complicated as one expects in a dictatorship. General Metaxas had seized power in 1935 and begun to ape Germany and Italy, so, among other things, one was not allowed to take money out of the country. As one entered Greece, the amount one was bringing in was entered in one's passport, and one was allowed to take out only up to that amount again when one left the country.

We arrived at Salonica station hot, grubby and tired but excited. Seven years had passed since we had last left from that same station, and there we were again, with our parents waiting for us, and Leonida, the chauffeur, outside. After joyful greetings we piled into the car and set off for home.

Our parents had moved house twice since we were last in Greece. First they had taken a flat on the sea front not far from the Mediterranean Hotel, and had had a middle-aged woman from an inland village to do for them. But the flat was too small for us all, and besides it was hot and

noisy, particularly in summer, when the town was a furnace, and the quay outside the windows was the main promenade of Salonica's population in the evenings and till late into the night.

The Standard Oil Company's lawyer, Mr Zannas, had decided to build a house a few years before our re-arrival in Salonica, and to let it - which was a good investment. Father had declared his interest in renting a suitable house, and had helped to plan it. The building had taken longer than expected, but by the time we arrived, a cool, comfortable house was standing well outside the town and a few yards from the sea. It was surrounded by its own garden, which was flanked on both sides by open ground, with pretty houses along the shore beyond these grassy spaces. On one side there was the American girls' school, and on the other a house belonging to Mr Zannas's brother, in which the latter lived.

Being very new, our garden did not have the trees, shrubs and flowers which the others did, but Mother was a zealous gardener and employed a man to help her. However, the elements were not kind: there is a violent wind that blows down the Vardar valley periodically, continuing for anything from a day to a week at a time. It roars across Salonica bay, whipping up salt spray as it goes, and deposits this on the shore on the other side. Mother's poor plants and baby trees could not stand this spray. It used to burn them up regularly, to her dismay. Only canes, tamarisks

and other salt-tolerant plants thrive in this atmosphere, though in the lee of the house Mother did finally manage to produce some flowers, and later even grew some little trees - a cypress, a peach and a few others.

The house was pale pink and had a flat top, big windows and balconies and glass all the way up the house where the marble staircase led up to the bedrooms on the first floor and the roof terrace above them. In the brilliant sunshine of a Greek summer, with its intense blue sky, this house looked very much in its element; but in winter, when the sky was gloomy and the Vardar was whipping the sea into angry crests, it looked sadly incongruous.

The garden was surrounded by a six foot high brick wall surmounted by broken glass. To get in, someone had to get out of the car and open the big gate which ran along an iron arc in the ground. The garage was reached by a sloping concrete runway, with a right-angle bend at the top.

One entered the house by mounting marble steps (there was a lot of white marble everywhere in the house) to a little portico and turning right, through the front door into the entrance hall, where there was a hat and coat rack. A door to the right led into the downstairs loo, while two other doors opposite took one into the hall proper and to the staircases leading up and down. The drawing-room, sitting-room and dining-room were entered

through the hall, and there was a balcony in front of the house, leading off from the drawing-room, and a large verandah at the back, overlooking the sea, with doors from the sitting-room and dining-room.

On the landing from which the stairs led up and down was the servants' bathroom, and straight ahead, the pantry, kitchen and servants' bedroom. From the kitchen one could get down into the garden by the back stairs.

Going downstairs, one came to the cellars, which took up the whole area of the house. It was rather dangerous walking about there, as the heating and water pipes were very low, or rather the floor was very high, as it had had to be raised quite a bit when it was discovered that the cellar was easily flooded when it rained. The central heating boiler, run on diesel oil, was one of the earliest examples with thermostatic control in Greece, and was installed in one of the cellars.

Going upstairs from the ground floor, one came to a landing on which were our bathroom (Dick's, Derek's and mine), my small room, and a bigger one overlooking the sea which was shared by Dick and Derek. A door led from the landing to a separate part of the first floor, where our parents had their two bedrooms, a bathroom, a study and a balcony overlooking the sea,

Still higher up the main staircase was the washhouse,

where our laundry was done once a week by an old woman, and the roof terrace, from which one had a fine view inland to the hills, and out across the bay to the distant mud flats of the Vardar. I once saw a stray cat jump from this terrace down on to a flower bed below and run away unscathed.

Such was our house. Mother still had the old servant she had had in the flat, but a younger relation of the old one, from another village, now did the housework and served at table, while old Vassilo cooked. The new girl was fat and jolly and was called Kerassía, an unusual name in Greece. Her village possessed a cherry orchard, and a cherry tree is called a kerassía in Greek, so the inhabitants had adopted the name, with a change of stress, for some of their daughters.

I went to Salonica every summer from 1936 to 1939. That first summer we rather kept to ourselves. Father was not a sociable person and the weather was very hot for entertaining. We quickly got ourselves cool clothes: we had brightly coloured aertex shirts and sandals from England, but now we got ourselves white cotton trousers and a beige linen suit each for more formal occasions. Our normal wear was an aertex shirt, our white cotton trousers, cotton socks and sandals. For parties we wore a tie with our shirt, our beige suit and white canvas or leather shoes. Headgear was very important, as we had heard nasty stories about sunstroke. For wandering about the garden,

bathing and excursions in the country we wore huge, round fishermen's straw hats, and for the town and parties, white imitation panamas.

BO was always a problem in a hot, very humid climate such as that of Salonica. Mother had always maintained that I smelt like an old male goat.

Our day usually began late. Father would be driven to the office shortly before 8, but we used to sleep on till anything up to 10, when the heat became too unpleasant. Salonica unfortunately had a very humid climate, unlike Athens, so that one was continually covered in sweat during the day. It never really got cool at night in the summer, so that one slept in next to nothing, though we always kept something over our stomachs to prevent chills. The mosquito net, which was essential owing to the danger of malaria, increased our discomfort even more by cutting down the air reaching us. Later in my life, after years in really hot places like Egypt, Iran, Indonesia and India, I developed a great tolerance for heat, even when accompanied by high humidity, but I did not have this in 1936.

Our chief amusement in the morning was bathing. Father had got us a sturdy nine-foot rowing boat with detachable mast and sail, which we moored at the Salonica sailing club about a quarter of an hour's brisk walk from the house. It was not much fun having to walk along hot, dusty roads

to get there, but usually two of us, or even all three, would go together to keep each other company. There were sometimes other people at the club when we got there, but we were too shy to speak to them, so we would troop solemnly in, get hold of the boatman to row us out to our boat, which was moored to a buoy fifty yards or so from the shore near a few dozen others, and then set off for our house to pick Mother up.

It was not safe to bathe too close to the shore, as the drains ran out there. In spite of this, lots of people used to bathe from the open spaces on both sides of our house, and occasionally they even used to wade round our walls, which projected out into the sea, and sit on our parapet, though we always chased them away when we caught them. Just inland from the houses along the coast and on the other side of the main road there was a block of flats which had been built by the tram company for its employees, and further inland there were colonies of little houses containing refugees from Turkey who had come over in 1922. These people used to bathe around us, many in their shifts or underpants, and some of the children - even ones of up to fifteen - used to bathe in the nude.

We had a tiny stone jetty leading out from our garden, where we used to pick Mother up, or collect the mast and sail if we wanted to use them. From there we went out several hundred yards to bathe. We had a small ladder so that Mother

could climb in and out of the boat without too much difficulty but normally we boys used to clamber in and out over the sides. A few hundred yards from the shore there was a submerged wall about four yards wide on an average. It ran for over half a mile, broken in parts, narrower in others, but always traceable. There was a story that it had been a breakwater in ancient times, before the level of the sea rose to submerge it. Normally, when I stood on it, the water came up to my middle ribs. However, although there is no real tide in the Mediterranean, the depth varied somewhat according to winds etc. Sometimes we used to go out there, anchor and play about in the water and on the wall with straw shoes on. One needed them, as the wall was covered with unpleasantly squelchy seaweed. At certain times there were plenty of jellyfish about - small blue ones, which were said to be particularly painful to touch, and huge brown ones, which we used to pick up by putting our hands on the harmless top and then turning them suddenly over, after which we used to throw them like putting the shot.

Sometimes we used to take the British Consul-General's wife bathing with us. At that time there was an impressive white-haired and white-moustached gentleman called Lomas in Salonica as Consul-General. He lived in a house owned by Zannas's brother, which was two houses away from ours. They had a tiny port in their garden, protected from rough seas by a breakwater, and we sometimes used to go along there and collect Mrs Lomas, a very tall, slim woman who

was as imposing as her husband, and a perfect hostess. They had two very tall sons, who were, however, always in England when we were in Salonica.

After our bathe we used to deposit Mother and Mrs Lomas and set off for the sailing club again. On the way we used to pass the big Alatini Mill, a massive brown building with a little harbour in front of it, in which there were often barges, laden to within a few inches of their gunwales with sacks of corn or flour, and fussy little tugs. After leaving our boat at its mooring again, and being rowed ashore by the club boatman, whom one had to hail from out at sea, we made our weary way back to the house on foot again along those dusty, furnace-like roads. Sometimes it was so hot that the tarmac, where it existed, was soft and moved under our feet. On the way we passed the ice-factory and brewery owned by a gentleman called Fix (his ancestor, Herr Fuchs, had come over from Bavaria with the first King of Greece), who almost had a monopoly of beer in Greece in those days. We never went into the factory to cool off. In fact, the idea of doing so never entered our heads.

In later years, we also used to take the two Menzies girls and their governess swimming with us. Hazel, the elder girl, was about 6 years younger than me, and had very dark hair and eyes, whereas Jill, her younger sister, was blonde and green-eyed. Whereas Hazel was shy and lacked self-confidence, Jill was a great extrovert. The

submerged wall was too far down for either of the girls to be able to stand on, so Jill soon commandeered my services as a support for her short bursts of swimming. She used to cling to me tightly with her arms, laughing joyfully in my face, and I felt an extraordinary feeling of happiness at having this cold, smooth little thing in my arms. There was nothing sexual about it: I would as soon have spat in church as touched her erotically. But both of us seemed to derive great pleasure from our contacts. She bullied me, and I enjoyed it. I have since read about the medieval doctrine of 'amour courtois', courtly love, in which the knight served his mistress like a slave, and enjoyed it. That was exactly how I felt about Jill.

Back at home after our walk from the sailing club we had a cold shower, drank some ice-cold lemonade and settled down to wait for lunch. Firms in Salonica worked from 8 to 1.30 in the summer, and that was all. In view of the terrific humid heat after midday, and the lack of air-conditioning in those days, this was wise, but it meant that lunch was at 2, making a very long morning for us.

Sometimes we used to go down town in the morning to shop or to visit the police. Either we went by car with Mother, who used to go down and shop at about 9 on some days, or by tram. To get to the tram we had to walk about half a mile, but then we were carried the whole

way to the centre of the town. I still loved trams. I don't know whether it was the association of ideas with returning home from the German school, or whether it was the spirit of Erika standing cool and demure by the steps, but I always enjoyed tram trips, despite the stink of stale garlic and soldiers' feet in unwashed socks and sweat-impregnated boots. Actually, the King had done a lot to improve the soldiers' dress since his return in 1935. One no longer saw such ragged, dishevelled and filthy visions in khaki, but there was still room for improvement by Western standards.

If we had to go to the police (foreigners had to report to them within a month of arrival to get a permit to stay longer), we got out about halfway to town. The Aliens Police station was a very leisurely place. We usually had to wait an hour or so, during which we would watch with disbelieving amazement while the typist - a policeman - put up the record for slow-motion typing. After each letter or accent he would stop and check to see that it was the same as in the original. I never saw him have to make any corrections, I must admit. The Greek police were very badly paid. Until they reached the rank of sergeant, I believe, they were not allowed to marry as, even by Greek standards, they could not support a wife. At one time, after a police strike, the government found a way of raising their pay without having to pass any laws by promoting all privates to corporals, so that after

that one never saw a Greek policeman without stripes on his arms. Honesty, I heard, was high in the Greek police force as, despite low pay, it was much coveted work owing to the perks and prestige, and there were plenty of people waiting to take the place of an errant policeman if he tried blackmail or let himself be bribed.

One had to have a photograph on one's alien's permit, but we never seemed to have any ready, so we always had to go downstairs to a street photographer who plied his trade outside the police-station, waiting for customers like ourselves with an old-fashioned camera on a big tripod, and a black hood to put over his head before he whipped the lens cover off to take his photos.

When we went shopping we had to go right down to town. Father had moved his office from the oil installations to a central position in Salonica, and it was now one stop before the terminus, where the tram swept round little back streets to come round ready for the return trip. The new office was in a tall modern building on the main street, Tsimiski. Father's suite was on the second floor. Antoni, the office boy, was still there, as excited to see us and eager to ask questions as he had been seven years before. Mother had helped him with loans of money so that he could buy a house, and he was always full of the little joys and sorrows of being a house-owner.

I used to enjoy following Mother around when she did

her domestic shopping. She had favourite greengrocers, butchers, chicken sellers, grocers etc, and as she was a good customer, she expected them to be honest with her and not try to palm off bad stuff. If they did, she told them that they had lost her custom, and went to others. One of the main headaches was choosing melons and water melons. Experts claimed to be able to tell whether they were sweet and juicy by smelling and pressing them, but the safest way was to get the vendor to cut a little wedge out so that one could taste it. That way of buying melons and water melons was called 'me voola' in Greek. Most of the greengrocers and chicken sellers in the market were Jews, who shouted to each other in singsong medieval Spanish, and the chicken sellers always had a rabbi on call, so that he could kill the birds in an acceptably kosher way. The butcher was Greek, and so was the grocer Mother went to. Our cook was hopeless at shopping, or too lazy to admit that she knew how, so when Mother was out of action with her migraines, the chauffeur - Leonida or a new man called Yanni - did it.

We used to go into town to buy clothes and shoes mostly. Father used a little Jewish tailor called Leoni, who was really very good if one knew exactly what one wanted. Craftsmen were painstaking and excellent in Greece (Goering used to have his boots made in Athens), as long as they had something to copy. A little milliner could turn you out a perfect copy of the latest Paris hat if

you gave her an original to copy. Carpenters were the same. My parents had liked the look of some wooden armchairs with adjustable backs and puffy upholstered seats, and had got a little Greek carpenter to make some, this time from detailed plans. The results were excellent.

There was a first-rate confectioner's in town called Floca's. They served coffee, pastries and ices there, all of them delicious. We usually used to drop in there when we were in town and have one or two of the ices - made from real chocolate, vanilla or bottled fresh fruit juices. Even after the war they continued to produce real, pure ices, until the influence of American convenience foods persuaded them to change over to prepacked powdered mixes, whereupon I stopped patronising them for ices. Floca's also made excellent chocolates and served really good lunches and dinners, both Greek and French.

At home we used to have cosmopolitan food. Mother had been collecting recipes for years, and although she never cooked herself, trained cooks well. Father suffered from acidity and liver trouble. He and Mother did not smoke or drink alcohol. Father had smoked when he was younger, but had cured himself of the habit by threading horsehairs through his cigarettes. The taste was so terrible that he gave up smoking. He said that his digestion had been ruined when he was at Cheltenham College. His housemaster had fed his boys so badly that Father's insides had never recovered since. He had tried various diets, and had come

to the conclusion that proteins and farinaceous foods should not be mixed at the same meal. Not content with sticking to this rule himself, he used to try to make me follow suit. He had been persuaded to adopt this diet by an English lady who lived in Cyprus, Mrs Shepherd. One day he received the news that she had died of stomach cancer, whereupon the diet was instantly discontinued, and we had no more nagging about it from Father. He came of a long line of hypochondriacs who always thought there was something wrong with them and therefore took the greatest care of their health. They all lived to a ripe old age, particularly Granny, who was close on 101 when she died.

Lunch in our house in Salonica always consisted of two main dishes followed by fruit. Sometimes we had a sweet as well, quite often home-made ice-cream. Meat was not good in Greece. We never got any of the wonderful wild boar I had loved so much in Turkey and Germany. The country did not lend itself to cattle production - in fact there was little but sheep and goats to be seen. Meat usually came from Yugoslavia, but was always rather tough and rank. Fish was plentiful, except when the Vardar wind was blowing, and we often had chicken - small ones usually, so that each of us finished off a half with no trouble. Squid was one of my favourite dishes, deep fried with plenty of lemon. Prawns were also popular with us, and also 'keftethes', small meat balls in which the meat was mixed with breadcrumbs, onions and herbs before

being fried in deep fat.

We were not great meat or fish eaters. We had plenty of vegetable dishes, cooked in olive oil and eaten with lots of bread. There were tomatoes and peppers stuffed with rice, raisins and pine-kernels; lovely big raw tomatoes stuffed with Russian salad and home-made mayonnaise and topped with an olive or an anchovy; macaroni or rice with grated Parmesan cheese and home-made tomato sauce; and any amount of other things I loved, all made from sun-ripened vegetables, which taste so much better than the anaemic ones that come from greenhouses or are picked unripe and exported. Some vegetables, however, I disliked at that time, though I have since come to love them too - courgettes, 'bamyas' (lady's fingers) and aubergines among them.

Sometimes we had Apfelstrudel, a German sweet made of very fine leaf pastry filled with almonds, slices of apple, cinnamon and brown sugar. Kerassia was very good at rolling the pastry and then pulling it out carefully until it was almost transparent. Our ice-cream was made by hand. The ice came up from the Fix factory every day in big blocks, and to make ice-cream it was broken up into small pieces and mixed with rough salt in an ice-cream bucket. By turning a handle for half an hour or so, one revolved the ice-cream mixture in a container surrounded by the ice and salt until it froze. We used to have a wide variety of flavours - vanilla with chocolate sauce,

chocolate, coffee, caramel, peach, apricot, sour cherry, walnut etc. One of my favourites had no cream in it, but was made of a mixture of lemon juice, white of egg, sugar and water, and frozen into a substance that looked and felt exactly like snow. It was very refreshing - much more so than the cream ices.

As regards fruit, our main standbys were melon and water melon, of which we were real connoisseurs. Very rarely, we would find a water melon whose flesh was primrose yellow instead of pink, an attractive and peculiar variant. Other fruits changed according to the season - apricots, peaches (two kinds, one with white and the other with orange flesh), grapes of various kinds and colours, figs, pears, apples (including one small, very sweet kind), pomegranates and various kinds of nuts. We never had tea, coffee or any kind of alcohol at lunchtime.

Mother was always worried about my gauntness and tried to fatten me up whenever I was in Salonica. I used to get up from table with my stomach painfully distended, but never put on an ounce.

In winter, one of the richest and most fattening things (to other people) was a kind of clotted cream made from water-buffaloes' milk. It was called 'kaimaki' and sold in a kind of roll, like a Swiss roll, and we ate it with lovely, strong-tasting Hymettus honey, or raisins and almonds. Buffaloes' milk also made the richest yoghurt.

We were real connoisseurs of yoghurt, being able to tell at once from the taste whether it was made from sheep's, cows' or water-buffaloes' milk - and also whether it had been adulterated by an unscrupulous dairyman.

But that was later in the winter: now in the summer we used to have a siesta after lunch till about 6 p.m. This was a hot, sweaty part of the day, when it was painful to be out. Most of the family retired to their beds to read, but usually I sat in a cool draft in the drawing-room and read or studied a bit. Father's library was not very extensive, but he had some travel books which I read with great pleasure and some profit. One of my favourites was the first edition of T. E. Lawrence's 'Seven Pillars of Wisdom', which introduced me to the desert, something I enjoyed at first hand some years later in the army in Egypt and Libya. I also got a lot of pleasure from an amusingly illustrated English translation of Rabelais' 'Gargantua et Pantagruel'. In addition, I read Compton Mackenzie's books about the war in Greece in 1914-18, in which Father was mentioned, various novels and a ponderous but fascinating work on the international law of salvage.

At about 6 o'clock the house would begin to stir again. Everybody looked rather limp and sleep-dazed. We boys used to have a glass of lemonade made with real lemons, some rusks with butter and jam, and some cake, but Father

never ate anything, and Mother rarely had more than a bite or two.

The car was waiting outside, and at about a quarter past six we would set out for a drive. One had to go quite a distance from the house to get out of the built-up area and away from people. Occasionally we used to walk from the house, through poor smelly quarters with hovels or tiny modern houses, along rough roads, rutted by sudden winter rains, past noisome rubbish-heaps and yapping dogs, until we came to rough stony fields and still rougher, stonier stretches of wilderness cut by deep dry ravines. Everywhere we would find capers growing wild.

When we went by car, there were a number of different places we used to go to. On getting to our chosen destination, we would get out and walk for an hour and a half. It was rather a squash in the Studebaker. Two of us had to sit in the front beside the chauffeur, while Father, Mother and the third son sat in the back. The heat beat down on the car, and even the air coming in through the windows was often like a furnace blast. Of course, cars did not have air-conditioning in those days.

Salonica was surrounded by hills separating it from the plains of the Rivers Struma and Vardar beyond. The most impressive height near Salonica was Hortiatch, which dominated the skyline as one looked inland from the sea. Normally we did not go as far as that in the

afternoons. Either we would go to the hills overlooking the Vardar valley, or to a ridge on the way to Hortiatch, to a ravine beside Sedes aerodrome, or to the plain beside the sea on the way to the cape of Karaburnu.

There was a beach some miles beyond the latter, where a small freighter had gone aground. It was twenty yards or so from the land, off a spit of sand which caused very strong rip currents from both sides. We used to wade out to this ship, the water up to our waists, battling against the currents and trying to choose the line where the two met and cancelled each other out.

Few of the roads in Macedonia at this time were metalled, but there were a few leading up to the Struma valley which had been tarmacked by British Sappers during the First World War. These now all had numerous wicked potholes in them, and I soon learnt that a completely unmetalled road was infinitely preferable. I remembered this in 1945, when I drove my jeep along German autobahns which had suffered years of neglect.

In the hills, we walked over rough ground plentifully interspersed with rocks. The sun had burnt up all the vegetation except for thorny, desiccated herbs and thistles, and stunted clumps of holm-oaks, never more than waist-high, covered with prickly leaves like holly, and acorns. The smell was always wonderful: the sun brought out the scent of the various aromatic herbs, combining them into

a potpourri the very memory of which fills me with nostalgia. These hills were frequently cut by steep-sided ravines - rich red gashes in the grey-brown landscape, where sudden torrents roared down after a cloudburst in the mountains. In the summer they were dry, but there was still enough residual water below the ground to allow oleanders to luxuriate, their long dark-green leaves and red or white horn-shaped flowers providing a welcome splash of colour. In some ravines one actually found deep rocky pools still fed by underground water following its course from the hills to the sea even in summer, and sometimes providing a home for fresh-water turtles, looking ugly and sinister compared with their cousins the tortoises, which one met with in such numbers in the hills. Very often we would find the empty shells of tortoises. The birds of prey would pick the poor creatures up and drop them on rocks from a height to break them open. The shells of dead baby tortoises were particularly dainty and attractive. We had a small collection of ones we had found on the hills, and we used to polish them with colourless shoe polish till their black and yellow patterns shone.

Sometimes we also met shepherds, guarding their flocks of sheep with fierce dogs, which were fed only on dry bread and anything they could catch. They were there to protect the sheep from wolves, which were still to be found in Greece.

Sometimes we boys would race each other up rough,

steep, brush-covered hills to the little chapel which was often at the top. Isolated chapels of this kind, such as those crowning steep hills, were usually visited only once a year by a priest and congregation on the name's days of their patron saints.

When we went to the plain beside the sea just before the Karaburnu, we sometimes used to bathe there. This plain had been used as an aerodrome during the First World War, and was now mostly covered with low scrubby bushes. The actual beach was very narrow and sandy, as was the sea-bottom. It was pleasant to change in the car and swim gently about in that clear, not too cold water after a long hot day. I learnt to drive on that flat plain, an excellent place for it.

Once a week we used to take our wicker-covered demijohns and drive up to Kerassia's village in the mountains to fill up with the beautifully clear spring water they had there - so much pleasanter to drink than the chlorinated town supply - and also to buy big, flat, heavy loaves of wholemeal bread for the next week. Quite a number of the inhabitants of this village in addition to Kerassia were blonde and blue-eyed. What long-past Frankish invasion or Crusade had left this ebb-tide behind, I wonder?

Sometimes instead of going for a walk in the afternoon we used to visit friends or go to a party. There were small colonies of British and Americans in Salonica. The

Americans had a boys' and a girls' college and also an agricultural one, all run by missionaries. The boys' college was a large, new place a few miles from the town on the way to Hortiatch. There were several American masters there besides Mr White, the headmaster, and his wife, but in summer the school was on vacation, so we did not see much of them. They had enlightened ideas about religion, and did not try to ram it down people's throats or to convert them to their brand of Christianity.

The agricultural college lay a few miles from Salonica in the direction of the Karaburnu. It was run by a kindly, efficient and amusing American couple, the Houses, who were helped by several American and Greek teachers. I used to enjoy going to their model farm, seeing their cattle, horses and pigs, and sitting in their comfortable house with mesh netting to keep out the flies and mosquitoes. The American missionaries always seemed to manage to live very comfortably, although once, when Father, Mother and I were invited to have dinner with one of the American teachers and his wife there, I was surprised to find that there was only one small chicken for the five of us.

There were also the Donaldsons. The father had gone out to Salonica as a missionary, married a Bulgarian lady and settled down in a comfortable house in a suburb of Salonica, with an ample garden round it. He was dead, but the old lady still lived there with one of her sons,

Bobby, a cheery, breezy man with greying hair who worked in the British Consulate-General. He had a German wife and a pretty little blonde daughter called Mary. Like the other Donaldsons, he had been educated at the German school where Dick and I had been, and spoke German slightly better than English. We used to go to parties at his house quite often. It had a tennis court, on which we played in a thoroughly incompetent fashion.

One of the other brothers, Freddie, kept a grocer's shop in the centre of Salonica where one could buy high-class groceries, whisky, etc in spotlessly clean surroundings. His wife was a Greek from Smyrna, a dark, pretty woman. They lived in a flat near the shop, and we went to parties there several times too.

The third brother, Wallace, whose wife was Swiss, had been working for the Foundation Company, a concern which drained marshes and canalised rivers in Northern Greece, thus dealing a powerful blow to malaria. Later he went to work for one of the American tobacco companies in Eastern Macedonia and Thrace. Neither he nor Freddie had children.

There were also some Donaldson sisters, one of whom lived in Athens, while the others were in England. The one in Athens had married an Australian Air Force officer, who had been killed some time after, leaving her with a daughter. It was said that Mrs Preston had spied for

the Germans in the First World War, but now she lived in Athens and supported herself and her daughter Miriam by giving English lessons and teaching driving.

Miriam was about 17 when I first met her while she was visiting her Uncle Bobbie and her grandmother in Salonica. I got to know her well, squiring her about Salonica and later Athens. She was beautiful and extraordinarily lively, and there was a pure, eager, almost ethereal quality about her which set a new standard for me. Naturally she attracted everyone she met: she was one of those rare people who really radiate something that one recognizes at once as vital and real and good. I never fell in love with her, as I did with dozens of other girls at this time - admittedly in a rather superficial, calf-like way: she somehow seemed too far removed from my little world of anxieties, worries and mental battles. She was an inspiration and an example, but not a person I felt I could ever get on familiar terms with. Once when I was walking with her in Athens, I expressed annoyance at the many strange men who made personal remarks about her as they passed. Miriam at once protested, 'If nobody made any remarks about me, I'd be really worried, because it would mean I was quite unattractive!' It took me some time to digest this profound remark, and I have remembered it ever since.

Among Greek friends we visited were the Iliades, our old friends of 1929, who had gone to the German school with us and who had invited us to the fancy dress party.

The son was now studying to be an engineer; the elder daughter, Eva, was a buxom and attractive blonde; and the younger daughter, a very dark little mouse of a girl, with nothing to interest one about her appearance except large, intelligent, intensely black eyes, had turned out to be something of a prodigy on the piano, and had been sent to Vienna to study it there.

Once or twice we visited our chauffeur Leonida's house, once for a christening. He lived in a poor refugee quarter, in one of a mass of little houses which were simple but spotlessly clean. His wife was a pretty little thing, and they had a small son and daughter. Fantastically enough, the place of honour in their living-room was taken up by a telephoto newspaper shot of a recent Cambridge boat race crew in action.

The christening was picturesque. I had seen others many years before, but had been too young to take in the details. The first event was the arrival of the portable brass font on the back of an old black-draped hag who was the church servant. This was set up in the living-room, which had been decked with candles, flowers and streamers the day before. Next the congregation began to arrive, a motley throng of relatives, friends and neighbours, with small children much in prominence. The arrival of the priest in his tall hat and robes started a small stir. The Greek priests mostly came from the very poor classes. They had

to go through a seminary, but many came out still almost illiterate. They could reel off the prayers, and knew how to read the lessons in the sing-song nasal chant which was imposed by tradition, but not much else. They had to marry and were not allowed to cut their hair or beards. They normally wore flowing black robes and a peculiar, long black stovepipe hat with a rim at the top, which distinguished it from that of monks, who had no rim to theirs. During religious ceremonies they wore special embroidered robes, some of them quite spectacularly rich and beautiful. As the church was disestablished in Greece, the priests had to live on what they could get from their parishioners, an unsatisfactory state of affairs which made them resort to the spiritual blackmail of their intensely superstitious and credulous flock.

The baby to be christened was brought in in the arms of its godfather, who looked hot and embarrassed while trying to carry things off with a sickly smile. Warm water was put in the font, and the priest turned up his sleeves, took hold of the baby firmly, and immersed it totally three times, putting his hand over its mouth and nose to prevent it from drowning. Enraged by this unusual treatment, the infant naturally shrieked with the full power of its lungs. It being impossible to be reverent under such circumstances, the congregation chattered and giggled throughout the service, without being abashed by the priest's occasional reproaches and admonitions

to silence. As in the Roman Catholic church, religion was such an integral part of life for believers that they did not treat it with any more outward respect than they did any other part of their daily life.

After being dipped, the baby was dried and then anointed with consecrated oil, mixed with the ashes of holy icons. This anointing was the high point of the proceedings: Greeks referred to the Jews as 'alathoti' ('unoiled', or 'unanointed' because they had not been treated in this way. Then small packets of sugared almonds and tiny glasses of some potent liqueur were distributed to the guests, and everyone congratulated the parents.

We also went to a Jewish wedding once. Unfortunately no one had told us to bring hats with us, but being Gentiles and children we were allowed in bareheaded to watch from the gallery. I do not remember much about the service except the shrill chanting of trebles, the canopy over the bridal pair and the fact that the bride and groom drank out of the same glass and then smashed it on the floor. The groom worked for the Standard Oil Company, hence the invitation.

Normally we used to return home at 8, have some lemonade (Father always put honey in his instead of sugar) and get cleaned up for supper, which was at 8.30 sharp. Our parents seldom ate much at this meal, but we boys were always given a hot dish such as fried eggs on spinach in addition to bread and jam, cake and milk.

Our bread was always the wholemeal type, made from stone-ground flour, which we used to get from the baker's at Kerassia's village. Sometimes Mother used to buy the flour and get the cook to make the bread herself, baking once a week and using little yeast, so that the bread was really solid peasant stuff. The servants, being from a village, always ate white bread from the town bakers. When they first arrived from the villages, servants always had large appetites and ate anything one gave them, but later they always became faddy, rejecting the food they had had as children, an inevitable process which nevertheless always infuriated Mother, who had been brought up by ultra-Victorian parents who refused to admit the existence of human nature.

After dinner we used to sit on the balcony facing inland for an hour or so, and then go to bed early. There was always a land breeze in the evenings, so it was cooler on that side of the house. What happened was that, when the land became hotter than the sea at about 10.30 in the morning, the hot air rose, and was replaced by cooler air drawn in from the sea, so that during most of the day there was an onshore wind. Then, when the sun set and the land began to cool, there were several breathless hours when land and sea were at about the same temperature, so that there was no wind of any kind. After that, when the hills cooled off and the sea became relatively warmer than they were, an offshore wind began to blow until

dawn the next day. I came across this again in the tropics many years later. The dead calm after sunset was always the sweatiest time of the day.

Before we went to bed, we used to read, or listen to the wireless or Father's gramophone. Gramophones of the old wind-up kind had been one of Father's hobbies. He had a good scientific brain, and had invented and patented a device for keeping a gramophone in tune despite changes in barometric pressure. No one had been interested, few people having a good enough ear to be worried by small inaccuracies in pitch. He had also designed a special giant papier-maché horn, which produced a wonderful tone for those days before electrical gramophones and hi-fi. Thus from an early age I developed a discriminating ear, and enjoyed listening to my favourite classical music without the distractions of fellow members of an audience coughing and rustling chocolate papers around me.

During those first two summers - 1936 and 1937 - life continued very peacefully and uneventfully. In 1937 Vassilo, the old cook, retired, and a cousin of Kerassia's, who came from the same village, was also blonde and had the same name, but was slimmer and shorter, joined the household as maid, the elder Kerassia being promoted to cook. One of those summers, too, our Greek first cousins, Alexi and Dimitri, came to stay with us in Salonica for a fortnight or so. They were both at

Athens University and had grown into powerful, muscular lads, shorter than us, but very strong as a result of physical exercises - what we would now call body-building.

In the summer of 1937 I decided to travel to Athens by ship from Marseilles to the Piraeus. A cousin of mine, who was a lot older than me, was Greek consul-general in Marseilles (he later became ambassador to the USSR), and he and his wife entertained me warmly before I embarked. During the voyage we passed quite close to the Italian island of Stromboli, which has an active volcano on it. I was looking at it through my fieldglasses when I heard an American couple on the deck near me wondering what it was. I therefore said quietly, 'Strómboli,' putting the accent in the correct place, i.e on the first syllable. The American husband turned, looked at me, then turned back to his wife and said, 'This boy says it's Strombóli,' putting the accent on the second syllable.

Chapter 7: Cambridge

The term at Cambridge started some time after that at Canford, but I set off for England with my brothers in September 1936 to get ready for the term. We had second-class tickets as far as the Yugoslav-Austrian frontier, and third-class ones from then on. We reached that frontier at about 1 a.m. one morning, and had to vacate our second-class seats. Unfortunately the third-class seats were all occupied, as a theatrical troupe was on the train with us, so we stood or sat on the little folding seats in the corridor nodding desperately, with nothing to tie our scarves to, after having had next to no sleep the night before between Salonica and Belgrade.

Towards evening the next day, as we were approaching Paris, Derek was so tired that we could not wake him when the ticket-collector came round, and I finally had to take his note-case out of his pocket and hand over his ticket myself.

In Paris we slept at the same hotel between stations, and travelled to England the next day, arriving tired and haggard. I spent a couple of weeks at Letchworth and then left for Cambridge.

My first experience there was an unpleasant one. The college tutor had apparently sent all freshmen a notification that they were to present themselves a few days before the beginning of term in order to get settled in. I had never

received this notification in Greece, so I had arrived late. The tutor refused to accept my explanation and was annoyed and sarcastic.

I found that I had a very nice pair of rooms on the ground floor close to the ones I had occupied when I had come up for my scholarship exam. It was a pleasant feeling to be master of my own rooms, with my own furniture, crockery, cutlery etc, and to be able to entertain friends, or sit alone in a comfortable armchair studying or reading. One had two outer doors to the doorway leading out of one's rooms, one ordinary inner one, and a heavy outer one. When one closed the latter, it meant that one did not want to be disturbed. This was known as 'sporting one's oak', the outer door being made of that wood.

Each staircase of eight suites of rooms had two dailies, who were called the bed-maker or 'bedder' and her assistant. It was rumoured that they were specially selected for their lack of physical attractiveness, in order to guard impressionable students from temptation. My bedder, Miss Smith, was a kindly, middle-aged lady who worked well and thoroughly, but was hardly ever known to smile. She used to arrive early in the morning, let herself in with her passkey, light our fires in our living-rooms, and call us at the time we had arranged with her. Usually I got up at 8, washed and shaved in my bare, unheated bedroom with the iron bedstead, white-painted washstand, brown wardrobe and barred windows (the latter to prevent illicit entry and exit during the night), and,

after dressing, went into the living-room, to find my kettle on the hob, make some toast and then wait for my breakfast to be delivered from the college kitchens. Every day we were issued with a loaf of bread and a pint of milk, which cost us 6d and were called our 'commons'. Besides these, we could order what we wanted for breakfast from the kitchens and buttery the previous day. There was a 'plat du jour' every morning - bacon and eggs, omelette, scrambled eggs, kipper, herring etc - but if one did not want this, one could order something else. One could ask for tea, coffee, porridge, toast, etc, but it was more economical to make one's own tea and toast, as I did. It was quite usual at Cambridge in my day to entertain people to breakfast instead of more usual meals.

Lectures started at 9 a.m, but it was not every morning that I had a 'niner'. In fact, I only had 13 lectures a week, each lasting about 50 minutes. The rest of the time I was supposed to work on my own. I was reading for the Modern & Medieval Languages Tripos, the first part of which I was to take at the end of my first year. As we were only allowed to enter for two languages, I chose French and German. I used to attend seven lectures on literary and historical subjects, four language classes (French composition, French translation, German composition and German translation) and two tutorials, one in French and one in German, per week. I immediately proved to be particularly good at translating both languages into

English.

My Director of Studies and French tutor was Pat Charvet, a very polished, witty, elegant and charming man, who was also domestic bursar of the college. Throughout my three years, he was a stimulating and interesting tutor, and became one of my few real friends. But a few weeks after I started being tutored by him, he told me that I did not seem to be interested in what he was saying, and that if I wanted, I could find another tutor. I hastily and truthfully disclaimed that I was bored, and henceforth made efforts to drop my mask and allow my face to show the interest I really felt in the questions we discussed. At Canford I had developed a very effective poker face, which I could don when I felt like it, but this volatile man with the French blood could not stand it.

My German tutor, Trevor Jones of Trinity Hall, was a short, very bright man with spectacles and a prematurely bald head. He was a young man, like Pat Charvet, and had the same incisiveness of mind. With him, too, I got onto very cordial terms. It is extremely difficult for a non-German, even one who speaks the language as well as Trevor Jones and I did, to be sure of the gender of some nouns, so we occasionally used to have little competitions when we came across a word we were not sure about, or which we disagreed on the gender of. We also occasionally had friendly arguments about idiomatic usage. I remember once

writing in an essay that a certain poet or other was 'erblich belastet' (saddled with a hereditary disease), and having an argument as to whether this was only a euphemism for hereditary syphilis, or whether it could be used for other hereditary troubles as well.

At first Trevor Jones lived in digs - the usual rather repulsive place, stinking of bacon or fish when I used to go there in the mornings, and presided over by a toothless old hag. Later he married a very pleasant woman and moved into a little house near the station, where tutorials were much more agreeable.

Pat Charvet was already married, but I did not see much of his wife until after the war, when I liked her very much too.

When I went to Trevor Jones, I was accompanied by another member of my college, Brian Hunt, and I shared my tutorials with Pat Charvet with a man who stuttered terribly. They were both agreeable and stimulating people to work with.

We usually went to lectures by bicycle when they were not very near by. The Cambridge streets were an absolute menace around 9, 10, 11 and 12 o'clock, when students were cycling to and from lectures in their hundreds. We all had to wear our gowns at lectures and tutorials, though not our caps (mortar-boards), so at every crossroads one could see streams of gowned undergraduates dodging

between each other, with a sprinkling of girl students as well (they did not wear gowns at Cambridge in those days).

Each college had its own distinctive gown, but all undergraduates had short ones, down to their knees, while graduates had them down to the ankles. Most colleges had black gowns with variations in the facings, but two had dark blue ones. Ours had black velvet trimmings down the front, and we were not allowed into dinner unless we were wearing the right gown. One day mine was stolen and another belonging to another college left in its place. Rather than buy another (it was my last term), I went and bought some black velvet and sewed it on the gown.

Lunch was a magnificent affair at Corpus. We were one of the two smallest colleges at Cambridge, the other being Peterhouse. Our fees were relatively high, and the college food was the best in the University, with the possible exception of Peterhouse. Lunch was not compulsory, and one could eat table d'hôte or à la carte at that meal. Our hall was smallish, with oak refectory tables and benches. The dons sat on chairs at the high table on a low dais at the far end, and we undergraduates sat at three long tables, freshmen at one, second year men at another, and third year men at the third. The walls were panelled, and paintings of former Masters of Corpus alternated with stained glass windows.

During my last term, at the third-year table, one of the students who rowed with me decided to carry out a survey. He asked all of us whether we were virgins. All the others answered in the affirmative, but I was not going to give anything away, so I answered, 'I can think of at least three ways in which a man can be a virgin. Which one do you mean?' Everyone laughed loudly, but my colleague cried triumphantly, 'I knew he wasn't one!'

At lunch one could sit where one liked. Most of the dons and undergraduates preferred to save money by having a frugal lunch in their rooms. I myself seldom had lunch in hall, as my allowance of £300 a year from my parents and £40 from my exhibition did not go far, although my summer vacation was free, as I spent it with my parents. There was always a large array of cold meats and pies, and an imposing selection of hot dishes, on the menu, comparing favourably with a first-class restaurant in London. I particularly liked the cheese - including really perfect Camembert, and one of the best cream cheeses I have ever tasted, which was especially good with digestive biscuits. A clerk noted down one's name and what one collected from the sideboards and hot-plates, so that one could be charged accordingly at the end of term.

After lunch one could go to the junior common room, which had comfortable armchairs covered in red leather, and read a wide selection of newspapers and magazines.

I myself began to subscribe to 'The Times' as soon as I got to Cambridge, taking advantage of an offer of half-price for students. I had been reading it and doing the crossword for a couple of years already. In those days it had excellent rowing reports, giving details of every single race at Henley, for example. Alas, those days are long gone by, and rowing takes a very poor place beside the 'popular' sports of soccer, cricket and horse racing, which I never even bother to glance at. I wrote my first letter to 'The Times' during my first term, protesting at a piece of inaccurate reporting about the Fairbairn Cup rowing races, but marking my letter 'Not for Publication.' I have since written many letters to 'The Times', a minute proportion of which have been published. I even had one reprinted in one of the books of selected letters which appear periodically.

My afternoons at Cambridge were always devoted to rowing. I had decided to do this long before I went up to Cambridge, so when the various representatives of the college sports clubs came round to canvass us freshmen, I told them that I was only going to row. The secretary of the Boat Club, Ronald Brown, was rather taken aback when I actually said I wanted to row without any sales talk from him. My arrival at Corpus coincided with the beginning of a three-year boom in Corpus rowing, due mainly to a body of keen and strong young freshmen who came up with me. One of them, Arthur Turner, who had not

been to a rowing school but had learnt on the Thames, got his blue two years running and finished up as secretary of the Cambridge University Boat Club. The rest of us, though far less successful, pushed the Corpus boats quite a way up the gradings on the river during those three years.

We used to go out at any time between 2 and 3 for about an hour's outing on the river. It was a five or ten minutes' cycle ride down to the boathouse which we hired from Banham's, the boat builders. There we used to change in an unheated changing-room (our boat club did not have the funds some others had, so we did not have a club house of our own), practise a bit in the bank-tub, which was fixed to the side of the landing-stage, and then get our boat out.

I started by going out in a tub pair with the other freshmen for a few days, but at last the great day came when we took out an old clinker-built eight and embarked. A second-year man who had already had a year's rowing at Corpus was put at stroke, an Old Radleian freshman who had rowed at school was 7, and I was put at 6. The rest of the crew were beginners with the exception of bow, who, like stroke, was a relic of an earlier year. Our first outings were as bad as one could expect: I had only been out in an eight twice before, and that only an ancient fixed-seat one we had bought cheap from Eton College at Canford; and most of the others only knew the rudiments of rowing, so that we rolled and jerked and splashed a

great deal.

Our first race was to be the Fairbairn Cup Head of the River Race, about three miles with the stream. As the river was narrow, we could not race side by side, so boats started off at half minute intervals, their times over the course were taken, and the final order determined accordingly. That was the order in which they would start the following year.

As it would take too long to have all the 65 boats taking part in the race rowing on the same day, the lower half rowed one day, and the upper half the next. We formed the college second eight, which had finished 49th the year before, so when the great day came, we set off in that position. Our first boat was about 22nd, as far as I can remember, so rowed on the second day. We rowed a very good race, overtaking one boat on the way and nearly catching another, and when the results came out, we found that our time was faster than that of our first boat, and in fact one of the fastest of the two days! However, this did not suit the authorities at all, so it was decided that wind and stream conditions had been better on the first day than the second, and times were adjusted accordingly. However, we still found that we had gained 27 places, going up from 49th to 22nd, which was not at all bad for a crew most of whom were beginners. Our first boat went up to 13th, with two or three freshmen in that too, including Arthur Turner and one or more others who had

been at leading rowing schools.

After the race we had our first Boat Club dinner, a slap-up affair with lots of champagne, port, sherry, exquisite food and congratulatory speeches. The college was renowned for the dinners it could lay on to order. As long as one had the money to pay for it, one could have a five-course dinner with caviare and champagne every night of the term in one's rooms.

Just before the race, we had to change our bow, as the one we had had till then was rusticated for his part in a November 5th rag. Guy Fawkes Day always led to trouble in the market square at Cambridge. Undergraduates would climb street lamps and smash the glass in them, mob the police and steal their helmets, and generally go mad. Police from other districts were always drafted in, and the University authorities took a serious view of offender

Dons called proctors used to patrol the streets in the evenings to see that undergraduates - and also graduates for that matter - behaved. They were elected for a term of office from among the university dons and did their patrols individually, each supported by two college porters in black suits and top hats, whose job was to catch offenders who ran for it, and who were therefore chosen for their speed in boots. The proctors were nicknamed 'progs', and their porters 'bulldogs' or 'bullers'. Punishments were normally fines - 6/8d if one was an undergraduate, 13/4d

if one was a BA. In the case of more serious offences, students were reported to their college tutors and then rusticated or sent down, the difference being that the former was temporary, until the end of the term, and the other was permanent. One of the drawbacks of rustication was that, to get one's degree, one had to be in residence nine full terms of approximately eight weeks each, as well as passing one's exams.

After rowing was over, I would go back to the college, have a bath and some tea and then go to any afternoon lectures or tutorials I had, or do some studying. Our baths were in a part of the college called the Old Court, and to get to them I had to walk about fifty yards across two courtyards. Members of the college who lived in lodgings, as I did my last year, were often to be seen riding to the college on their bicycles, wearing pyjamas and a dressing-gown, with a towel slung over their shoulders, to have a bath.

Baths were a rather recent innovation. It was said that when the dons discussed whether to sacrifice part of the college rooms to create them, one don said, 'Why do the students need baths when the term is only eight weeks long?' In fact, many dons in my day were scruffily dressed and unkempt. There was a joke about to the effect that if you saw a man in smart evening wear, he could not possibly be a don, and must be a waiter.

Dinner was a formal meal which one missed if one did not get into the hall before the dons trooped in. One was automatically debited with its cost whether one ate it or not, but one could sign off twice a week, on giving due notice, in which case one was not charged for the missed meals. One could bring guests both to lunch and to dinner, again by giving due notice, but at both meals women were strictly barred. Dinner consisted of soup, a fish or entree course, a meat course, and a sweet or savoury. One of the men in my year, the one who had won the £100 scholarship when I won my exhibition, was an orthodox Jew, so special food was made for him every day to ensure that he ate nothing non-kosher. Dinner was good, though unimaginative. It never came up to the standard of lunch. At both meals we could order what drinks we wanted, usually beer. There was one very strong audit ale, and one of the tricks was to invite freshmen to have a pint of it, and then watch their surprise when they found themselves very drunk.

When we were in strict training for a race - i.e for about a fortnight before it - we used to have a special dinner at a special table, with plenty of grilled steak, vegetables, stewed or tinned fruit, fresh fruit, and no soup, sauces or puddings. We also used to have a training breakfast in hall, consisting of lots of eggs, bacon, toast, butter, marmalade and coffee - massive breakfasts such as I have never had before or since. Before eating them, we had to go for a brisk short walk and then have a cold bath

or shower. I always chose the bath.

After dinner most people used to study, or go to society meetings. There were plenty of societies at Cambridge, political, scientific, social, religious and so on. As I knew very little about economics, I joined a society dealing with that subject, but soon developed the same healthy disrespect for it as I already had for philosophy, considering both of them bogus sciences. Sometimes I would go to the cinema or the theatre and work later - or not. I was always highly critical of the pop culture of my day, as I still am of that of today. After seeing a film, I would tear it to pieces, pointing out the ways in which it contradicted itself in order to produce dramatic effects, ways in which character suddenly changed in order to produce startling reversals of fortune, or to allow the then obligatory happy ending, and so on.

I also very much disliked the overpainted, over-sophistic actresses, with their constant cigarette-smoking, and also the smooth, slick, shiny actors. My one weak spot was the ingenue French actress Simone Simon, with her huge eyes set wide apart, her sensuous lips and her baby face. Somehow she escaped my sweeping censoriousness, and when the film 'La Bête Humaine', in which she appeared with Jean Gabin, was recently revived on TV, I was glad to discover that she still had the same appeal for me.

In the case of music, too, I hated the (to me) mindless

pop jazz of my youth. My musical friend at Canford, Michael White, had enabled me to accustom myself to Italian opera, from which I gradually rose to older classical music, particularly the oldest forms, so that now anything after 1800 I find difficult to swallow. I was interested to read recently that children brought up on pre-romantic classical music show a greater aptitude for brain organisation than children brought up on the formless music that has mostly succeeded it.

I worked pretty hard at Cambridge, but never late at night like some other students. The purely linguistic work I enjoyed, but the literature, philosophy and history began to bore me and weigh me down because they were too subjective. I tried to take up philology instead in the second part of the Tripos, but Pat Charvet dissuaded me. It was only after the war, when I took an External BA at London University, that I was able to indulge my taste for languages (Old English Middle English, History of the Language, Old Icelandic and Phonetics) to the full, with the result that I got first class honours and was declared the best student of my year, both External and Internal.

During my first term at Cambridge I was matriculated with my fellow freshmen. We had to march to the Senate building in procession, led by a don in a magnificent red doctoral gown, and go through a Latin ceremony. I also went to chapel once or twice, but found it as unsatisfac

for me as at school. I bought one of the white surplices we had to wear in chapel, but never used it after the first few days, which made me even more unpopular with the college tutor.

On November 11th we always made a big effort to collect money for Poppy Day. My contribution was to provide people with change for our 'mile of pennies'. I used to start off with five pounds' worth of pennies from the bank, and go back for more as I accumulated larger coins and notes in return for the pennies I gave out. I had a big sign with CHANGE written on it in as many languages as I could manage to find the word for.

I spent that Christmas vacation at Maryland with Dick and Derek, who did not have such long holidays as universities did. I found it very interesting chatting to Kathleen Morriss now. She was intelligent, had thought much and profoundly about religious problems, and had reached a faith that satisfied her intuition and intellect. She belonged to a church called the Sign of the Cross, which used to hold little meetings in Letchworth once or twice a week, at the houses of members. The headquarters were in London, and every now and then Kathleen and Rebecca would go up there to a service. They took me once, but I was at once put off by the 'guru' (actually an Englishman) on whose lips everyone seemed to hang. I have always been suspicious of such people since then, and was glad to find, when I went to work in India, that most Indians were too, since most were charlatans with nothing

but charisma and a love of power or money or both.

The members of this church never took life and did not indulge in drugs. They were naturally vegetarians, but did eat eggs and drink milk. They never allowed themselves to be vaccinated or injected, and did not drink alcohol or smoke. They believed in reincarnation and that the world had once been good, but had fallen. It was the duty of every individual, they said, to strive, through all his or her incarnations, to get back to the state of perfection from which humanity had fallen and to exert his or her influence to help others back to the same state, so that good might triumph in the end. They believed that by eating meat, drinking alcohol and smoking one sullied one's soul, thus making it much harder, if not impossible, to recognise and strive for what would lead to perfection.

I found all this very interesting, and it appealed to me, but I found I could not accept it fully. One holidays a particularly pious old lady was staying at Maryland, and I shocked her by maintaining that all people did only what gave them pleasure. When she protested that good people did many things for superior motives, I answered, 'Don't they get more pleasure from being good than they would from yielding to temptation?'

One thing that surprised me was that when, one summer, we had been plagued with wasps, and I had asked Kathleen whether she would mind if I set a trap for them in the garden,

she had told me to go ahead, as wasps were fallen creatures.

The following term at Cambridge, the big event was the Lent bumping races towards the end of term. Our crew was almost unchanged from the Fairbairn Cup one, and we worked hard. Normally we had an outing of about six miles every day except Sundays, when rowing was strictly banned. Some days we would get out at Baitsbite Lock, see our boat through it, get in at the other side again, and row another two miles each way, thus having a ten mile outing. The motto was 'mileage makes champions.'

When one left our boathouse in a boat, one first passed a whole string of other boathouses, some attractive to look at. One of them was the CUBC boathouse itself, sometimes with a row of the prestigious oars with the pale blue blades outside it. Then one came to some ugly little brick houses, closely packed along dingy streets, like one saw all over England. Then came the gasworks and sewage plant, with their distinctive effluvia. And finally one was out in the country, with fields and trees on both sides. At a pub on the left - the Pike and Eel - one stopped while one's coach got off his bicycle and crossed the river, as the towpath changed sides there. He could either wheel his bike over a foot-bridge, or pay a penny to use the 'grind', an old ferry which was pulled across the water by turning a hand-wheel connecting up with a chain.

Beyond the Pike and Eel one came to the course proper,

over which the bumping races were held. On the outward journey one followed it in reverse, first to the railway bridge, then along Long Reach, round Ditton Corner (very sharp), past Ditton village and cafe (served by another 'grind'), round Grassy Corner (another sharp bend), along the Gut, round another sharp corner, and into the gently curving reach in which the bumping races started. At the end of this reach was Baitsbite Lock, with a weir at the side which inexperienced coxes occasionally took their boat over by mistake.

I often used to walk or cycle alongside the river on Sundays. It was one way of getting through that boring day. Normally I used to get up late on Sundays and study for about eight hours, with only an hour or so for walking as a break. Cambridge town was run by a pack of what I considered old fogies (a lot of them acid women) who insisted on making Sunday as abysmal as possible. Walking round the town, one would see knots of local youths leaning against every street corner with their hands in their pockets and cigarettes dangling from their lips.

Sometimes I went to King's College Chapel on a Sunday afternoon for the beauty of the singing and architecture.

The shops in Cambridge were always interesting. There were naturally several excellent bookshops, with large second-hand departments where one could browse for hours, and good tailors with plenty of colourful college blazers, caps and

badges in their windows. Then there was the market-place, with its bookstalls, and stalls where one could buy farm-made jam and honey, lovely flowers, pewter, fruit, vegetables and many other things.

Corpus entered three boats for the Lents and two for the Mays (held in June) that year, and all won their oars by making four bumps in four days. Paddling up to the start and waiting for the race to begin are two of the most nerve-racking things I know - more so, in fact, than waiting for a battle to start during the war. Crowds line the towpath and clap or shout encouragement as the crews paddle past. In the Lents there were five divisions, so five times, at hourly intervals, the spectators would see sixteen eights go past on their way up to the start, the lowest division early in the afternoon, then the next highest, and so on until finally the top division ended the day's rowing. This took place on four consecutive days, Wednesday to Saturday.

Each of the sixteen boats in a division had a special place at which to start the race, the order depending on how they had finished in the previous race. Chains were fixed to the bank, with a piece of cork at the end of each, so that when the cox held the cork and the chain was taut, the boat was the right distance from the one ahead and the one behind. Thus one saw a string of sixteen boats, each a couple of lengths or so from the next, waiting for

the gun to fire so that they could start. The aim was to touch the boat in front, or one of its oars. If one did, the cox of the boat touched had to raise his arm to acknowledge the 'bump', as it was called, and then both boats pulled in hastily to the bank to let the other boats pass. If one made a bump, one changed places with the victim in the next day's rowing and tried to bump the next crew, and so on. If one got to the end of the course (about one and a half miles) without bumping or being bumped, one started in the same position the next day. If one finished top of one's division, one rowed at the bottom of the division above an hour later, thus preserving the continuity between the divisions. The boats which had to race twice in an afternoon in this way were called 'sandwich boats'.

If one went up four places in four days, one won one's oars, which meant that each member of the crew was given an old second-hand oar, on which he had the college crest and the names and weights of all the crew beautifully painted. The cox got a rudder, similarly painted. Our crew were much too good for the division we were in that year. We never had to row far enough before bumping our opponent to reach the place where the action photographs of each crew were taken, so we had to be content with a photo of us paddling home on the last day with the college flag tied to the cox's back to indicate that we had won our oars.

My second year at Cambridge I was in the College 1st VIII. We won our oars in the Lents again, made three bumps in the Mays, and also won the Marlow Eights Challenge Cup at the regatta there, which I felt made up amply for my lack of success at that regatta when I was at Canford. We entered for the Ladies Plate at Henley regatta, the second eights event in order of importance, but did not get far in the heats that year.

My third year, I was tried for the Cambridge crew a couple of times, could not row in the Lents because I already had my First Boat colours, won the College Pairs race with a diminutive but very energetic man who was reading Theology, and had the indignity of being bumped for the first time in 20 races on my last day on the Cam. However, we got our own back on our conquerors, King's College, at Henley Regatta, where we beat them comfortably and got into the final of the Lady's Plate, to be beaten by another Cambridge college.

I will not finish my tales of life at Cambridge without mentioning our Master at that time. We saw little of him except on formal occasions, but the thing that sticks in my memory about him is that, when I visited Corpus again after the war, I was told that during the war he had been Area Air-Raid Commissioner, or whatever the title was, but had been absolutely terrified whenever he heard bombs dropped. This confirmed my own experience,

which was that it is impossible to foretell who is going to prove a hero in war, and who is going to collapse. It has nothing to do with will-power or swashbuckling macho behaviour: it goes down far deeper into one's uncontrollable unconscious.

Chapter 8: Vacations in Berlin

My first Easter vacation at Cambridge I began going to Berlin, and every year thereafter until the war came I did the same. Aunt Lovie and Uncle Adalbert had left Kniephof some time before, and lived in a flat in Berlin. I arranged to go and stay with them for four or five weeks, and in due course left Harwich for Flushing. Those Channel crossings continued to be a torture. I soon took to using a travel sickness remedy called 'Vasano', which always worked in my case but still did not prevent me feeling terrible. In Flushing I always had a row with the greedy porters, and admired the beautiful horses which still pulled things around on drays there, and then I went on to Berlin by the overnight train, which arrived at the Zoo station early in the morning, where Aunt Lovie was waiting to welcome me.

My German was still so good that I could carry on lengthy conversations with Germans on the train without people realising I was a foreigner. I had none of the small telltale give-aways such as an aspirated 'p', 't' or 'k' which gave me away when I spoke Greek and French, and which I did not become conscious of until years later, when I had my voice recorded on a gramophone record in the days before tape-recorders. As soon as I heard myself on the record, I realised with a shock what was wrong, and speedily set about correcting it.

I loved those vacations in Berlin as much as I had loved holidays at Kniephof. Aunt Lopie had always been my favourite person, and I got on well with Uncle Adalbert, although I found his intense interest in politics a bore. He was a rigid nationalist, who had been forced to leave the German navy in 1919 when it had been reduced to almost nothing by the Versailles Treaty, and had joined the Stahlhelm a nationalistic veterans' league. He had voted for the Nazis from the beginning of their bid for power, and was now a party member and fanatical supporter, whose enthusiasms bored Aunt Lopie as much as they did me. The wireless in the flat continually resounded to shrill speeches, the blare of military music and tendentious news broadcasts. I approved of Hitler, but in moderation.

The flat was in Charlottenburg, a very fashionable part of Berlin, in a block on Steinplatz, close to the Zoo, the Kurfürstendamm and the Tiergarten. It was beautifully furnished. There was a study, a drawingroom, a dining-room and a bedroom, all leading into each other, but with a passage running along beside them as well; and on the other side of the passage, a guest bedroom, a servant's room and a bathroom. At the end of the passage was the kitchen. The walls of the study were covered with Uncle Adalbert's old hunting trophies, which I had known at Kniephof, the floors were covered with rare and beautiful oriental carpets, the paintings and sculptures were by famous artists, and everything was very fine. Uncle Adalbert was a connoisseur

and often went to the antique shops to buy things with the intention of selling them at a profit later. In spite of his Nazi ideas, he used to buy a lot of antiques from shops still owned by Jews in 1937. Unfortunately, however, he hated to part with anything beautiful, so instead of reselling things at a profit, he usually kept them. He was very interested in agencies, out of which he said one could make a lot of money. One of the things he wanted to do was to buy up fezes and resell them in India, where he was sure he could develop a flourishing market. Then, when ersatz materials began to flourish in Germany, he thought of getting the rights to sell plastic toothpaste tubes in the United States. He asked me how many tubes of toothpaste I used a year, multiplied this figure by the number of inhabitants of the United States and then by the commission he was going to get on each tube, and produced quite a tidy sum - on paper.

I had gone to Berlin on the understanding that I would be allowed to contribute to the cost of my food and lodging, but Aunt Lopie and Uncle Adalbert would not accept a pfennig from me when the time came, and I had a constant battle to pay even for things like theatre tickets.

I used to get up rather late, have an egg, lovely little rolls (Semmeln), some with poppy seeds on them, butter, various kinds of jam and sausage, including a lovely smoked pâté one, washed down with excellent coffee,

and then study or walk. While I was at Cambridge I did a lot of work during vacations, and this first Easter I had, in particular, to read certain books in preparation for my oral examinations in French and German early the following term.

We were supposed to read a number of set books, but students usually just studied the literary histories and any commentaries on the individual set books that had been published. I was very surprised at one of my tutorials at Cambridge when Trevor Jones expressed amazement that I had actually read Goethe's 'Wilhelm Meister'.

One of our set books for Part 1 of the Tripos was Thomas Mann's 'Buddenbrooks', which traced a German family over several generations, rather like the 'Forsyte Saga'. Thomas Mann's works had been banned by the Nazis, but I smuggled it into Germany, against my instincts, which, like my father's, were very lawabiding, and read it with great pleasure. In fact, it became one of my favourite novels. One had to be very careful what one did and said in Germany at that time already, as it was well known that the Nazis employed informers. Aunt Lopie was always very careful what she said in front of Minna, the maid, although she had had her for many years. One never knew, and servants were encouraged to inform on their employers.

Actually, the Berliners had a great sense of humour, like the inhabitants of many cities, and were often irreverent

about the Nazis. There was an organization called 'Kraft durch Freude' (Strength through Joy) which aimed to give good party workers holidays and entertainment in order to encourage them to do their best ('All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy'). There is a story that one day a used condom was found on a bench in the Tiergarten with the following couplet attached to it:

'In diesem schlichten Kleide

'Genoss ich Kraft durch Freude'

(In this simple attire / I enjoyed Strength through Joy).

Aunt Lopie was usually busy with housework in the morning, and Uncle Adalbert away seeing people, so if I went out I would go alone, either to a museum, or sightseeing in the more picturesque parts of the town, rowing on the little lake in the Tiergarten, or by Underground to beautiful places around Berlin, preferably ones where there was water and boats.

One place I visited each time I was in Berlin was the Zoo, and my favourites there were the monkeys. In front of one cage I once had a salutary lesson in human psychology. The cage contained a pair of macaques, a male and a female. I gave the male a peanut, and then offered one to the female. The male stretched out a hand and took that one too, so I decided to trick him. I went to the other end of the cage and held out another peanut. The male came over and took it, whereupon I doubled back

to the female at the other end of the cage and held a nut out to her. She took it, but immediately the male hurried over and took it out of her hand, although his pouches were bulging. The female looked at him, then turned to me and began bawling me out in shrill tones. I realised that, if one cannot curse the thing that is responsible for one's misfortunes, it relieves one's feelings to vent them on someone or something else that is not likely to answer back.

Lunch was a family meal which always managed to be plentiful and tasty, despite rationing and restrictions as the war drew closer. The edict went out that once a week all households should have a simple lunch consisting of only one dish (they called it 'Eintopfessen'), the money saved being donated to the State for rearmament. Even if Uncle Adalbert had not supported this enthusiastically, we would have had to conform because of Minna. In fact, the one dish was always excellent - a delicious stew of meat, potatoes and other vegetables.

In the afternoon I sometimes played patience or other card games with Aunt Lopie, who was, like Mother and me, an enthusiastic and indefatigable patience player, with a great repertoire of different games, and a number of special favourites.

Other afternoon activities, apart from study, were listening to Aunt Lopie playing the piano, which she did

very well, and going for walks, either with her or with Uncle Adalbert. One of the problems about walking in the town with him was that he was a great lady's man, so that whenever an attractive female approached, he would stop, follow her round with his eyes and body till she was behind us, and only then resume our walk, which was acutely embarrassing for a rather prim 20-year-old.

Other afternoons we would go visiting. One of the leading German sculptors, Arno Breker, was very popular with Hitler, because he sculpted wonderful representations of the ideal Aryan male and female in a style based on that of the great period of Greek art. Like me, the Nazis were strongly opposed to non-representational art, which which they called decadent. When Hitler began to plan the new Berlin (the 'Thousand Year Reich'), with its massive monuments, he used Albert Speer as his architect, and Arno Breker as his sculptor. Breker had a Greek wife, a dark, tubby little woman, who had been a model in Paris, where Breker had worked, and Aunt Lopie got to know her well. She was a vulgar, pretentious little nouvelle riche, who always told the most whopping lies in an attempt to appear aristocratic. She claimed to be a member of a leading Greek family and said her brother had an important post in Salonica. Mother checked up, and found that the family, whom she knew, had never heard of her, and that the brother was a small clerk in some government office.

I visted the Brekers a number of times with Aunt Lopie.

He was much less flamboyant than his wife, and a really charming man in every way. He once told me that I had an Assyrian head, which would be wonderful to sculpt, but as the Assyrians were Semites, I wondered whether this was a back-handed compliment. I came to the conclusion that it was not. The Brekers lived in a nicely furnished modern flat, but had Siamese cats which sprawled all over the best chairs and ruled the household with a rod of iron. When years later I went to the film '101 Dalmatians', I saw a perfect reincarnation of these cats in the sly, scheming ones in that film.

Uncle Adalbert's sister Frieda, a real old spinster who could, however, be very pleasant, was another of the people Aunt Lopie used to take me to visit now and then. But the really interesting person, apart from Arno Breker, was a tall, dark, intense and imposing Greek woman who acted in German tragedy. She had married and divorced a Swiss, and did not wish to lose her Swiss passport, so she lived with a German author without marrying him. Whereas she was vivid and a powerful personality, he was soft, grey and delicate. He stayed at home, cooked, did the housework and wrote historical novels while she went out to work in the theatre. I had never come across such a Butch and Dolly relationship before, so I was puzzled, but they seemed happy. I went out with her occasionally, or rather she went out with me, and she always made a point of correcting any mistakes I made in German grammar,

mostly in genders of articles. Her boyfriend was very interested in Shakespeare, about whom he had written a novel - a rather romanticised biography - of which he presented me with a copy. On the flyleaf he wrote a quotation from 'As You Like it' - 'When I think, I must speak'. I asked him whether this was a comment on me, meaning I was tactless, but he was evasive. I must say, I had never noticed that I possessed this vice - or virtue.

One Easter, my cousin Andreas Pappas, the brother of the Consul-General in Marseilles (Andreas later became Greek ambassador to Austria), had been appointed Greek consul in Berlin, and his wife Agni and baby were due to arrive to join him, so I accompanied him to the station to meet them, as I was curious to see this girl. Aunt Lopie had told me that she had been brought up at an English girls' Public School and was a cheerful, sporty type. Her train, an express from Greece, was so late that we had to pack up and go home. When I finally met her I was very favourably impressed and developed a warm liking for her. She was dark, rather plump, sloe-eyed, youthful and completely unstuffy. She spoke excellent English and appreciated having me as a cavalier on trips and expeditions while her husband was at the office. I was particularly sorry to break our partnership when I had to return to Cambridge that April.

Another Greek Aunt Lopie took me to meet was a

tenor who was studying and performing in Berlin one Easter. He was a typical, spoilt, soft Mummy's boy, but certainly had a magnificent voice. In the small room in which we heard him practising, the glorious sounds reverberated painfully in my ears. I believe he was a remote cousin of ours.

Uncle Adalbert was considerably deaf, which was not surprising after his years in the German navy, partly as a gunnery specialist, and his many years of shooting. However, he had wonderful longsighted vision, and once he played a nasty trick on me because of my shortsightedness. He called me to the window of his study and asked me whether I could see the unusual plane in the sky. I pretended I could, whereupon he laughed heartily and said there was nothing there at all.

He was a good driver, and owned an Opel Kapitän, in which I sometimes rode. It was he who first introduced me to the thrilling and yet boring autobahns. The scenery they passed through was often lovely - the thick coniferous forests of Germany, where it was nothing to see a stag or a group of red deer, and there was something extraordinarily pleasing aesthetically about those two bands of white pouring endlessly across the countryside, held parallel by a vivid green strip of grass in the middle. The modern, efficient-looking bridges spanning the autobahns, the smooth effortless of one's progress, unimpeded by cyclists or pedestrians, and the neat way in which exit and entry points were

managed, with their clover-leaf pattern - a revelation in those days - all contributed towards a certain impression of simple, classical, symmetrical beauty. Yet the very ease and effortless efficiency of the whole business bored one very soon. It was many years before I drove a vehicle along these autobahns myself, but I could realise, even as a passenger in the Opel, how fatally easy it would be to fall asleep as those mesmerising white ribbons unwound themselves beneath one.

One afternoon Uncle Adalbert took Aunt Lopie and me to Goering's Karin Hall, and then on to his version of Whipsnade. There was foot-and-mouth disease about, so we were not allowed in to see the bison, nor did we stop at Karin Hall, which struck me as an attractive country house in a pleasantly rustic and Northern style.

During the 1938 Easter vacation I was invited with Aunt Lopie and Uncle Adalbert to spend a week over Easter with an estate owner who lived near Landsberg close to the then Polish frontier. We went as far as Landsberg by train, and were then taken on by car to the manor house where Herr Glahn lived with his wife, two children and a stepson. He was an old shooting friend of Uncle Adalbert's and had trained Harpa, Uncle Adalbert's pointer-cum-retriever at Kniephof. He was a fat, jovial but rather apoplectic-looking man, who was so fond of his food that he died of overeating a year later, preferring this death to the

diet recommended by the doctors. He had recently divorced his first wife and married the widow of Baron von Richthofen, who had previously been his housekeeper. She was a dark, kind little woman, whom I took to at once.

Herr Glahn's two children were by his first marriage, a son of eleven and a daughter of nine. The new wife had a fourteen-year-old son by her first marriage, and there was a baby on the way. The young Glahn boy had been well indoctrinated by the Hitler Youth, and expressed surprise that I, an Englishman and therefore an enemy, should have been invited to the house. Herr Glahn told us this with great amusement, and expressed the hope that Germany and Britain would always remain friends. Ulrich, Freiherr von Richthofen, the stepson, was a fine-featured and friendly boy. He was being educated as a boarder at the nobles' school of Puttbus on the island of Ruegen in the Baltic Sea, and lacked the Prussian arrogance and rudeness of the other boy. The daughter was an outwardly demure little miss, with a spark of merriment and even devilry beneath her delicate features and straw-coloured plaits.

I corresponded with Ulli (as Ulrich was called by his family and friends) until the war broke out, and sent him stamps, which he collected, as I did. After the war I tried to get in touch with him again, only to hear from an uncle of his of the same name that he had been killed while in the Luftwaffe on the Russian front.

I was very happy during that week in Silesia. I had a quaint little bedroom overlooking the cobbled courtyard in front of the house, with the stables and pigsties beyond. In spite of the shortages in Berlin, we ate copiously on this estate. Eggs, various kinds of sausage and bread, rolls, butter, ham and coffee formed a sumptuous breakfast; lunch was three or four courses with plenty of good solid meat and potatoes; there was a light tea of bread, butter, jam and the usual anaemic Continental tea; but the most colourful meal was supper, which consisted of a hot dish and a large array of cold meats, wursts, salads, various kinds of bread, including my favourite, dark heavy sourdough, cheeses and sweets. To drink there was any amount of milk, butter-milk, beer, wine and liqueurs. Here was the only place where I ever tasted Kosackenkaffee, an East Prussian liqueur with a coffee flavour, which I liked very much.

Besides eating, the main recreations were walking, chatting and playing children's card games. We had heavy snow part of the time, but every day I went out for a couple of brisk walks, sometimes alone and sometimes accompanied. One very cold blizzardy day I suggested a walk to Uncle Adalbert, but he excused himself. I then jokingly accused him of being a coward. He took this accusation very seriously, and explained at great length how he had taken his ship through a terrible hurricane in the North Pacific, exposed to the elements for days on end.

There was a small lake not far from the house, and

my favourite walk was through the pine woods round its edge. With thick, dazzling white snow on the ground and a thin coating of ice on the lake, the views were magnificent. The fish were coming up the little streams and inlets round the edge of the lake to spawn, and once Uncle Adalbert and I stumbled upon a large fish which poachers had recently scooped out of the shallow water.

On Easter Day we went to the village church. Aunt Lopie and I went up to the family gallery, from where we had a good view of the preacher and congregation. It was a Lutheran church, so men and women were segregated in the main body of the church. In their best clothes, the villagers were an attractive sight. However, the preacher did not look the part: he was a short, dark, thick-set man with the brow and nose of a gorilla.

I was sad to leave the Glahns, as I had always been to leave Kniephof. I would have been even sadder if I had known that in only seven years' time both places would be parts of Poland. I had again become accustomed to the formal greetings every morning, when the men and boys always clicked their heels and shook hands with everybody, and the little girl curtseyed elegantly.

The following year, Easter 1939, Uncle Adalbert had to go to Wiesbaden for the ninetieth birthday of an aunt. He invited me to go along too, and I jumped at the chance. We went in the Opel, myself map-reading and

using the route cards. We first took the autobahn to Frankfurt, making a detour to visit Goethe's house at Weimar, which I found very attractive and full of atmosphere. From Frankfurt we took an ordinary road to Wiesbaden, arriving at our hotel there in time for dinner.

We spent several days in Wiesbaden. The hotel was a rather Victorian family place. We always ate out, usually in a very colourful and picturesque Bierkeller, where one could get excellent hock at a reasonable price. The best vintage year at that time was 1934. I had tasted hock before, but from this visit to the Rhineland I brought back a great partiality for this smooth, golden, not very strong wine. I was fond of German food, sausages of various kinds, all tasty, sauerkraut, liver dumplings, potatoes such as one does not seem to find anywhere else in the world, pork which I could for some reason digest easily, whereas I found the stuff very troublesome in England, the sweets, and all the rest, and our Bierkeller turned them out attractively. I met some of Uncle Adalbert's relatives, also on the pilgrimage to the old aunt. We ate, drank, joked and laughed together, and they all told me how sure they were that Germany and Britain would never fight each other again.

I was not taken to see the old lady, so sometimes had some hours to myself. On one such evening I had dinner at the fashionable Kurhaus, where people went to take the waters for which Wiesbaden was famous, and then heard

a Beethoven symphony in the Kursaal. The dinner was uninteresting and could not compare with the more modest but much tastier food of the Bierkeller. As for the symphony, the orchestra was just not good enough to do it justice. The only bright spot in an otherwise frustrating evening was the purchase of an elaborate hock glass painted with the arms of Wiesbaden. The next day I climbed the Neroberg with Uncle Adalbert, but was rather disappointed with the touristy café at the summit.

To show me a bit of South West Germany, Uncle Adalbert had decided to return to Berlin by a roundabout route. First we drove to the bend in the Rhine opposite Bingen. I was duly impressed by the width of the river and the tugs and barges crawling up and down it. We climbed the wooded hill on which the 1871 monument stood, and looked out over the Rhine while Uncle Adalbert proudly told me its story. Then we visited a cousin of his who owned a vineyard in the famous Rudesheim area. Uncle Adalbert had himself been the owner of a famous vineyard for a time after the First World War. Now we had lunch in his cousin's house overlooking the Rhine and lying only a few feet above the level of its waters. At that meal we had the most perfect hock I have ever tasted, a 1934 Spätlese, a choice connoisseur's wine made from grapes grown by his cousin and bottled on the property. Uncle Adalbert bought half a dozen bottles of it before we left.

Our next port of call was Heidelberg. Over snow-covered hills and along the Neckar we drove, and reached the old university town at about teatime. I was hoping to go there and to the Sorbonne in Paris after leaving Cambridge, to pick up a doctorate before going on to try for the Consular Service. We were taken round the castle, and I was duly impressed by the mammoth wine tun and the spectacular view over the Neckar. Then we set out for Würzburg, where we arrived after dark and went straight to a pretty little inn.

We spent the next morning seeing the sights of Würzburg. The Residence, the church with its Riemenschneider carving, and the river with its statued bridges were all beautiful, but what made the deepest impression on me was the mere atmosphere of the whole town - its cobbled streets, medieval houses, squares and inns with their elaborate wrought iron signs. I loved the quaintness of the place, the expectation that at any moment the inhabitants in their modern dress would turn into gnomes, or medieval students, burghers in silks and satins, swashbuckling soldiers, monks and all the other colourful and motley throng one sees in Brueghel's paintings.

Even more medieval-looking was the next stop on our pilgrimage, Rothenburg ob der Tauber. I saw it several times after the war, when - although it had been spared the bombing many other towns had received - it looked the worse for wear, but in 1939 it was still a jewel,

with its walls around which one could walk the whole way on the bowmen's walk, its cathedral and town hall and its hundreds of lovingly preserved medieval houses. The Germans must obviously have tried very hard to retain its medieval appearance, and were clearly very proud of it. It was a show tourist spot with its lovely situation on a spur of high ground falling away sharply on its flanks and point to the Tauber valley winding around its foot. We had lunch at an imposing and ancient inn in the main street and then drove down to the Tower to visit a chapel containing a Riemenschneider carving before setting out for our next port of call, Nürnberg, where we arrived in the late afternoon.

After getting ourselves installed in a small hotel, we set out for a walk, then had dinner - I had roast pheasant, and Uncle Adalbert kid's liver - and so to bed. Next morning we continued our sightseeing. We toured the old town thoroughly - it was small and compact. There was a youth rally on at the Hitlerjugend headquarters beside the castle, an international affair at which Great Britain was represented among other countries, so that the Union Jack hung beside the swastika and a string of other flags. We did not visit the law courts which, an eventful seven years later, were to play an important part in my life. Then the Union Jack would hang over Nürnberg indeed, but instead of the swastika there would be another predominantly red flag beside it which I am sure was conspicuous by its

absence in 1939.

I remember that Nürnberg did not attract me as much as the other old cities we had seen on this tour. Its strong Nazi associations were obtrusive and repelled me, and it could not rival Rothenburg, for instance, for sheer picturesqueness to my eyes. On the way out towards Berlin we passed the party Rally grounds, stopped for a hasty glance and then moved on to Bayreuth.

There again I was left rather cold. As a town it could not compare with those that had gone before, nor was I at all a Wagner worshipper. In fact, I disliked his heroic Teutonic philosophy and, though entranced by many of the orchestral parts of his operas, and attracted by the 'Flying Dutchman', heartily disliked the bombastic way in which his characters declaimed their parts in his great nationalistic works. I just found them embarrassing. So, after a perfunctory visit to the opera and Wagner's house, I was not sorry to take to the road again.

I considered it part of my education to go to operas, including Wagner's, and in fact saw a number of them in Berlin and Paris, always from boxes, so that I could go to sleep when I got bored. I claim to have slept in some of the best opera houses in Europe, particularly during performances of 'Siegfried' and 'Parsifal'. In the latter the man taking the part of the young Parsifal was too old and much too fat, so that he bulged ridiculously out of

his long velvet shorts.

We reached Berlin that evening after an extraordinarily interesting tour of about a week.

I spent the Christmas vacation of 1938-39 in Paris as a paying guest of relations of Pat Charvet's. A Greek cousin of mine, Titi, who was a major in the Greek army at the time, was at the Staff College near the Eiffel Tower, and I used to see a lot of him and his Greek wife, and also of a nephew of King Zog of Albania, who was also at the Staff College and a friend of Titi's. It was a very cold December in Paris that year, with a lot of snow, and I used to walk from the Charvet flat near the Hotel de Ville to the Ecole Militaire through the snow to have lunch in Titi's flat.

The Charvet family were very interested in politics, and strong right-wing nationalists. They took me to some of their rallies, but the main impression left on me by my month in Paris was one of decadence, accentuated by the contrast with the new spirit in Berlin.

Before leaving Cambridge, I went up to London to be interviewed for the Consular Service, and was accepted, which meant that I could sit for the written exams after getting my BA.

Between Marlow and Henley regattas that last summer term, I was invited to spend a few days with the Lomases,

and it was there that I read my Cambridge BA results in 'The Times'. To my chagrin, I only got an Upper Second instead of a First. Pat Charvet wrote to say that I had reached First Class marks in German, but was pulled down just below the necessary level by one of my French papers, the 18th Century literature one. I had never been able to raise any enthusiasm whatsoever for that period in French literature and history. It was the time when the Philosophes and the Encyclopédistes were preparing the ground for the French Revolution by their theories about liberty, equality and fraternity, which were so radically different from the realities of the post-revolutionary period, when liberty became chaos, equality rapidly gave way to Napoleonic hierarchy, and fraternity to slaughter of all who were different from oneself. Having followed the Russian revolution of 1917 and its aftermath carefully, I had no illusions about the selfseeking brutality of revolutionary leaders, or about the starry-eyed folly of the intellectuals who prepared the ground for them. Lenin and Stalin set up a far more efficient and vicious system of secret police and slave labour camps than the Czars had ever done (or, for that matter, than Hitler managed to do), and instead of the bread they had promised to all, they systematically murdered some fifteen million Russians, most of them by starvation, between the two World Wars - a record hardly likely to endear revolutions to a person like myself, who believed in real liberty,

equality and fraternity. I have always been particularly amused, in a cynical way, by the way in which the French continue to celebrate the fall of the Bastille: in fact, when the mob stormed it, instead of finding it full of downtrodden middle and lower class prisoners, it contained seven aristocratic mental defectives.

Our defeat in the final of the Ladies Plate put paid to another of my hopes: just as I had wanted to leave Cambridge with a First in my exams, I had wanted to become a member of the prestigious Leander Boat Club. Those in the winning crew in the Ladies Plate at Henley regatta were eligible for membership - but not the losers.

After that second disappointment, I set out for Greece by train. I had found a very cheap yet comfortable way of getting from London to Salonica the summer before. One crossed the Channel from Harwich to Flushing, and then travelled from there to Munich second class, paying the sleeping car attendant ten shillings for a berth for the night. Then one had about twelve hours in Munich waiting for the night train to Salonica. In those days, the Germans were very keen to get foreign exchange, so if one paid for one's tickets across Germany in sterling, one got a 66% discount. Travel in Yugoslavia and Greece was also very cheap. Furthermore, in Munich one could get a colossal plate of meat and potatoes in one of the underground Bierkellers for the equivalent of sixpence, and two of those meals set one up wonderfully for the two more nights on

the train from Munich to Salonica, via Belgrade, again with ten shillings' worth of sleeper each night, so that one arrived at the other end without undue fatigue for a total of about £10, including food, for the trip from London to Salonica.

Chapter 9: Greece again, and British Council work

My plan was to spend a holiday in Greece and then go to Heidelberg and the Sorbonne to get a doctorate before taking the written exams for the Consular Service, but fate decreed otherwise.

My first action on getting to Salonica was to get in touch with the Sailing Club there. The year before, I had been persuaded by one of my Greek friends to join it, as they had just started to row there, having been presented with some Italian yoles de mer by a rich and generous member. The club was desperately anxious to beat the Nautical Club of Salonica, which had been rowing for several years. Because of some petty internal feud, two of the Nautical Club's best oarsmen had defected to the Sailing Club, and now one of them was rowing in the latter's four, and the other was coaching it.

I was put in as stroke, and we started training. We used to go out very early in the morning, partly because most of the crew had to go to work at 7.30, and partly to avoid the rough sea that always started at about 10.30. I used to set my cheap, noisy alarm for 5, and when it went off, my heart would beat so painfully that I thought I was having a heart attack. The yoles de mer which were used on the sea for racing were much heavier than our narrow river racing boats in England, and they had no outriggers. However, I soon learnt to

handle them, and the crew settled down behind me in time for the Greek championships, which were held in Salonica in 1938. We entered both for the Beginners' IVs and the Junior IVs.

The Beginners' IVs race was rather a fiasco: we took an early lead from the ten or so other crews rowing in line abreast, with the Nautical Club in second place, but the Greek trio rowing behind me panicked when they saw that they were winning, so they started to row much too fast a stroke. As a result, we were overtaken by our rivals, and only won the silver medal.

I was annoyed about this, and gave my crew a severe lecture after the race, telling them that their job was only to follow me, not to set their own individual paces. This was a very hard lesson for Greeks, who are above all individualists - even anarchists. My Greek cousin Dimitri always claimed that it was impossible for a Greek gang to carry out a bank raid or a burglary, because not one of its members would be able to cooperate with any of the others.

Another disconcerting trick that Greek oarsmen had was to take both hands off their oar if they wanted to say anything, as they needed them to gesticulate.

The next day we had the Junior IVs, and this time I made sure that we would not have the same fiasco as the day before by shouting, 'Psychraemia!' (i.e. 'Keep

calm!') every few strokes. We won by a comfortable margin, whereupon No. 3 nearly strangled me with his embraces and kisses, and Bow and No. 2 nearly capsized the boat trying to reach me to do the same. The Nautical Club of Salonica had been well and truly put in its place as we walked off with our gold medals!

This, of course, had all been in the summer of 1938. Coming back now to 1939, I began training men's and women's crews for the next Greek championships, but did not row in one myself this time, as it had been decided, after the previous year's triumph, that it was a bit unfair to use me. But the Greek championships were cancelled in 1939 because of the outbreak of World War II.

On September 1st 1939, I wrote the following letter to the British Consul-General in Salonica, who was a new man called Hole:

'Dear Mr Hole,

'As General Mobilization has taken place in England, I would like to clear my position officially. As a member of the Officer Cadet Reserve (Artillery branch), I have given my word to enlist for training as an Artillery officer immediately upon mobilisation. I therefore offer to you, as the nearest representative of the British government, my unreserved services, whether as an Artillery officer (in which case I would like to know what means of transport to England you advise), or in any other capacity, if you

think I would be more useful there.'

I was a member of the Officer Cadet Reserve on the strength of the Certificate A which I had obtained in the OTC at school; my query about means of transport was prompted by the fact that I could not now return to England via Germany, and other routes were doubtful because of mobilisatic needs; and the suggestion from the Consul-General himself that, given my knowledge of Greek and Greece, my services might be invaluable in that country.

Mr Hole wrote to the War Office requesting my services, and meanwhile made use of me in the Consulate-General, particularly for encoding and decoding for the Royal Navy team which had been sent to Salonica from Alexandria to give permits for ships passing through the British blockade in the Mediterranean. The members of this team were all retired naval officers, captains and commanders, reemployed for the war.

I started work in the Consulate-General on the 2nd September. On the 16th of that month I wrote to the recruiting station at Cambridge explaining my position; and on the 27th September I wrote to the British Military Attaché at our Embassy in Athens, on Mr Hole's advice. I finally received the following answer from the Military Attaché, dated 4 December 1939:

'I have to inform you that we have received a letter

from the War Office dated the 22nd November 1939 acknowledging the offer of your services in the following manner:-

"I am to inform you that it is not at present considered essential that Mr. L. A. Hill should return to this country to offer his services in a military capacity.

"It is not possible to offer any certainty of military employment to men who proceed to the United Kingdom at present as commissions can normally only be gained after service in the ranks, and men may have to wait several months before being called up for training in the ranks.

"I am to add that Mr. L. A. Hill's offer of his services is much appreciated and in view of his qualifications (detailed in your letter), it would appear that his services would be more useful in Salonica and it is therefore agreed that he should continue in his present occupation."

I had been working unpaid and unofficially in the Consulate-General, but now Mr Hole thought I should be given something more solid, so he offered my services to the British Council, which had a flourishing office in Salonica. Lord Lloyd, the Chairman of the British Council, was consulted and agreed, so one morning I found myself on the way to the airport outside Salonica with Magnus Irvine, the Director of the Salonica Institute, on my way to set up an Institute of English Studies in Kavalla in North East Greece.

It was my first trip in an aeroplane. When I sat down, I searched around my seat and then called the air hostess.

'Where's my parachute?' I asked.

She giggled and then explained that passenger planes did not have parachutes.

'Not even for the pilot?' I asked incredulously.

'No, sir, not even for the pilot,' she answered with another giggle.

I had been looking forward to my first flight, but now I was not at all sure that I liked the idea. In fact, for years after this, I had an unreasoning fear of being in the air, which did not give way until turbo-prop and then jet planes came in, and my unconscious could really have confidence in the power of the engines to keep such a heavy object up.

During that first flight, I had pain in my ears when we descended rather sharply and flew very low for quite a distance before landing at Drama airport, from where Magnus Irvine and I travelled to Kavalla by taxi.

I used two ways of travel between Salonica and Kavalla during the following year. Either I went by bus via Lake Volvi and Serrai, watching the peasants get on and off at the little villages and towns on the way; or I booked a seat in one of the taxis that carried

five passengers, two in front and three behind. By paying a little extra, one could make sure of a front seat, which helped me to avoid feeling carsick. The drivers both of the buses and of the taxis believed in getting from A to B as fast and as economically as possible, so when they came to a down slope, they turned off their engines and coasted at great speed, taking perilous S-bends with a precipice on one side with the dedicated fury of a Jehu. Later, when I was in the army and had to guide British officers over these roads, I started off by grossly underestimating the time it would take to cover a given distance, because I did not reckon on the cautious descent of such precipitous roads in low gear by the well-trained British driver.

Kavalla was a very pretty little town, built on hills and a rocky promontory surrounding a small harbour. We were met by Mr Phanos, a Cypriot who gave English lessons there, and who was going to help us find premises for our Institute of English Studies.

We very quickly settled on a small one-storeyed house in the slum area of Kavalla, right away from the port. It had a small garden on three sides, and there were four rooms and a lavatory, which consisted of a dark, cupboard-like recess with a black hole in the floor. There was a corridor down the middle of the house leading to this lavatory, with two rooms on each side. I turned the rooms on the left as one came in into a classroom and kitchen, and

the ones on the right into my bedroom and a general purpose room, which served as the students' waiting-room during class hours, and my dining-room and living-room at other times. I had a tin bath made, so that I could have baths in the kitchen, heating the water in buckets over the stove, which did not seem at all strange to me after Kniephof.

The rent was £1 a month, and Magnus Irvine and I agreed that I should pay five shillings of this. As my salary was £300 a year for the first three probationary months, and £325 thereafter, this seemed very fair to me, and in fact I saved half my salary during the next year and a half. Incidentally, £325 a year was equivalent to the pay of a Greek brigadier-general in those days.

I was now Director of the Institute of English Studies at the tender age of 21, 100 miles from my nearest superior. The first time I tried cooking for myself, I heated a tin of aubergines on my primus stove without first making a hole in it, and when I finally jabbed it with my tin-opener, it sprayed up all over the ceiling, narrowly missing me on the way.

I had always been very nervous of speaking in public, and had suffered agonies when I had started to have to read the lessons at house prayers and then in chapel at school. I was therefore looking forward with some trepidation to having to teach for the first time in my life; but the reality was nothing like as bad as my anticipations. All

my students, young and old, were delighted to have a real Englishman to teach them, and were highly respectful when Mr Phanos had an advertisement for our classes put in the local paper, stressing that I had a Cambridge BA.

Some of my students were old enough to be my grandfather or grandmother; others were schoolchildren; and several times a week I went to local missionary schools to teach, with a monk, when the pupils were boys, or a nun, when they were girls, always present. I once asked one of the nuns, after a lesson, whether she was there to protect the girls from me. 'Oh, no!' she answered, pitying my greenness. 'I am here to protect you from the girls.' This was rather a blow to my masculine pride, but as some of the girls were nearly as old as I was, and no doubt healthily repressed, I believed her.

I also taught at one ordinary Greek boys' school, which had a teachers' lunch mess. I joined this, and found it very useful, as one got tasty food that I was accustomed to without having to cook it oneself, and more cheaply than in a restaurant. One of the regular dishes was half a sheep's head each, boiled with potatoes and other vegetables. One drank the soup it had been boiled in, and ate the brain, tongue, cheek and eye with the vegetables. Most British people in the affluent society of today are sickened by the idea of eating a sheep's eye, but it is full of good things, and I was quite used to it, as we sometimes used

to have sheep's heads (and calves' heads) for lunch at home in Turkey and Greece when I was a boy.

My school classes were mostly for children of the better off, but I also had classes at the Institute for children from less affluent homes, and in one of these I came across a problem I had not bargained for: this class consisted of girls, and as the summer of 1940 progressed the smell from the girls became so overpowering that I had to pour eau de cologne on a handkerchief and take sniffs of it throughout the class in order to be able to keep going.

The Institute was completely self-supporting apart from my own salary. I collected fees from the students each month, and paid for the furniture, electricity, rent etc out of these, keeping my accounts in an exercise book.

As I had originally come to Greece that year only for the summer, I had no winter clothes with me. I had some made in Salonica, and Father gave me Grandfather's old-fashioned black overcoat with raglan sleeves. It had gone quite green, but was still perfectly serviceable. In his day, clothes were made to last. When I first wore this coat in Kavalla as winter came on, it caused considerable mirth among a group of street urchins, one of whom shouted with disconcerting accuracy, 'Why are you wearing your grandfather's coat?'

Before going to Kavalla, I had been told by one of the naval officers attached to the British Consulate-General in Salonica that the port of Kavalla had recently been rebuilt, and that the Royal Navy did not have a map of the new layout. As they might need one at short notice if they had to help the Greeks against a German or perhaps a Bulgarian invasion, it would be useful if I could provide one. Soon after I arrived in Kavalla, therefore, I hired a rowing boat by the month, and began to go out in it regularly, partly for exercise, and partly to prepare my map. I particularly enjoyed going out when the sea was really rough, and pitting my wits and strength against the elements.

To make the map, I also used to go for walks along the harbour mole, with a pencil and piece of paper in the pocket of Grandfather's coat, pacing out distances and writing them down secretly without taking my hand out of my pocket. I had to make several attempts before I could read my scrawl on my return home, but I finally sent a map off by safe hand. A few days later the mole was wired off and a guard set to keep unauthorised persons out.

At about the same time, one of my students, a fat, jovial young man who was prematurely balding, began to cultivate my company, inviting me out to dinner in restaurants and then back to his home, where we had long talks about politics, which he always started. He

assured me that there was no danger of Germany taking Greece over, or even of a Bulgarian invasion, as the Russians were going to attack Germany shortly (this was in the winter of 1939), and there were already highly efficient Communist cells in Greece and Bulgaria which would take these countries over when this happened. My fat, jovial friend introduced me to several of his 'collaborators', and I spent long evenings defending myself and Western democracy against a concerted flood of the usual Marxist propaganda.

Greece was at this time under a right-wing dictatorship rather like that of the Colonels after the war. The prime minister was General Metaxas, and there was a strong and nationalistic youth movement. Nevertheless, Greece was being scrupulously neutral as between the Axis powers and the Western allies.

A few days after one of my sessions with my Communist 'friend', I was sent for by the police and given a form to fill in, in which I had to state, among other things, my political beliefs and affiliations. I put down 'Conservative'. At the same time, the fat, jovial young man stopped coming to my classes, although I still used to see him in the town from time to time. On one of these occasions I told him about my visit to the police station, but he was non-committal about it. I have always thought that he was probably an agent provocateur employed by the security police to

try to spot Communist sympathisers. As a foreigner, I was constantly under police surveillance, and had to get a written permit to move about anywhere in Greece, even for only the day.

Not long after this I became friends with a very pleasant young Greek, Costa Mylonas. He came from Athens, spoke excellent English and better French, was gay and amusing, and enjoyed coming out for trips in my boat on the sea. We got into the habit of having dinner together in various restaurants, where I was so much of a habitu   that they would allow me to go into the kitchen and cook myself something I particularly liked for supper, if they did not make it themselves.

Both Costa and I used to be annoyed by the fact that in these restaurants the news in Greek broadcast by the Germans was always turned on, whereas the BBC news in Greek never was. We objected mildly from time to time, and then one day I received a message written in pencil while I was in the middle of teaching, which read as follows:

'Dear Leslie,

'If you did not find out yet I inform you that I'm in jail, and will probably stay till next Thursday, when the Council will discuss the matter of my expulsion or exile. I've done everything possible and I have serious possibilities to be forgiven and quite as serious not to

A BIT OF AN OUTSIDER REALLY

Addendum to Chapter 9 (Costa Mylonas in Kavalla)

Like me, Costa was much travelled and multilingual. It was he who introduced me to the French 'con' jokes. 'Con' in French is a rude word which coincides exactly with our 'c--t'. It can be used for the vagina, but also to mean 'silly fool'.

As in English, there are a lot of words in French that start with the syllable 'con' (in both languages, for example, we have 'conjoint' and 'congenial'--with an acute accent on the 'e' of the latter in French). By playing on this fact in French, Costa produced such concepts as 'consacré' for a nun; 'congénial' for a very clever woman; and any number of others; try, for example, 'connu', 'convaincu', 'congelé' and 'confessé' ('nu' means 'naked'; 'vaincu' = 'conquered' or 'overcome'; 'gelé' = 'frozen' or 'very cold'; and 'fessé' = 'spanked' or 'beaten').

be. Anyway I don't care and only wish the thing to come to an end. I've had a lot of fun in jail yesterday. I had two Communists as fellow prisoners and read very interesting inscriptions on the walls. The place was awful dark, dirty and 'puante'. Now after many efforts from my director and some other eminent Cavallians I've been transferred to an office facing the side of the Olympia cinema.

'Please don't come to see me. It'll be better for both of us. I don't think you can do anything for me, except perhaps being interested. And please don't mention anything about my insertion to anybody. I'm supposed to be ill.

'So tomorrow you'll go out in the sea alone. From my window I cannot see the sea so I won't be jealous.

'Yours,

'C.M.

'P.S. Have you ever rode on bicycle in the police office, and more; have made races with the constables. The 'Parcour' is the round of the room. I've a lot of good fun and - goodbye.

'C.M.'

Costa had been arrested for creating a disturbance in one of our favourite restaurants when I was not there but my German opposite number in Kavalla was. He had

protested against the German news in Greek once too often, and was in fact exiled to another politically less sensitive part of Greece.

At about this time the British Council Representative in Greece came up from Athens with his wife to inspect my Institute, and decided that we should move to more salubrious premises in the middle of the town, which we duly did, occupying several rooms in an office block. I had to go out into the public passage to get from the lecture room to my bedroom, which overlooked the back of a café. There I would see ice-cream being made in large quantities by a young man who mixed it in a huge tub with a paddle that looked as if it had come from a rowing-boat. Every now and then he would dip his dirty hand into the mixture to have a taste, and I was glad that I had never patronised that particular café, although I had no reason to believe that any of the others would be more hygienic.

There were two British and two American families in Kavalla besides myself. They were all in the tobacco trade, Kavalla being the main centre for curing and then shipping the famous 'Turkish' tobacco grown in Eastern Macedonia and Western Thrace, both of which had been parts of Turkey before the Balkan Wars. One of the Englishmen had his wife and two teenage daughters with him, and I used to see quite a lot of them at weekends. One of them ultimately became my sister-in-law, but that was not until

the end of the war, during which the family had been evacuated to South Africa when the Germans invaded Greece.

As a polite, well-spoken young Englishman who knew Greek well, I was much in demand socially in Kavalla. There were frequent 'surprise parties', which were a surprise to no one, since we were each told exactly what to bring. The ladies mostly prepared food and took it along to the house where the party was being held that week, and I always brought a bottle of whisky, which cost the astronomic sum of £1 (more than a day's salary for me) in Greece in those days.

I had several mild affairs with girls and even with married women, but was determined to keep my nose clean, as I was an ambitious young chap and knew that, in a small community like Kavalla, I could not get away with anything.

One day I went to visit a young Greek married couple whose name Father had given me (the husband worked for Standard Oil) and found that only the old mother was at home. She let me in, and I said I would wait. Then I thought, 'Now, I wonder how long I can sit in the drawing-room with this old bird without saying a word.' As an experiment I sat there opposite her in total silence for a quarter of an hour, after which I got up and took my leave, delighted that I had managed it.

One of the colourful characters in Kavalla was a

Hungarian businessman of about 30 who was a great success with the ladies. He invited me to informal parties at his house several times, where there were gorgeous girls I had never seen before around Kavalla. They were all much too sophisticated and too used to a wealthy milieu to be interested in a gauche, poverty-stricken greenhorn like me.

I joined the Kavalla Mountaineering Club and had some very interesting excursions with them, one to an ancient monastery in the mountains. I also went on picnics with some of my students, travelling by bus to pleasant places in Western Thrace such as Xanthi. Returning from one of these one hot summer's day I found myself sitting beside a pretty girl of my own age who was in one of my evening classes. I suddenly noticed that my hairy arm was touching hers, and pulled it politely away, only to feel her arm move back and press even more firmly against mine. I looked at the girl in surprise, and found that she was smiling invitingly. We chatted inconsequentially for a time, and months later, when I was up in the mountains in the British army, I received an affectionate letter from her, forwarded from my home in Salonica.

This meeting in the bus took place in the summer of 1940, when the devastating German attacks on the Low Countries and France had already taken place. As the news got worse, attendance at my classes fell off drastically. The connection was obvious, so I was rather

hurt when Lord Lloyd, who read all monthly reports from every British Council Institute, sent a telegram to Magnus Irvine demanding an explanation for the falling off in numbers of students.

The summer term ended, and I was ordered to return to Salonica to prepare for my next posting, which would be in Serrai, between Kavalla and Salonica. There, again, I was to set up a new Institute of English Studies. Meanwhile, I was to hand over in Kavalla to Bill Barron of the Salonica Institute. Shortly after he came to Kavalla for the handing over, there was a big dance at the Kavalla Club, of which I was a member, and I took Bill along, although he had not yet had time to apply for membership. At about midnight, a very irate member of the club committee asked us to step into a side room, where the whole committee were seated behind a table. The president of the club then proceeded to tear me off a great big strip for having had the temerity to bring a guest to the club without permission. It was clear which way the wind was blowing after our ignominious defeat in France.

That summer of 1940 my parents went to England to see my two brothers, and a bright young American took over the Company house which went with Father's Standard Oil job. George Lipton very kindly agreed to let me share the house with him, and we and the American vice-consul, who was also a bright, charming man, had some very enjoyable

times together that summer.

But my main love again was coaching the Sailing Club crews for the Greek national championships, which were once more to be held in Salonica that year, and were to be opened by the King's brother, Prince Paul (later King Paul of the Hellenes). I was determined that, this time, my crew would win the top event, the Senior IVs. I bought a fast motor-boat, which I used for coaching during the day, and for trips down the coast to nice beach restaurants in the evenings.

Inevitably, given the large Jewish colony still in Salonica at that time, there were a number of Jews and Jewesses in the crews I coached. There were, in particular, two sisters whom I liked, and who were amazingly different from each other to look at. Whereas the elder was very dark - one's idea of a real Spanish Jewess - the other had very curly fair hair and intensely blue eyes. Little did I guess that they, and most of the others of Jewish race whom I coached that summer, would soon end up in the Nazi gas chambers.

The men's First IV was a good one. It included a very strong and experienced Italian Jew named Nabarro, and the cox was also a Jew by the name of Cohen.

The news from Western Europe was getting worse and worse, and the threat of Britain being invaded seemed overwhelming. A week before the championships, two of

the crew came to me and said, 'We can't have a chap called Cohen coxing the winning crew in the top event of the regatta in the presence of His Royal Highness. He'll have to be replaced.'

I was furious. 'You know perfectly well that I've trained the cox just as I have the rest of you,' I said. 'And you know that he's a very important member of the crew, and that he's the only cox we have who's really good and knows my methods. And anyway, do you think that Nabarro would agree to stay in the crew if you got rid of Cohen because he was a Jew?'

But German propaganda and the fear of reprisals if and when Germany occupied Greece were too strong for them. 'We won't row if Cohen stays,' they said flatly. 'And we can put Nabarro in the programme as 'Navaros', and they'll think he's a Greek.'

Of course, when Nabarro heard that Cohen was to be dropped, and why, he said he would leave the crew too. It was only after I had begged him to stay that he did so for my sake; but the life had gone out of the crew, and the new cox was too big and clumsy in any case. The crew came second to the Nautical Club of Salonica, their old rivals, and I drowned my sorrows ostentatiously in drink at the Sailing Club premises on my return from watching the race in my motor-boat, after which I resigned from the club with the maximum publicity.

Nabarro survived the Holocaust because of his Italian passport, and Cohen was hidden by one of the older ladies of the Greek royal family and survived too. I met him again in Salonica after the war.

My parents had returned from England much earlier than they had planned because of the war situation, and Mother had the job of smoothing my ruffled feathers, and also of making me pull myself together when I started to despair of Britain and talk, half-seriously and half-defiantly of joining the Germans if we could not beat them because of the pacificism and self-indulgence of the pre-war years, when defence had been considered less important than soft living.

'Aren't you ashamed of yourself?' my little mother stormed, bristling indignantly. 'You're British, and it's your duty to stick up for your country whatever happens!'

Sexual morality was still very strict in Greece in those days, and there were extremely few 'nice' girls with whom one could go out. One of these was Efy, an unusually tall girl for a Greek, slim, elegant and with a double no-chin. One Sunday I invited one of my Salonica colleagues, Dr Harold Edwards, who had been at Corpus, Cambridge before me, and had a PhD in English literature, to join me on a trip in my motor-boat for lunch at one of the beaches along the coast, and he asked whether he

could bring Efy. I was surprised, but agreed. I picked them up opposite the Mediterranean Hotel in the centre of Salonica, and when we were all aboard, Harold said, 'And what about you? Why don't you pick up one of your girlfriends too? Then we can have a foursome.'

I agreed, but my attempts to find one of my girlfriends at home at 10 a.m on a fine Sunday morning proved fruitless, and when I returned after half an hour, I found Harold fuming. 'We've been compromised, Efy and I, sitting in your damn boat together like this all this time, with everybody looking at us from above,' he said.

I was surprised, since it was he that had suggested I go off in the first place, but Efy and Harold climbed the steps up to the quayside and departed in a real huff. Shortly after this, Harold broke off his engagement to a girl in England and married Efy. They were evacuated to Egypt before the German invasion in 1941, but returned to Greece after the war. The last I heard of them was that first Efy and then Harold had committed suicide.

That autumn I went off to Serrai to open my second Institute of English Studies. At the age of 22, I was a veteran setter-up of such places, and already ex-director of the Kavalla one. I lived in a ramshackle hotel until I found premises not far from the German Institute, and was in Salonica for a short weekend before moving in when the Italians attacked Greece from Albania, which they had

already occupied.

At once all transport was taken over by the Greek government to enable reservists to go to their units. Greece had compulsory military service during peacetime, as did nearly all other European countries, apart from pacifist Britain. General mobilisation was declared, and I only managed to get back to Serrai by pretending that I was going there as a Greek officer on mobilisation. Despite Mother's warnings that I would be arrested for unauthorized use of the railways, and that I might receive a severe sentence because martial law had been declared, nobody questioned my right to board the train, and when some of the young reserve officers travelling in my first-class compartment discovered that I was not in fact Greek, but British, they welcomed me joyfully as a new ally now that Greece was at war with Italy. Despite my explanations that I was in the British Council and taught English, they at once decided, probably because I spoke such good Greek, that I was a British spy, but this did not worry them at all. Like all other Greeks, they were delighted to be at war with Italy at last, and believed that they could throw the 'macaroni pies', as they called them, out of Albania with no trouble.

When we got to Serrai and I returned to my hotel there, I discovered that one of my favourite girlfriends from Kavalla was staying there on business. We had always kept our relationship quite respectable while we were in

Kavalla, but she knew that I fancied her, and vice versa. We welcomed each other like long-lost relations, and I suggested that she might like to come and stay with me at the Institute for a couple of days, an idea that struck her as excellent.

Unfortunately, however, a blackout had been declared, and the blankets I hung at the windows of my room in the Institute proved wholly inadequate. A few minutes after I turned the light on in the room, an angry shout from the road informed me that I was breaking the blackout regulations, so we had to turn out the light and return crestfallen to the hotel. The next day, incidentally, I was summoned by the chief of police and given a lecture about breaking military laws. 'You're an educated man,' he said with withering scorn. 'Surely you have enough brain to know what a blackout means.' I was stung to the quick by this cunning approach, being young and proud, but I apologised and was allowed to go.

Meanwhile, however, Marika and I got talking about suicide in the lobby of the hotel for some reason. I suppose we were both worried about the fall of France and the apparently imminent Nazi attacks on Britain and Greece. We talked for a couple of hours about ways of killing oneself painlessly, and the dangers of making a mess of it and finding oneself paralysed, or blind, or in great pain, or all three. Marika told me of an acquaintance

of hers who had shot himself in the right temple. The bullet had merely gone round the inside periphery of his skull and come out at the other temple without doing any vital damage. After that, we were both too emotionally exhausted to do anything but retire to our respective rooms for the rest of the night.

The next morning I searched the town for material suitable for blackout curtains, but discovered that every square metre had already been bought up, and that the chances of getting more from the factories in Salonica were practically nil while the railways were needed for the military, and the looms for making their equipment.

After my visit to the police chief that morning, I bought a newspaper, and discovered that all foreign teaching institutions had been closed for the duration of the war. Presumably this was to prevent the Germans using their Institutes as centres for espionage and subversion, but as the Greek government was still trying hard to remain neutral between Germany and us, in an attempt to stave off a Nazi invasion, our Institutes had to be included too.

I therefore packed up and decided to go back to Salonica as soon as civilian travel was again allowed, to find out what to do from the British Council and the Consulate-General there. However, before I could go, I was sent for by a Greek colonel on the staff at Serrai, who lectured me on the iniquity of the Greek government

in trying to remain neutral between the British and the Germans, and the need for all patriotic Greeks to work closely with the British. He told me that he was the senior Engineer officer in the area, and that he could let me have plans of the frontier fortifications on the Bulgarian border. I answered that the British Council was not allowed to engage in any political or espionage activities, but that I would pass his offer on to the British authorities when I reached Salonica, which I did.

Within a few days I was able to travel back to Salonica by train, but there the British Council Institute was as nonplussed about the future of our work as I was. I discovered that Father had started turning one of the cellars of our house into an air-raid shelter by stacking sandbags outside the windows. He was also having all windows in the house taped with sticky paper to guard against flying glass in case of air raids.

Soon after my return, there was in fact an Italian air raid and one of the Standard Oil storage tanks at the installation was hit and set on fire. As soon as the raid ended, Father and I drove down there, but there was nothing we could do. The fire brigade were working to prevent the fire spreading to other tanks. After that, there were more air raids, but little damage was done.

A week or so after my return to Salonica, I received a letter from the British Council Representative in Athens

saying that he had heard I had deserted my post in Serrai, and that he had been very disturbed to hear it. I at once wrote back explaining that, for from deserting my post, I had taken considerable risks to get back to it after a perfectly permissible weekend in Salonica, and that I had only left a second time because I was not allowed to work in Serrai any more, had no blackout curtains in any case, and had received no instructions from anybody as to what I was to do under these circumstances. I received a handsome apology from the British Council Rep, whereupon I wrote to him again, saying that I wanted to resign in order to join the British army. Ever since the incident over the Jewish members of our rowing crew, I had been eager to have a go at the Germans, since I very much resented the way they had brainwashed my Christian friends into turning against my Jewish ones.

At that time the British Council was a reserved occupation, which meant that its officers could not be called up for military service, and I knew that Lord Lloyd was very much against releasing any of his experienced staff. I therefore had to wait to hear what he would decide in my case.

Meanwhile, I worked for a time in a voluntary, unpaid capacity at the American Farm School outside Salonica, putting their accounts in order, and I made my peace with the Sailing Club and spent quite a lot of time there,

although most of my friends were up at the Albanian front, fighting the Italians. I had cheery postcards from them, sent them food and clothing parcels and had the heartrending experience of going to visit a member of my almost champion crew as he lay in a military hospital with one leg amputated because of frost-bite, the main cause of casualties in the Albanian mountains where the Greeks were valiantly throwing back the Italians.

Although the British Council was not allowed to do any teaching, its premises could still be used as a social club, and I used to go there some evenings. It was there that I met a small, very pretty, very dark Jewish girl, and it was soon obvious that we were both attracted to each other. As she lived in the same part of Salonica as I did, we began walking home along the dark streets together, holding hands in one of the voluminous pockets of Grandfather's coat, and stopping now and then to kiss.

'Do you know,' she said to me the second evening, 'that it's against the law to kiss in public in Greece unless one's married? If one's caught, the only way to get out of trouble is to get married.' This was news to me. I laughed, but gradually over the next few weeks I realized that this girl in fact wanted us to marry. I had no desire at all to get tied down at this stage, and my departure to Athens to try to join the British army put an end to our romance. When after the war I returned to Salonica and found that nearly all the Jews had been

taken off to Germany and gassed, I had a nasty, sneaking suspicion that the girl might not really have fallen in love with me, but might only have wanted to get a British passport to escape the wrath to come.

I had trained some crews of girls the two summers before, and now that their young men had gone off to fight, one or two of them began to make a dead set at me, teasing me when I did not respond, for the same reason as in Kavalla - to keep my own doorstep clean. One girl, who had a Bulgarian mother, came to my house and asked whether she could show me how supple she was. She took off her dress, under which she was wearing only a skimpy bathing-dress, lay down on her back with her legs wide apart, and proceeded to do the most amazing cartwheels on the floor. I was duly impressed, but did not invite her up to my bedroom, which was obviously what she was angling for. This did not, however, mean that I was leading a celibate life, as this girl discovered, to her surprise, when we saw each other in one of the main nightspots of Salonica, she with the German vice-consul, whom I knew by sight, and me with the most glamorous dancer in the current show at the nightclub. There were really charming young showgirls in Salonica in those days, following the circuit which continued in Lebanon. My favourites were the Hungarians, who seemed to lack all inhibitions, and could be bubbling over with excitement one moment, and in the depths of dramatic despair the next.

After I had been back in Salonica for a few months, I discovered that the Greek government had begun to accept discreet help from the British, and that a military liaison mission of some kind had been set up in Athens. This made me even more impatient to join the British army.

Lieutenant-Colonel Menzies, the War Graves Commission man in Salonica, who was the father of the two little girls I used to take bathing, donned his uniform when the British military presence in Greece became semi-official, and invited me to tour the war graves near the Bulgarian frontier with him. The trip in his wonderful old T-model Ford made me feel that I was almost in the army already.

That February, however - February 1941 - I went down with jaundice, which left me weak and on a diet, but in spite of that I decided to go down to Athens to find out what was happening to my application to resign from the British Council, and to put pressure on the Embassy if possible, so I set out in the train, with a few of the British Council staff from Salonica, who were on their way to new postings in Egypt. While I was in Athens, I was going to stay with my Greek retired admiral uncle, Costa Kanellopoulo. Alexi, his elder son, had already been called up and left, but Dimitri, the younger, was still living in the house, although in uniform and undergoing training.

Uncle Costa was a bluff old sea dog, very right wing

in his ideas, and full of old wives' tales. When I had stayed in his house in previous summers, he had always insisted on my keeping all windows closed at night, even though I slept under a mosquito net, because of the danger from 'bad air' ('mal aria' in Italian, from which our name for malaria comes, because it used to be believed that it was caused, not by mosquito bites, but by a miasma from swamps etc). Uncle Costa had also told his sons that men could pick up VD from public urinals, so he had taught them a complicated way of urinating when one was using one which was supposed to be safe. Alexi and Dimitri demonstrated it to me, and were very insistent that I should use it, but I pooh-poohed the idea. Another thing that Uncle Costa had done was to take each boy in turn, when he reached 14 years old, to his favourite brothel and have one of the older, kindlier 'girls' there teach him the facts of life in a practical way. All Greek fathers in those days felt that this was one of their family duties.

My visit to the British Council office the morning after my arrival in Athens was entirely successful: the Representative showed me a telegram from Lord Lloyd to the effect that, 'in view of Hill's extreme youth' (I was 23 at the time), I could exceptionally be released.

Then, while I waited for news about my application to join the British army, I amused myself by going to the

theatre to see variety shows, at which excruciatingly awful chorus girls - failed domestic servants, on a par with the nurses of those days - made me laugh till the tears poured down. I also went to night clubs, where the hostesses were better. Often they were the wives of soldiers at the front, trying to support a family (conscript soldiers were extremely poorly paid), and some were really nice, and not at all like the hard females one expects to find in such a job. After I had plied one with the regulation drinks out of which she made her commission, and the management their living, she disappeared, and when I complained to the manager that I had spent quite a lot of money on her for nothing, he took me along to the girls' dressing room, to show me the poor creature, looking very pale and forlorn and retching into a basin. The drinks she had been consuming with such gay abandon had not, as I assumed, been coloured water, but the real thing!

Chapter 10: War!

On September 1st 1939, I wrote the following letter to the British Consul-General in Salonica, who was a new man called Hole:

'Dear Mr Hole,

'As General Mobilization has taken place in England, I would like to clear my position officially. As a member of the Officer Cadet Reserve (Artillery branch), I have given my word to enlist for training as an Artillery officer immediately upon mobilisation. I therefore offer to you, as the nearest representative of the British government, my unreserved services, whether as an Artillery officer (in which case I would like to know what means of transport to England you advise), or in any other capacity, if you think I would be more useful there.'

I was a member of the Officer Cadet Reserve on the strength of the Certificate A which I had obtained in the OTC at school; my query about means of transport was prompted by the fact that I could not now return to England via Germany, and other routes were doubtful because of mobilisation needs; and the suggestion from the Consul-General himself that, given my knowledge of Greek and Greece, my services might be invaluable in that country.

Mr Hole wrote to the War Office requesting my services, and meanwhile made use of me in the Consulate-General, particularly for encoding and decoding for the Royal Navy

team which had been sent to Salonica from Alexandria to give permits for ships passing through the British blockade in the Mediterranean. The members of this team were all retired naval officers, captains and commanders, reemployed for the war.

I started work in the Consulate-General on the 2nd September. On the 16th of that month I wrote to the recruiting station at Cambridge explaining my position; and on the 27th September I wrote to the British Military Attache at our Embassy in Athens, on Mr Hole's advice. I finally received the following answer from the Military Attache, dated 4 December 1939:

'I have to inform you that we have received a letter from the War Office dated the 22nd November 1939 acknowledging the offer of your services in the following manner:-

"I am to inform you that it is not at present considered essential that Mr. L. A. Hill should return to this country to offer his services in a military capacity.

"It is not possible to offer any certainty of military employment to men who proceed to the United Kingdom at present, as commissions can normally only be gained after service in the ranks, and men may have to wait several months before being called up for training in the ranks.

"I am to add that Mr. L. A. Hill's offer of his services is much appreciated and in view of his qualifications

(detailed in your letter), it would appear that his services would be more useful in Salonica and it is therefore agreed that he should continue in his present occupation."

I had been working unpaid and unofficially in the Consulate-General, but now Mr Hole thought I should be given something more solid, so he offered my services to the British Council, which had a flourishing office in Salonica. Lord Lloyd, the Chairman of the British Council, was consulted and agreed, so one morning I found myself on the way to the airport outside Salonica with Magnus Irvine, the Director of the Salonica Institute, on my way to set up an Institute of English Studies in Kavalla in North East Greece.

It was my first trip in an aeroplane. When I sat down, I searched around my seat and then called the air hostess.

'Where's my parachute?' I asked.

She giggled and then explained that passenger planes did not have parachutes.

'Not even for the pilot?' I asked incredulously.

'No, sir, not even for the pilot,' she answered with another giggle.

I had been looking forward to my first flight, but now I was not at all sure that I liked the idea. In fact, for years after this, I had an unreasoning fear of being

in the air, which did not give way until turbo-prop and then jet planes came in, and my unconscious could really have confidence in the power of the engines to keep such a heavy object up.

During that first flight, I had pain in my ears when we descended rather sharply and flew very low for quite a distance before landing at Drama airport, from where Magnus Irvine and I travelled to Kavalla by taxi.

I used two ways of travel between Salonica and Kavalla during the following year. Either I went by bus via Lake Volvi and Serrai, watching the peasants get on and off at the little villages and towns on the way; or I booked a seat in one of the taxis that carried five passengers, two in front and three behind. By paying a little extra, one could make sure of a front seat, which helped me to avoid feeling carsick. The drivers both of the buses and of the taxis believed in getting from A to B as fast and as economically as possible, so when they came to a down slope, they turned off their engines and coasted at great speed, taking perilous S-bends with a precipice on one side with the dedicated fury of a Jehu. Later, when I was in the army and had to guide British officers over these roads, I started off by grossly underestimating the time it would take to cover a given distance, because I did not reckon on the cautious descent of such precipitous roads in low gear by the well-trained

British driver.

Kavalla was a very pretty little town, built on hills and a rocky promontory surrounding a small harbour. We were met by Mr Phanos, a Cypriot who gave English lessons there, and who was going to help us find premises for our Institute of English Studies.

We very quickly settled on a small one-storeyed house in the slum area of Kavalla, right away from the port. It had a very small, rough garden on three sides, and there were four poky little rooms and a lavatory, which consisted of a dark, cupboard-like recess with a black hole in the floor. There was a corridor down the middle of the house leading to this lavatory, with two rooms on each side. I turned the rooms on the left into a classroom and kitchen, and the ones on the right into my bedroom and a general purpose room, which served as the students' waiting-room during class hours, and my dining-room and living-room at other times.

I had a tin bath made, so that I could have baths in the kitchen, heating the water in buckets over the stove, which did not seem at all strange to me after Kniephof.

The rent was £1 a month, and Magnus Irvine and I agreed that I should pay five shillings of this. As my salary was £300 a year for the first three probationary months, and £325 thereafter, this seemed very fair to me, and in fact I saved half my salary during the next year

and a half. Incidentally, £325 a year was equivalent to the pay of a Greek brigadier-general in those days.

I was now Director of the Institute of English Studies at the tender age of 21, 100 miles from my nearest superior. The first time I tried cooking for myself, I heated a tin of aubergines on my primus stove without first making a hole in it, and when I finally jabbed it with my tin-opener, it sprayed up all over the ceiling, narrowly missing me on the way.

In Kavalla, I had a daily servant, an old Greek refugee woman from Turkey. She always referred to her husband as the 'sakatis' (cripple), so I presume she was the only breadwinner in the family, in a country where Social Security did not yet exist. I do not know how she and her husband managed to subsist on the small wage I paid her, and there were certainly no perks to be 'borrowed' in my meagre household.

She was very rough and ready compared with the excellent servants I had been used to in my parents' homes. Once I asked her whether she could darn a sock of mine which had developed a largish hole. She said she could, took it home with her, and brought it back next day with a large patch of a different colour sewn on it with big, rough stitches.

In spite of Hodgson, I had always been very nervous of speaking in public, and had suffered agonies when I had started to have to read the lessons at house prayers and

then in chapel at school. I was therefore looking forward with some trepidation to having to teach for the first time in my life; but the reality was nothing like as bad as my anticipations. All my students, young and old, were delighted to have a real Englishman to teach them, and were highly respectful when Mr Phanos had an advertisement for our classes put in the local paper, stressing that I had a Cambridge BA.

Some of my students were old enough to be my grandfather or grandmother; others were schoolchildren; and several times a week I went to local missionary schools to teach, with a monk, when the pupils were boys, or a nun, when they were girls, always present. I once said to one of the nuns after a lesson, 'Are you here to protect the girls from me.'

'Oh, no!' she answered, pitying my greeneness. 'I'm here to protect you from the girls.' This was rather a blow to my masculine pride, but as some of the girls were nearly as old as I was, and no doubt healthily repressed, I believed her.

I also taught at one ordinary Greek boys' school, which had a teachers' lunch mess. I joined this, and found it very useful, as one got tasty food that I was accustomed to without having to cook it oneself, and more cheaply than in a restaurant. One of the regular dishes was half a sheep's head each, boiled with potatoes and other vegetables. One drank the soup it had been boiled in, and ate the brain,

tongue, cheek and eye with the vegetables. Most British people in the affluent society of today are sickened by the idea of eating a sheep's eye, but it is full of good things, and I was quite used to it, as we sometimes used to have sheep's heads (and calves' heads) for lunch at home in Turkey and Greece when I was a boy.

There were a couple of restaurants in Kavalla that had pleasant enough food, but it tended to be monotonous week after week and month after month. One evening I saw, 'Little Lordlings' on the menu. It was a new one on me, so I shouted to a passing waiter, 'Here, what't this Little Lordlings, eh?'

Suddenly there was a deathly hush among the customers, and then a guffaw as the waiter hastily stopped what he was doing and hurried over to me to whisper, 'It's balls - testicles.' I have always believed in trying everything once, so I had them, but found them rather uninteresting.

When I became well known in the restaurants, the proprietors would allow me to go into the kitchen and knock up the odd dish that they had never seen before, such as scrambled eggs.

My school classes were mostly for children of the better off, but I also had classes at the Institute for children from less affluent homes, and in one of these I came across a problem I had not bargained for: this class consisted of girls, and as the summer of 1940 progressed,

the smell from the girls became so overpowering that I had to pour eau de cologne on a handkerchief and take sniffs of it throughout the class in order to be able to keep going. It had never occurred to me till then that girls, having an extra orifice which exuded certain powerful secretions, had an extra problem when it came to hygiene compared with boys.

It was not until years later that a Russian friend whom I told this story to said, 'My dear fellow, you don't know what that smell can be like until you've smelt the crotch of a Bolshoi ballerina after a morning's practice!'

As for me, I was having problems with my face. I was constantly cutting myself shaving, so the barber I went to offered to take me in hand. Many men still went to barbers for a shave as well as a haircut, and now this man began shaving me carefully every morning, downwards only (upwards was called 'contra'), and soon I was fine.

The Institute was completely self-supporting apart from my own salary. I collected fees from the students each month, and paid for the furniture, electricity, rent etc out of these, keeping my accounts in an exercise book.

As I had originally come to Greece that year only for the summer, I had no winter clothes with me. I had some made in Salonica, and Father gave me Grandfather's old-fashioned black overcoat with raglan sleeves. It had

gone quite green, but was still perfectly serviceable. In his day, clothes were made to last. When I first wore this coat in Kavalla as winter came on, it caused considerable mirth among a group of street urchins, one of whom shouted with disconcerting accuracy, 'Why are you wearing your grandfather's coat?'

Before going to Kavalla, 'One of the naval officers attached to the British Consulate-General in Salonica had said to me, 'The port of Kavalla's recently been rebuilt, old boy, and the RN haven't got a map of the new layout. As we might need one at short notice if we have to help the Greeks against a German or perhaps a Bulgarian invasion, it'd be useful if you could provide one.

Soon after I arrived in Kavalla, therefore, I hired a rowing boat by the month, and began to go out in it regularly, partly for exercise, and partly to prepare my map. I particularly enjoyed going out when the sea was really rough, and pitting my wits and strength against the elements.

To make the map, I also used to go for walks along the harbour mole, with a pencil and piece of paper in the pocket of Grandfather's coat, pacing out distances and writing them down secretly without taking my hand out of my pocket. I had to make several attempts before I could read my scrawl on my return home, but I finally sent a map off by safe hand. A few days later the mole

was wired off and a guard set to keep unauthorised persons out.

At about the same time, one of my students, a fat, jovial young man who was prematurely balding, began to cultivate my company, inviting me out to dinner in restaurants and then back to his home, where we had long talks about politics, which he always started.

'There's no danger of Germany taking Greece over,' he assured me, 'nor is there any danger of a Bulgarian invasion, as the Russians are going to attack Germany shortly (this was in the winter of 1939), and there are already highly efficient Communist cells in Greece and Bulgaria which will take these countries over when this happens. My fat, jovial friend introduced me to several of his 'collaborators', and I spent long evenings defending myself and Western democracy against a concerted flood of the usual Marxist propaganda. Of course, I reported all this back to our Consulate-General in Salonica.

Greece was at this time under a right-wing dictatorship rather like that of the Colonels after the war. The prime minister was General Metaxas, and there was a strong and nationalistic youth movement. Nevertheless, Greece was being scrupulously neutral as between the Axis powers and the Western allies.

A few days after one of my sessions with my Communist 'friend', I was sent for by the police and given a form

to fill in, in which I had to state, among other things, my political beliefs and affiliations. I put down 'Conservative'. At the same time, the fat, jovial young man stopped coming to my classes, although I still used to see him in the town from time to time. On one of these occasions I told him about my visit to the police station, but he was non-committal about it. I have always thought that he was probably an agent provocateur employed by the security police to try to spot Communist sympathisers. As a foreigner, I was constantly under police surveillance, and had to get a written permit to move about anywhere in Greece, even for only the day.

Not long after this I became friends with a very pleasant young Greek, Costa Mylonas. He came from Athens, spoke excellent English and better French, was gay and amusing, and enjoyed coming out for trips in my boat on the sea. We got into the habit of having dinner together in various restaurants, where I was already a habitue.

Both Costa and I used to be annoyed by the fact that in these restaurants the news in Greek broadcast by the Germans was always turned on, whereas the BBC news in Greek never was. We objected mildly from time to time, and then one day I received a message written in pencil while I was in the middle of teaching, which read as follows:

'Dear Leslie,

'If you did not find out yet I inform you that I'm in jail, and will probably stay till next Thursday, when the Council will discuss the matter of my expulsion or exile. I've done everything possible and I have serious possibilities to be forgiven and quite as serious not to be. Anyway I don't care and only wish the thing to come to an end. I've had a lot of fun in jail yesterday. I had two Communists as fellow prisoners and read very interesting inscriptions on the walls. The place was awful dark, dirty and 'puante'. Now after many efforts from my director and some other eminent Cavallians I've been transferred to an office facing the side of the Olympia cinema.

'Please don't come to see me. It'll be better for both of us. I don't think you can do anything for me, except perhaps being interested. And please don't mention anything about my insertion to anybody. I'm supposed to be ill.

'So tomorrow you'll go out in the sea alone. From my window I cannot see the sea so I won't be jealous.

'Yours,

'C.M.

'P.S. Have you ever rode on bicycle in the police office, and more; have made races with the constables. The 'Parcour' is the round of the room. I've a lot of good

fun and - goodbye.

'C.M.'

Costa had been arrested for creating a disturbance in one of our favourite restaurants when I was not there but my German opposite number in Kavalla was. He had protested against the German news in Greek once too often, and was in fact exiled to another politically less sensitive part of Greece.

At about this time the British Council Representative in Greece came up from Athens with his wife to inspect my Institute, and decided that we should move to more salubrious premises in the middle of the town, which we duly did, occupying several rooms in an office block. I had to go out into the public passage to get from the lecture room to my bedroom, which overlooked the back of a cafe. There I would see ice-cream being made in large quantities by a young man who mixed it in a huge tub with a paddle that looked as if it had come from a rowing-boat. Every now and then he would dip his dirty hand into the mixture to have a taste, and I was glad that I had never patronised that particular cafe, although I had no reason to believe that any of the others would be more hygienic.

There were two British and two American families in Kavalla besides myself. They were all in the tobacco trade, Kavalla being the main centre for curing and then

shipping the famous 'Turkish' tobacco grown in Eastern Macedonia and Western Thrace, both of which had been parts of Turkey before the Balkan Wars. One of the Englishmen had his wife and two teenage daughters with him, and I used to see quite a lot of them at weekends. One of them ultimately became my sister-in-law, but that was not until the end of the war, during which the family had been evacuated to South Africa when the Germans invaded Greece.

As a polite, well-spoken young Englishman who knew Greek well, I was much in demand socially in Kavalla. There were frequent 'surprise parties', which were a surprise to no one, since we were each told exactly what to bring. The ladies mostly prepared food and took it along to the house where the party was being held that week, and I always brought a bottle of whisky, which cost the astronomical sum of £1 (more than a day's salary for me) in Greece in those days.

I had several mild affairs with girls and even with married women, but was determined to keep my nose clean, as I was an ambitious young chap and knew that, in a small community like Kavalla, I could not get away with anything.

One day I went to visit a young Greek married couple whose name Father had given me (the husband worked for Standard Oil) and found that only the old mother was at home. She let me in, and I said I would wait. Then I thought, 'Now, I wonder how long I can sit in the drawing-room with

this old bird without saying a word.' As an experiment I sat there opposite her in total silence for a quarter of an hour, after which I got up and took my leave, delighted that I had managed it.

One of the colourful characters in Kavalla was a Hungarian businessman of about 30 who was a great success with the ladies. He invited me to informal parties at his house several times, where there were gorgeous girls I had never seen before around Kavalla. They were all much too sophisticated and too used to a wealthy milieu to be interested in a gauche, poverty-stricken greenhorn like me.

I joined the Kavalla Mountaineering Club and had some very interesting excursions with them, one to an ancient monastery in the mountains. I also went on picnics with some of my students, travelling by bus to pleasant places in Western Thrace such as Xanthi. Returning from one of these one hot summer's day I found myself sitting beside a pretty girl of my own age who was in one of my evening classes. I suddenly noticed that my hairy arm was touching hers, and pulled it politely away, only to feel her arm move back and press even more firmly against mine. I looked at the girl in surprise, and found that she was smiling invitingly. We chatted inconsequentially for a time, and months later, when I was up in the mountains in the British army, I received an affectionate letter from her, forwarded from my home in Salonica.

This meeting in the bus took place in the summer of 1940, when the devastating German attacks on the Low Countries and France had already taken place. As the news got worse, attendance at my classes fell off drastically. The connection was obvious, so I was rather hurt when Lord Lloyd, who read all monthly reports from every British Council Institute, sent a telegram to Magnus Irvine demanding an explanation for the falling off in numbers of students.

The summer term ended, and I was ordered to return to Salonica to prepare for my next posting, which would be in Serrai, between Kavalla and Salonica. There, again, I was to set up a new Institute of English Studies. Meanwhile, I was to hand over in Kavalla to Bill Barron of the Salonica Institute. Shortly after he came to Kavalla for the handing over, there was a big dance at the Kavalla Club, of which I was a member, and I took Bill along, although he had not yet had time to apply for membership. At about midnight, a very irate member of the club committee asked us to step into a side room, where the whole committee were seated behind a table. The president of the club then proceeded to tear me off a great big strip for having had the temerity to bring a guest to the club without permission. It was clear which way the wind was blowing after our ignominious defeat in France.

That summer of 1940 my parents went to England to

see my two brothers, and a bright young American took over the Company house which went with Father's Standard Oil job. George Lipton very kindly agreed to let me share the house with him, and we and the American vice-consul, who was also a bright, charming man, had some very enjoyable times together that summer.

But my main love again was coaching the Sailing Club crews for the Greek national championships, which were once more to be held in Salonica that year, and were to be opened by the King's brother, Prince Paul (later King Paul of the Hellenes). I was determined that, this time, my crew would win the top event, the Senior IVs. I bought a fast motor-boat, which I used for coaching during the day, and for trips down the coast to nice beach restaurants in the evenings.

Inevitably, given the large Jewish colony still in Salonica at that time, there were a number of Jews and Jewesses in the crews I coached. There were, in particular, two sisters whom I liked, and who were amazingly different from each other to look at. Whereas the elder was very dark - one's idea of a real Spanish Jewess - the other had very curly fair hair and intensely blue eyes. Little did I guess that they, and most of the others of Jewish race whom I coached that summer, would soon end up in the Nazi gas chambers.

The men's First IV was a good one. It included a

very strong and experienced Italian Jew named Nabarro, and the cox was also a Jew by the name of Cohen.

The news from Western Europe was getting worse and worse, and the threat of Britain being invaded seemed overwhelming. A week before the championships, two of the crew came to me and said, 'We can't have a chap called Cohen coxing the winning crew in the top event of the regatta in the presence of His Royal Highness. He'll have to be replaced.'

I was furious. 'You know perfectly well that I've trained the cox just as I have the rest of you,' I said. 'And you know that he's a very important member of the crew, and that he's the only cox we have who's really good and knows my methods. And anyway, do you think that Nabarro would agree to stay in the crew if you got rid of Cohen because he was a Jew?'

But German propaganda and the fear of reprisals if and when Germany occupied Greece were too strong for them. 'We won't row if Cohen stays,' they said flatly. 'And we can put Nabarro in the programme as "Navaros", and they'll think he's a Greek.'

Of course, when Nabarro heard that Cohen was to be dropped, and why, he said he would leave the crew too. It was only after I had begged him to stay that he did so for my sake; but the life had gone out of the crew, and the new cox was too big and clumsy in any case. The

crew came second to the Nautical Club of Salonica, their old rivals, and I drowned my sorrows ostentatiously in drink at the Sailing Club premises on my return from watching the race in my motor-boat, after which I resigned from the club with the maximum publicity.

Nabarro survived the Holocaust because of his Italian passport, and Cohen was hidden by one of the older ladies of the Greek royal family and survived too. I met him again in Salonica after the war, but I was shocked to learn that one of the Jews hidden by this lady had threatened to give himself up to the Germans and thus land her terrible danger unless she laid on a girl or girls for him to have sexual relief with. I presumed that he had no idea what happened to Jews when they fell into German hands - or that sex starvation had turned his brain.

My parents had returned from England much earlier than they had planned because of the war situation, and Mother had the job of smoothing my ruffled feathers, and also of making me pull myself together when I started to despair of Britain and talk, half-seriously and half-defiantly, of joining the Germans if we could not beat them because of the pacificism and self-indulgence of the pre-war years, when defence had been considered less important than soft living.

'Aren't you ashamed of yourself?' my little mother stormed, bristling indignantly. 'You're British, and it's

your duty to stick up for your country whatever happens!'

Sexual morality was still very strict in Greece in those days, and there were extremely few 'nice' girls with whom one could go out. One of these was Efy, an unusually tall girl for a Greek, slim, elegant and with a double no-chin. One Sunday I invited one of my Salonica colleagues, Dr Harold Edwards, who had been at Corpus, Cambridge before me, and had a PhD in English literature, to join me on a trip in my motor-boat for lunch at one of the beaches along the coast, and he asked whether he could bring Efy. I was surprised, but agreed. I picked them up opposite the Mediterranean Hotel in the centre of Salonica, and when we were all aboard, Harold said, 'And what about you? Why don't you pick up one of your girlfriends too? Then we can have a foursome.'

I agreed, but my attempts to find one of my girlfriends at home at 10 a.m on a fine Sunday morning proved fruitless, and when I returned after half an hour, I found Harold fuming. 'We've been compromised, Efy and I, sitting in your damn boat together like this all this time, with everybody looking at us from above,' he said.

I was surprised, since it was he that had suggested I go off in the first place, but Efy and Harold climbed the steps up to the quayside and departed in a real huff. Shortly after this, Harold broke off his engagement to a girl in England and married Efy. They were evacuated

to Egypt before the German invasion in 1941, but returned to Greece after the war. The last I heard of them was that first Efy and then Harold had committed suicide. I never discovered why, but had a guilty feeling that I had been partly responsible for throwing them together, and that they had then discovered too late that they were incompatible.

That autumn I went off to Serrai to open my second Institute of English Studies. At the age of 22, I was a veteran setter-up of such places, and already ex-director of the Kavalla one. I lived in a ramshackle hotel until I found premises not far from the German Institute. As the hotel had no restaurant or - of course - any room service, I had to go out even for breakfast. I was thus introduced for the first time to rancid butter, the only kibd available in the cafe down the road which opened early enough in the morning.

I was in Salonica for a short weekend before moving into our new Institute premises in Serrai when the Italians attacked Greece from Albania, which they had already occupied.

At once all transport was taken over by the Greek government to enable reservists to go to their units. Greece had compulsory military service during peacetime, as did nearly all other European countries, apart from pacifist Britain. General mobilisation was declared, and I only managed to get back to Serrai by pretending that I was going there as a Greek officer on mobilisation.

Despite Mother's warnings that I would be arrested for unauthorized use of the railways, and that I might receive a severe sentence because martial law had been declared, nobody questioned my right to board the train, and when some of the young reserve officers travelling in my first-class compartment discovered that I was not in fact Greek, but British, they welcomed me joyfully.

'You're a new ally now that Greece is at war with Italy!' they cried. Despite my explanations that I was in the British Council and taught English, they at once decided, probably because I spoke such good Greek, that I was a British spy, but this did not worry them at all. Like most other Greeks, they were delighted to be at war with Italy at last, and believed that they could throw the 'macaroni pies', as they called them, out of Albania with no trouble.

When we got to Serrai and I returned to my hotel there, I discovered that one of my favourite girlfriends from Kavalla was staying there on business. We had always kept our relationship quite respectable while we were in Kavalla, but she knew that I fancied her, and vice versa. We welcomed each other like long-lost relations, and I suggested that she might like to come and stay with me at the Institute for a couple of days, an idea that struck her as excellent.

Unfortunately, however, a blackout had been declared, and the blankets I hung at the windows of my room in the

Institute proved wholly inadequate. A few minutes after I turned the light on in the room, there was an angry shout from the street: 'You're breaking the blackout regulations!!' so we had to turn out the light and return crestfallen to the hotel. The next day, incidentally, I was summoned by the chief of police and given a lecture about breaking military laws. 'You're an educated man,' he said with withering scorn. 'Surely you have enough brain to know what a blackout means.' I was stung to the quick by this cunning approach, being young and proud, but I apologised and was allowed to go.

Meanwhile, in the lobby of the hotel, Marika and I got talking about suicide for some reason. I suppose we were both worried about the fall of France and the apparently imminent Nazi attacks on Britain and Greece. We talked for a couple of hours about ways of killing oneself painlessly, and the dangers of making a mess of it and finding oneself paralysed, or blind, or in great pain, or all three.

'D'you know,' Marika told me, 'I once knew a man who shot himself in the right temple. The bullet merely went round the inside periphery of his skull and came out at the other temple without doing any vital damage.'

After that, we were both too emotionally exhausted to do anything but retire to our respective rooms for the rest of the night.

The next morning, I searched the town for material suitable for blackout curtains, but discovered that every square metre had already been bought up, and that the chances of getting more from the factories in Salonica were practically nil while the railways were needed for the military, and the looms for making their equipment.

After my visit to the police chief that morning, I bought a newspaper, and discovered that all foreign teaching institutions had been closed for the duration of the war. Presumably this was to prevent the Germans using their Institutes as centres for espionage and subversion, but as the Greek government was still trying hard to remain neutral between Germany and us, in an attempt to stave off a Nazi invasion, our Institutes had to be included too.

I therefore packed up and decided to go back to Salonica as soon as civilian travel was again allowed, to find out what to do from the British Council and the Consulate-General there. However, before I could go, I was sent for by a Greek colonel on the staff at Serrai, who lectured me on the iniquity of the Greek government in trying to remain neutral between the British and the Germans, and the need for all patriotic Greeks to work closely with the British.

'I am the senior Engineer officer in the area,' he said to me, 'and I could let you have the plans of the

frontier fortifications on the Bulgarian border.'

'Thank you very much, sir,' I answered warily, 'but the British Council, for whom I work, is not allowed to engage in any political or espionage activities. But I shall pass your offer on to the British authorities when I return to Salonica,' which I in fact did do.

Within a few days I was able to travel to Salonica by train, but there the British Council Institute was as nonplussed about the future of our work as I was. I discovered that Father had started turning one of the cellars of our house into an air-raid shelter by stacking sandbags outside the windows. He was also having all the windows in the house taped with sticky paper to guard against flying glass in case of air raids.

Soon after my return, there was in fact an Italian air raid and one of the Standard Oil storage tanks at the installation was hit and set on fire. As soon as the raid ended, Father and I drove down there, but there was nothing we could do. The fire brigade were working to prevent the fire spreading to other tanks. After that, there were more air raids, but little damage was done.

A week or so after my return to Salonica, I received a letter from the British Council Representative in Athens saying that he had heard I had deserted my post in Serrai, and that he had been very disturbed to hear it. I at once wrote back explaining that, far from deserting my post, I

had taken considerable risks to get back to it after a perfectly permissible weekend in Salonica, and that I had only left a second time because I was not allowed to work in Serrai any more, had no blackout curtains in any case, and had received no instructions from anybody as to what I was to do under these circumstances. I received a handsome apology from the British Council Rep, whereupon I wrote to him again, saying that I wanted to resign in order to join the British army. Ever since the incident over the Jewish members of our rowing crew, I had been eager to have a go at the Germans, since I very much resented the way they had brainwashed my Christian friends into turning against my Jewish ones.

At that time the British Council was a reserved occupation, which meant that its officers could not be called up for military service, and I knew that Lord Lloyd was very much against releasing any of his experienced staff. I therefore had to wait to hear what he would decide in my case.

Meanwhile I worked for a time in a voluntary, unpaid capacity at the American Farm School outside Salonica, putting their accounts in order, and I made my peace with the Sailing Club and spent quite a lot of time there, although most of my friends were up at the Albanian front, fighting the Italians. I had cheery postcards from them, sent them food and clothing parcels and had the heartrending

experience of going to visit a member of my almost champion crew as he lay in a military hospital with one leg amputated because of frost-bite, the main cause of casualties in the Albanian mountains where the Greeks were valiantly throwing back the Italians.

In Salonica prostitution was supposed to be strictly controlled, with licensed brothels graded according to price. The first time I visited one, the girl I chose proved to be tough, bored and disillusioned - exactly the sort of prostitute I was expecting when I was taken to my first brothel in Paris in 1938.

But the next time I was lucky. The girl was young and enthusiastic, and before we got down to action, she said very politely, 'Could I please be on top?'

I had never tried this position before, although I had seen it exhibited in that first Parisian establishment, but I have always believed in trying everything once. The girl obviously enjoyed it greatly. I suppose it gave her a feeling of power, and allowed her to wiggle herself about to get the maximum friction in the best places.

Anyway, after we had finished she said in a wheedling tone, 'Please take me out one evening. All you have to do is to get a police permit. They just ask you to give your name and address.'

'It'd be unwise to go on record with the police in

that way,' I thought cannily, so I answered, 'Okay, I'll think about it,' but in fact did nothing.
pressing invitation.

At the door of every brothel there were photos of the inmates, each with a coloured slip under it showing whether she was out of action because of her period (the slip was then red), or available (green slip).

Although the British Council was not allowed to do any teaching, its premises could still be used as a social club, and I used to go there some evenings. It was there that I met a small, very pretty, very dark Jewish girl, and it was soon obvious that we were both attracted to each other. As she lived in the same part of Salonica as I did, we began walking home along the dark streets together, holding hands in one of the voluminous pockets of Grandfather's coat, and stopping now and then to kiss.

'Do you know,' she said to me the second evening, 'that it's against the law to kiss in public in Greece unless one's married? If one's caught, the only way to get out of trouble is to get married.' This was news to me. I laughed, but gradually over the next few weeks I realized that this girl in fact wanted us to marry. I had no desire at all to get tied down at this stage, and my departure to Athens to try to join the British army put an end to our romance. When after the war I returned

to Salonica and found that nearly all the Jews had been taken off to Germany and gassed, I had a nasty, sneaking suspicion that the girl might not really have fallen in love with me, but might only have wanted to get a British passport to escape the wrath to come.

I had trained some crews of girls the two summers before, and now that their young men had gone off to fight, one or two of them began to make a dead set at me, teasing me when I did not respond for the same reason as in Kavalla - to keep my own doorstep clean. One girl, who had a Bulgarian mother, came to my house and asked whether she could show me how supple she was. She took off her dress, under which she was wearing only a skimpy bathing-dress, lay down on her back with her legs wide apart, and proceeded to do the most amazing slow cartwheels on the floor. I was duly impressed, but did not invite her up to my bedroom, which was obviously what she was angling for.

However, she soon discovered - to her surprise - that I was not leading a celibate life when we saw each other in one of the main nightspots of Salonica, she with the German vice-consul, whom I knew by sight, and me with the most glamorous dancer in the current show at the nightclub, who used to invite me to her digs after the show, and actually asked me to marry her after one of our sessions in bed. Apparently a friend of hers in the same line of business had managed to get one of the British naval officers

attached to our Consulate-General in Salonica to marry her.

There were really charming young showgirls in Salonica in those days, following the circuit which continued in Lebanon. My favourites were the Hungarians, who, as I have mentioned before, seemed to lack all inhibitions, and could be bubbling over with excitement one moment, and in the depths of dramatic despair the next.

After I had been back in Salonica for a few months, I discovered that the Greek government had begun to accept discreet help from the British, and that a military liaison mission of some kind had been set up in Athens. This made me even more impatient to join the British army.

Lieutenant-Colonel Menzies, the War Graves Commission man in Salonica, who was the father of the two little girls I used to take bathing, donned his uniform when the British military presence in Greece became semi-official, and invited me to tour the war graves near the Bulgarian frontier with him. The trip in his wonderful old T-model Ford made me feel that I was almost in the army already.

That February, however - February 1941 - I went down with jaundice, which left me weak and on a diet, but in spite of that I decided to go down to Athens to find out what was happening to my application to resign from the British Council, and to put pressure on the Embassy if possible, so I set out in the train, with a few of the British Council staff from Salonica, who were on their

way to new postings in Egypt. While I was in Athens, I was to stay with my Greek retired admiral uncle, Costa Kanellopoulo. Alexi, his elder son, had already been called up and left, but Dimitri, the younger, was still living in the house, although in uniform and undergoing training.

Uncle Costa was a bluff old sea dog, very right wing in his ideas, and full of old wives' tales. When I had stayed in his house in previous summers, he had always insisted on my keeping all windows closed at night, even though I slept under a mosquito net, because of the danger from 'bad air' ('mal aria' in Italian, from which our name for malaria comes, because it used to be believed that it was caused, not by mosquito bites, but by a miasma from swamps etc). Uncle Costa had also told his sons that men could pick up VD from public urinals, so he had taught them a complicated way of urinating when one was using one which was supposed to be safe. Alexi and Dimitri demonstrated it to me, and were very insistent that I should use it, but I pooh-poohed the idea. Another thing that Uncle Costa had done was to take each boy in turn, when he reached 14 years old, to his favourite brothel and have one of the older, kindlier 'girls' there teach him the facts of life in a practical way. All Greek fathers in those days felt that this was one of their family duties.

My visit to the British Council office the morning

support on his extremely meagre pay. We had a heart-to-heart talk about how sad it was that she had to prostitute herself to support herself and the baby, but she seemed to enjoy the work - at least with me. After making love, I slept well until she woke me early in the morning for another go. She would have made a very kind and affectionate mistress.

Chapter 11: Interpreter in the Greek campaign

On March 9th there was a phone call from the British Embassy. With joy - and some trepidation - I went along to see my friends there. 'The British Army arrived at the Piraeus today (I later discovered that the Military Attaché at the German Embassy in Athens had watched them disembarking), and they need interpreters badly,' I was told. 'You're just in time. It might be months before you got to OCTU if you went back to England, and then there'd be months of training before you saw active service. Now you've got a chance to do something immediately. You might be off in three days. You'd start in the ranks, but certain starred people would get commissions. You'd go up to Macedonia with armoured units.'

'There's a rumour about that we've landed in Kavalla,' I said. 'That's a place I know well.'

'I doubt that very much,' answered my friend. 'There are a lot of rumours flying about. Here's a note of introduction to the OC, Second Echelon, at the Minerva Hotel.'

I went there at once, and found that the OC, Second Echelon was a lieutenant, and that he shared an office with my old friend from Salonica, Freddie Donaldson, who was now a captain and in charge of the British War Graves Commission in Greece, Menzies having moved elsewhere. I chatted to Freddie, till a sergeant began to fill up an

application form with my particulars. 'You interpreters will be in the RASC/S,' he told me.

I knew that the RASC was the Royal Army Service Corps, but I did not know what 'S' meant, so I asked.

'It means "Special",' answered the sergeant, 'but I don't know special for what.'

I discovered in due course that, in my case, it meant that I had no identification document, no dog tags to hang round my neck, no army number, no pay book - and no pay! What would have happened if I had been taken prisoner I do not know. Presumably I would have disappeared without trace.

'Report to the MO at fourteen hundred hours for a medical,' the sergeant went on. I had already had one medical in Athens for the OCTU, but that apparently did not count.

So began a chaotic couple of days and nights before I finally found myself interpreter to the Regimental HQ of the Northumberland Hussars.

First I went to Uncle Costa's for lunch and found no one at home, so I began eating on my own. Uncle Costa and Dimitri returned towards the end of my meal and I explained to them what had happened, and had to leave before they began eating.

There were about 20 of us at the medical. One was a diminutive man who had been a jockey at the Athens Race Club for years, another was a clerk at the British Consulate in Athens. All were British subjects, but some had Greek names, and most spoke English with a foreign or regional accent.

The MO, a captain in the RAMC, was an hour and a half late, which was par for the course for those two days. His examination was rather rough and ready. Chest expansion was measured with a piece of string, and I objected when I thought I was being sold short on that. The MO laughed and added half an inch. The only thing he was dubious about was my eyesight, but he finally passed me A1. As each of us finished, he went back to the Minerva to be sworn in, Bible in hand, and we were then dismissed, with orders to be back at 10.30 the next morning. I went straight home to Uncle Costa's and told him everything that had happened.

The next morning, on the way to the Minerva, I found Stefan, my Hungarian friend from Kavalla, sitting outside Zonar's cafe with some friends and had a coffee with them. I arrived at the Minerva a few minutes before 10.30. The OC, Second Echelon, was late, and when he came, told us that two trucks would take us to the clothing department. The trucks were late, like everything else so far, and finally five staff cars came instead, and took us to a school near Uncle Costa's which had been turned into an RASC depot. A Greek caretaker kept us waiting outside

this place for another half-hour and then we went in to be equipped. A red-haired corporal was in charge of the proceedings. We each got a kit-bag, an old-fashioned First World War tunic and trousers, of the type we had worn in the OTC at school, and which no one else wore any longer in the British army, two pairs of flannel pants and three pairs of grey woollen socks. My uniform did not fit anywhere, as my shoulders are relatively broad, and my arms and legs short.

Before dressing we were told we were to go straight to Voula, a pleasant summer resort by the sea, afterwards. I managed to get a meat sandwich and some tea in the yard of the depot before we left. It was my first white bread for a year. As a wartime measure, Greek bread had to be brown or brownish. Next we were taken to Voula in the same staff cars as before, and dumped in our civvies in an RASC camp. Here we were told by a corporal to change into our uniforms immediately. We were allotted one tent for this and promised another, which never materialised. There was a lot of chaffing as we saw each other in the weird old uniforms, and then we were given a meal, which consisted of tea (navvy's brew with lots of sugar and sweetened condensed milk), army biscuits, bully beef, marmalade that stuck to one's palate, and marmalade. As we had no cutlery or mess tins, we ate with our fingers.

Next we were told to parade for inspection by a major.

Some of us polished our buttons with a borrowed button-stick, as they looked as if they had had no attention since the First World War. The major proved to be low-class and bad-tempered. He asked us about our previous professions, and I told him I had been a teacher.

'I know nothing at all about you,' he said to us, 'but I'm going to Athens to find out. Meanwhile, you are not to leave camp.'

'But, sir,' some of our group argued, 'we'd like permission to go back to Athens for the night.'

'I have no orders about that,' answered the major, and then he departed.

Some of our group continued arguing, and then left the camp to try to find a telephone, but without success, so they came back. After a time the major returned and said, to a corporal, 'Take them off in a truck.'

We took some time to get ready, and he said, 'Aren't you buggers in yet?', which was my first experience of army bad language but by no means the last.

We were taken about a quarter of a mile, parallel to the coast, and then turned up to the right along cart tracks. As we were in the back of a closed truck, we could not see where we were going. We were deposited outside a bungalow. Evening was now drawing in. We were met by a tall officer whom I took to be a second lieutenant. He

talked to us, and then said, 'I'd like six volunteers to leave tomorrow morning. The others can have three days' leave first.'

There was some hesitation, and the officer again had to ask for volunteers before some of us, including the jockey and myself, put our hands up. I had nothing much to keep me in Athens, and was eager to get started.

'All right, you men,' the officer said, 'you can go to Athens now, but be back before dawn. And bring warm clothes back with you,' he shouted after us.' It doesn't matter what you look like.'

We left our kit at the bungalow, which turned out to be HQ, 1st Armoured Brigade, and then left for Athens in a truck.

I found it difficult to keep my side cap on in the back of the open truck, as I have a very large head. The others discussed the time we should get back. I wanted to be early, but did not speak. Ford, the Consulate clerk said, 'What about 1 a.m.?' But then he had second thoughts. 'No,' he said, let's make it 2 a.m. I want to meet my sister at her house first.'

'It'll be difficult to find transport at that hour,' I protested, but Ford said, 'Nonsense! There are plenty of taxis.'

'Okay, then,' I said, 'let's meet outside the Ellinikon cafe in Omonoia Square.'

'And,' added Teasdale, the jockey, 'you can pick me up at the kiosk on the main road near the Jockey Club.'

I then went to Uncle Costa's, but no one was at home. I ordered a taxi, and waited till Uncle came back, and then told him all that had happened.

'Here's the name of a Greek general who's a close friend of mine in Macedonia,' he said. 'He might be useful to you. And I'll dig you out some warm clothes from my wardrobe.'

My taxi arrived early, and I drove to Omonoia. One of our party was already there before me, but we had to wait for the other. Finally we set off, but the driver took us to Voula a different way from the one the truck had followed.

Suddenly we remembered the jockey, and had to drive across country to pick him up. When we got there, we were half an hour late, and he was not there.

Our taxi was now joined by another containing very drunk Australian soldiers. We drove to Voula together, but could not find our Headquarters, and the Australians had no money to pay their taxi driver, so a quarrel started. The Australians left their taxi and tried to get on the running-board of ours, but our driver was worried about the weight on his threadbare tyres and wasn't having any. Finally, we left the taxi and broke up into pairs to try

to find Headquarters, as we could not agree among ourselves on the right direction. The man I was with was rather drunk and dragged his feet annoyingly. We came across a British sentry, who did not know where the Headquarters were, and then some Greek woodcutters, whom we did not even bother to ask. Finally we went to sleep on the ground to wait for dawn.

We were due at the HQ at 7. I woke at 6, before dawn, and when my companion awoke too, we started out again, and found the place just in time. The others had already had breakfast, and Ford said to me sneeringly, 'Your Mummy isn't here any more to look after you now, you know.'

'I went to boarding school in England at the age of 11,' I answered crushingly, 'and I've been running an Institute in the backwoods of North Greece for the past year and a half,' at which the older soldiers laughed heartily.

We ate the remnants of some army biscuits and then I found that in the dark the night before, I had left a pair of blue trousers and a blue tie in my kitbag instead of taking them back to Uncle Costa's, to be deposited with the rest of my things there (after the war I got them all back from him, although everything I had left in Salonica was looted, with my parents' belongings, first by the Greeks as the Germans approached, and then by the Germans. When the British returned in 1944, they occupied our house, but there was nothing left to loot,

so they contented themselves with ruining the parquet floors with their army boots).

The major arrived soon after our scraps of breakfast and was sarcastic about our having lost the jockey. 'Well done!' he said. Then he began to detail us off to various units. My companion of the night before went first, but I did not hear where. Then three of us were detailed off to the Northumberland Hussars, and another to the RASC. Each of us was given three blankets before we left, and then we were driven off in a truck, first to the wrong place, and then to the right one, where the Northumberland Hussars were just moving off. The driver of our truck tried to take our blankets from us as we got out, but an NH officer stopped him.

I had got out of the truck first, so I was ordered into the first NH vehicle that came along. There was no room in the back, so I sat next to the driver. I was afraid of getting car-sick, so I took a pill. We drove west along the coast, through the Piraeus and Eleusis, and stopped at about 9.15. An elegantly dressed and very distinguished-looking lieutenant-colonel with a dark blue and light blue side cap, eyeshade, shooting stick and dark, bristly moustache walked up and down our column, and I took the opportunity of the stop to have a pee.

Whenever we passed Greek civilians, they greeted us with great enthusiasm and the thumbs-up sign. I did not

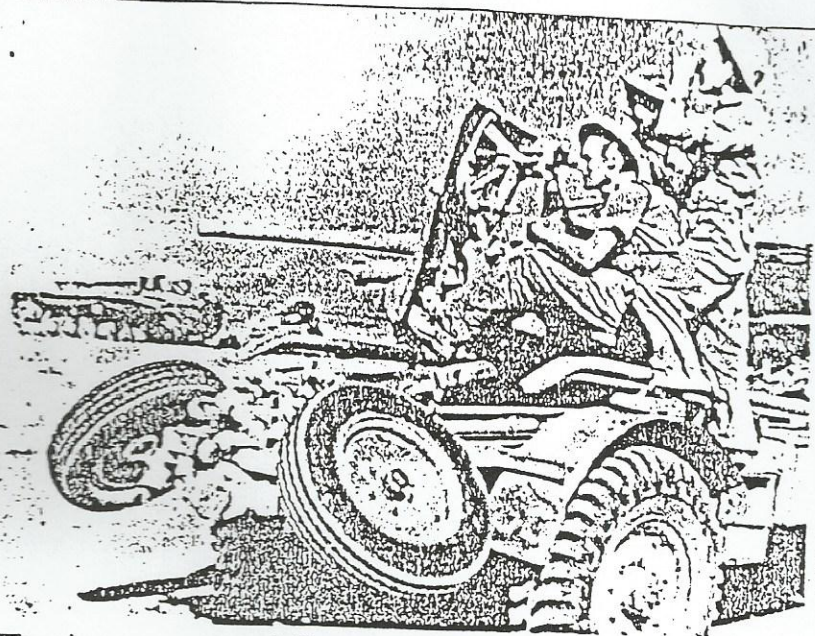
respond, feeling too strange and on my dignity, but the driver beside me always did.

Our next stop was in a village, where I was sent for by the second-in-command of the regiment, Major Philip (Pip) Pease, a tall, angular, very aristocratic-looking man with a red face, prominent false teeth and a very county accent. He was travelling in the padre's Humber Snipe staff car with his batman. I was put in the back with the batman, and the major drove, with the padre beside him. He was a gentle, quiet-spoken man with sparse fairish hair, a complete contrast to Major Pease. They asked me a lot of questions about myself, Greece and the Greek language, and I told them among other things that I had a Cambridge BA in German.

There was another stop, this time for lunch, and I was given some of the officers' sandwiches. They drank tinned beer. There was a magpie in a bush not far away, and the major said to the padre, 'Here, padre, take my revolver and have a shot at it!'

'No, thank you, Pip,' the padre answered with a deprecating smile.

In the car there was a Standard Oil map of Greece and a typed route card, with distances in miles. We went through Thebes and reached the Bralos Pass, which I had never been over before. The road wound through it in tight



To give greater mobility to their little two-pounder anti-tank gun, the British mounted it on a truck chassis, known as a 'portee', though this made it a more prominent target

S-bends, with a steep precipice on one side and an abrupt cliff on the other. The scenery was magnificent, but the driving dangerous, especially for the larger vehicles in our convoy, which included guns on truck chassis. I discovered later that these were two-pounder anti-tank guns belonging to the Northumberland Hussars.

On one descent, the brigadier's ACV (armoured command vehicle) shot over the edge of a bridge, and hung with the left front wheel above a drop of hundreds of feet, while a soldier who was travelling on the roof for some reason was catapulted off. His fall was broken by some trees, but his back was strained. The road was completely blocked, and as I waited and watched, I overheard one of the other soldiers on the brigadier's staff say that the man who had been hurt was a thief born to be hanged. He also gave me the first example I had heard of a certain four-letter word used in three different parts of speech in the same sentence when he said about the ACV, 'The fooking fooker's fooked.'

All the British officers I had seen in our convoy up to this point had worn battledress, but now two very elegant young majors in service dress and Sam Browne belts arrived to supervise the recovery of the ACV. They had red armbands with Q (MC) (Quartermaster, Movement Control) on them. A recovery truck with a crane arrived, its driver looking like a creature from outer space with his big goggles and leather jerkin. He pulled the ACV back on to the road,

but then it had to be manhandled out of the way to let the rest of our convoy pass, because its steering had been damaged.

Shortly after this we came round a corner and saw the plain of Lamia stretched out into the distance before us in the brilliantly clear Greek winter light. From the foot of the mountains, the road led straight as an arrow to the town of Lamia, and on the right we could see the dark indigo sea. The plan had been to camp near Larissa that night, but the person or persons who had drafted that neat route-card had not reckoned with the S-bends and slopes, down which the British drivers drove in bottom gear, nor with the hold-up caused by the ACV.

Our staff car went ahead to find a place to park the regiment for the night, and met the Staff Captain of the 1st Armoured Brigade, Captain Lubbock, who was allotting areas to regiments. We were directed on beyond Lamia and found a little valley at the beginning of the rise after the plain, but it was already bagged by another regiment, so we went some way up the pass on the other side. However, there was nowhere to get off the narrow, winding road, and it was also cold and windy up there, so we turned back. We came to a small airfield and wanted to use that, but were told to park on the road. Johnson, the padre's driver, who had taken over the driving from the major after the Bralos Pass, stopped the Humber Snipe near a cottage, and began

to prepare the padre's bed in the car, with my help.

Then we found some corrugated iron and put up a shelter to sleep behind. We borrowed a groundsheet, made some hot water on a primus and shaved. The owner of the cottage came out and was quite friendly.

'You are welcome to sleep inside if you would like,' he said.

'No, thank you very much,' I answered politely, afraid that we might pick up some unpleasant insects. Actually, I needn't have worried: later, when the regiment was billeted in Greek villages, we found them spotlessly clean, apart from the lavatories, but then there were not many countries outside North-West Europe and North America at that time which did not believe that a lavatory was inevitably a dirty place, so there was no point in trying to do anything about it.

Then Major Pease arrived and said to me, 'I've decided that you should eat with the officers, Hill, and I'm going to tell the colonel so.' I was about to go off to the Other Ranks' meal when he stopped me, took me to the officers' mess, and introduced me to the lieutenant-colonel I had seen earlier. I noticed that he had First World War ribbons and an MC. He was very nice to me, and said, 'I want to ask you some questions about Greek uniforms.'

I guessed what his problem was, and answered, 'Greek officers of the rank of major and above always have one

more star than the equivalent ranks in the British army. For example, a major has a crown and a star, not just a crown.' This did indeed solve the colonel's first problem.

He then said, 'Which family of Hills do you belong to?' He mentioned the names of two counties.

I answered, 'As far as I know, sir, I don't think I have any connections with Hills who live in England.'

'Really?' he answered, seeming very surprised.

I had not yet heard of 'Burke's Landed Gentry'.

The food was under the side of a tent rigged up against a truck, and Colonel 'Rob' Waller told me to fight for my food. 'It's good training,' he added with a charming grin. The meal consisted of M & V stew, the first time I had tasted this army standby.

After the meal, I went to the lavatory in a field, the first time I had done this since I had been caught short once as a boy in Pomerania, where, however, it was in a wood instead of an open field. I then bedded down in an icy gale which was sweeping across the plain of Lamia. Soon it blew my corrugated iron down, and after trying to sleep for some time in the teeth of the gale, I moved to a dungheap behind the cottage, which was more sheltered, and managed to get some sleep there, fully dressed, with my kitbag as a pillow.

I was woken before dawn by Johnson, and helped him, with icy fingers, to light a primus in a shed belonging to the cottage. Then we had tea, a wash and a shave, the latter painful because of the biting cold. I went to the officers' mess and learned how first to spread jam on bread and then sprinkle it with chips of frozen margarine, which would not, of course, spread. We then made an early start in the Humber Snipe again, leading the regiment up off the plain.

Our route now took us over the Lamia pass and then through Pharsala, on the other side of which we stopped near a pond. Major Pease, who was keen on shooting, said, 'This would be a good place for some duck.'

Our next stop was at a small village where we had to wait for petrol to be brought up. We could see Mounts Olympus, Pelion and Ossa, but could not be sure which was which. Some villagers came up, and when we saw that they were carrying shepherds' crooks, Major Pease said to me, 'Ask them where we can buy some of those for our officers.'

The men offered us one of theirs free, but it was too small for Major Pease.

Colonel Waller was in good form at this stop and talked to the villagers through me. He showed them the cock's feathers on one of our trucks, and said, 'These came from an Italian bersaglieri soldier's hat in the Western Desert.'

While we were waiting for the petrol, we had lunch, and then, when the petrol arrived, filled up and drove on. We were stopped by Greek sentries at a bridge, and asked for our passes. I said to them, 'British officers don't carry such things,' and they let us drive on. When I told Major Pease how I had disposed of the sentries, he said, 'You're wrong. British officers do, in fact, carry identification but nevertheless you did well to get rid of the sentries so quickly.'

We passed through Larissa, which looked a mess after being bombed and also suffering an earthquake. The people seemed listless and unenthusiastic about us for the first time. I then chose the left-hand road to Ellasson, which was the better of the two, but Major Pease again underestimated the time it took to travel on Greek roads, and became impatient. We stopped and asked various villagers how much further it was to Ellasson, and were always given the length of time it would take to walk there.

At last we saw it ahead, and stopped on the plain before it, where Major Pease got out to allocate places to the various units of the regiment, while he sent us to the village to see what supplies we could pick up. We bought shepherds' crooks, bread, yoghurt, a crate for carrying cigarettes, eggs, but no butter because, although it was fresh, there was only buffalo's and sheep's butter, which the British did not fancy.

When we got back, Major Pease was angry that we had taken such a long time and shouted, 'Damn you, where have you been? Go on, go on!'

We drove on to where the regiment was camped, and gave the shepherds' crooks out to the officers. The RSM wanted some eggs, so I interpreted for him, and a village boy went off with the money to get some, and brought them after half an hour.

Then the Signals Officer took me to his truck to hear the radio news through earphones while a tent was put up for us to have dinner in, after which Major Pease slept in one corner and I in another.

Next morning we made good time up to Kozani, which we bypassed. Then on a hairpin bend we were held up for a time by a big truck, which had to reverse very close to a precipitous drop to get round. Soon after that we stopped for lunch, which consisted of bully beef and biscuits. I had been told, after my hepatitis, not to eat any fatty foods for some time, but I could not pick and choose in the army, and I had no ill effects. I have always had a 'nervous stomach', but I found that, in times of danger, it never troubled me in the least bit.

Captain Lubbock had lunch with us, and I met his interpreter, who was a Greek corporal and told me he was expecting to get a commission. Captain Lubbock turned

out to be a classical scholar, and I had an argument with him about Thermopylae, which I had seen several times. Then we crossed the Aliakmon river. I was now approaching territory I knew, and foretold another high, cold pass up to Varria. Sure enough, we came to it, only to find a Greek army convoy of bullock carts ahead of us. There were some jokes about the Greek RASC as we crawled along the narrow road, waiting for a place to pass, but at last we did so and reached Kastania, where I remembered a spring with beautiful water.

I told Major Pease that the pass down to Varria and the plain was tortuous and dangerous, and I doubted whether the regiment would get to the bottom before nightfall, so we made camp just short of Kastania. Greek army transports passed us continually now, crawling up the pass, with half-starved ponies pulling heavy loads. Both the carts and the horses had been requisitioned from farmers. I talked to some Greek artillerymen, who admitted that their animals were given far less food than they needed. I saw that the animals had solid horseshoes and asked why this was. 'To keep out the stones,' one of the men answered. I noticed that some of the soldiers spoke to each other in Turkish, and I realised that they must come from Western Thrace. 'I suppose that's why they're being used as L of C troops,' I thought.

I was developing a cold, so the RSM gave me a car

cover to sleep under that night, and the doctor gave me some throat lozenges and cascara. The latter proved to be an explosive mixture, and I had to get up early in the morning to go outside and empty my bowels. The wind was icy. It was the coldest night of the campaign, up near the top of the pass.

The next morning we went on ahead of the regiment to arrange billets, and met the Brigade Major after a few miles. He said, 'I've allotted you three villages along the Verria-Salonica road - Stavros, Kavasila and Episkopi. Captain Lubbock's spoken to the Chief of Police in the area, who was very helpful.'

We drove to the second of the villages, Kavasila, and I saw one of the interpreters who had joined with me and had been allotted to D Battery. I was introduced to the Duke of Northumberland, who was a lieutenant commanding one of the troops of the battery, and I was left in Kavasila to help temporarily. I arranged with the village butcher for a supply of Easter lamb, and then returned to Stavros, which became my home for the next week or so.

I had to go around arranging lists of villagers and numbers billeted on each, payments for this and for things like broken windows, supplies of food such as lambs, chickens and beer, the roasting of the lambs, buying stoves, coping with thefts by members of the regiment etc. The regiment being from Northumberland, the cooks knew how to make black

pudding, which they proceeded to do. Because of my local knowledge, I could hobnob with the Chief of Police, the forestry guards etc, and was often invited in for a convivial evening with the RSM, RQMS and RMP and local bigwigs.

No one in the regiment was allowed to drink ouzo except me, because of its reputation for lying dormant during the night, and then making one roaring drunk the next morning again when one had a drink of water.

The RSM was a lonely figure, between the officers and the other ranks, and I got to know him well. We used to go for walks in the evening. Once he said to me, 'If we were taken prisoner, I'd be able to cope with the hardships much better than you would, Hill, because I had a hard working-class upbringing, whereas you I had a soft life.'

'I don't agree,' I protested mildly. 'I think I've just had a pretty tough year living on my own in a small Greek town and running an Institute there.'

With the officers I made a number of reconnaissance trips, and a few shopping ones. On one of these trips I met one of the interpreters who had been recruited with me, who told me that some of us were going to be made sergeants. He was obviously looking forward to this prospect eagerly. As I had not received a penny yet, nor even a paybook, and was still living on money I had brought with me, I was a bit scornful of his enthusiasm for an extra three shillings a day.

Our billets were always spotlessly clean, apart from the lavatories, which, as usual, were dirty and smelly. Some of the regiment were billeted in the village school. I shared a billet with Second-Lieutenant Laurie Pumphrey. Many years later I was to meet him again in Pakistan, where he was Sir Lawrence Pumphrey, the British Ambassador.

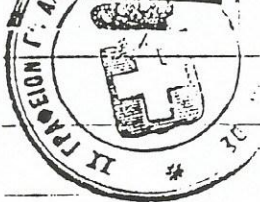
At about this time, I was kitted out with modern battledress in place of the First World War uniform I had received in Athens, and I was given a tin hat, which was much too small for me, although the biggest available, and a gas mask. I opened an account with the officers' mess, and was told to wear a tie like an officer, although I was not given shoulder pips. I was probably the only member of the British armed forces in this strange state of limbo, which was confusing for others. Sometimes I was saluted by men of other units on the strength of my tie. I was also lent a service revolver and ammunition by Major Pease, who was very much a law unto himself, with a healthy disrespect for generals and army regulations. I got to know him well, and told him that I had had a feeling at Cambridge that Britain was becoming decadent like France, but that the war seemed to have come just in time to save us.

On one shopping expedition, the Assistant Adjutant got me to test some Turkish delight, because there was some theory that it was dangerous. Possibly someone had eaten some fly-blown stuff off an open display, and had subsequently



Г' Амліра Крамичу' Стоїмчу

Wm. Gray, II

[illegible]

Özgeyorku 3. 8. Noyabr 1940
Sindinç



got 'gyppy tummy'. I had no such results, so the officers' mess bought a supply. We also bought halva, 'pastes' (light sweet cakes of different kinds), wines, potatoes and maps of Macedonia.

Two of the reconnaissance trips that I did with the CO or Major Pease were to Lake Ostrovo (now Veghoritis), and another to Tripolis, Profitilia (Prophet Elijah), Lipohorion, Yiannitsa and Lavra Khalkedon. Another time we went to Tripolis, Kalentra and Lipohorion again, and a fourth time again to Lipohorion with our MO, Captain Kent, who, like the padre, was an extraordinarily kind, cheerful and charming man.

On the 25th of March, which was a great Greek holiday, we moved to Lipohorion, and I took the regimental officers' passes to the police for stamping, so that Greek sentries would see that they were valid. All I had was a handwritten Greek pass with my photo and the rubber stamp of the Greek Military Government.

I spent the first morning at Lipohorion helping to billet the regiment once more, and the afternoon back at Stavros, getting clearance certificates from the people on whom members of the regiment had been billeted, to say that we had met any claims that they had had.

Near Lipohorion there was a big pond, which had a large complement of huge frogs. While we were billeted

there, I used to go down in the evenings to listen to the frogs' chorus.

The reconnaissance trips continued while we were at Lipohorion. The CO and Assistant Adjutant took me in search of a way of bypassing Edessa, and later on a long reconnaissance to Kilkis and Doiran; and I accompanied Major Pease, the Adjutant and two battery Adjutants on another trip to Kalindria, returning through Axioupolis and visiting the First World War military cemetery.

On the 5th April I went to Edessa and bought some lamps for the regiment, and also picked up a light mosquito net which I had ordered and had dyed green. I later used it very successfully as camouflage, both during our retreat in Greece and in the Western Desert. I used to put it over my hat and let it hang down to the ground on all sides, and it was voluminous enough to take in a camp chair and table as well as me, so that I could eat, read or doze untroubled by flies and invisible to anybody until they were within 100 yards or so of me.

On the way back from our trip to Doiran, at the top of a pass, we stopped at a coffee-house for a brandy, and while we were there, who should arrive but Marika, on her way from Kavalla to Athens to escape the coming disaster. We welcomed each other warmly, I introduced her to our officers, and the conversation got around to languages. 'Leslie speaks marvellous Greek,' Colonel Waller said.

'So he should!' said Marika. 'His mother's Greek.' I had never let on about this, wanting the officers to believe that I had learnt Greek so well because of my cleverness, and now I blushed with shame and said, 'It's very hot in here, isn't it?' although actually it was quite chilly up at the top of the pass, even inside the coffee-house.

We passed through Salonica on the way back, and I disgraced myself again, first by missing the proper way out of the town towards the south, so that we had to go through muddy lanes flanked by smelly rubbish heaps, and then by being very rude to a Greek sentry who stopped us at a bridge. Colonel Waller, although he was a highly efficient, brisk, brave man was studiously polite to everybody, and ticked me off quietly but firmly for my rudeness. Five years later, I met another man who combined extreme competence with extreme politeness, Sir David Maxwell-Fyfe (later Lord Kilmuir, the Lord Chancellor), whom I worked under for a year at the Nuremberg Trial. Ever since then, I have been convinced that really competent people do not need to throw their weight about, but can be modest and quiet while at the same time highly successful.

On the 6th of April we were moved out of our relatively comfortable billets at Lipohorion into a field near Edessa, at the end of what we called the Ashington By-pass (after a road in Northumberland), where we spent an uncomfortable night under canvas in rain and mud. This was part of a withdrawal to a shorter line, as a precaution following

the invasion of Yugoslavia by the Germans. Our B Echelon was at the same time sent back to Agras. Gradually during the day news began to come through about a Bulgarian breakthrough at Lake Doiran and then at the Yugoslav-Greek railway frontier of Djevdjelija, where I had admired the resplendent Greek evzones such a short time before, in the piping days of peace.

On the evening of 8th April Colonel Waller came to Major Pease and said, 'The balloon's gone up. We've received urgent orders to move across west to plug the Florina gap. The Germans have broken through the Yugoslav defences and might already be entering the gap in the mountains south of Monastir. You will go ahead with Leslie, Pip, and prepare for RHQ to follow.' I felt a mixture of fear at the prospect of crossing over perhaps into the jaws of the German advance with nothing but a couple of revolvers and the batman's rifle to protect us, and elation at the prospect of seeing real war at last. I also thought I might never see the rest of RHQ again.

We hurried off as evening fell, overtaking convoys of ambulances and other soft vehicles. We passed Agras and the place where our B Echelon had been, then the place where we had recently placed Second-Lieutenant Pumphrey's troop to give the Greeks anti-tank support. We had to ford several rivers in the dark.

Major Pease had taken his spare revolver back from

me at Lipohorion, but now he loaded it and handed it to me again, with his compass. From that point on, I map-read carefully, frequently giving Major Pease our approximate position, direction and distance covered. Every time the convoy we had got enmeshed in stopped, we thought that it had run into the Germans.

At last we reached Vevi, where the road south to Kozani branched off. There was a hairpin bend, where we were held up by heavy guns manoeuvring round the corner, then we turned left and were at last behind our front line and going south. A wave of relief came over me as I knew that we were now no longer driving straight on to a possible collision course with the Germans, with no British troops between us and them, but actually moving away from them, behind our own front line. We continued on till we reached Perdikkas, where we saw the Brigade HQ sign (a '50') but no Brigade HQ. At last we saw another staff car, and followed it to Brigade HQ, where Major Pease was given our orders.

These took us north again to a position west of Lake Ostrovo, where we dug slit trenches before going to sleep in the car for a few hours. The rest of RHQ arrived during the night and were allotted positions.

The next morning, 9th April, we moved to a saddle higher up, from which we had a magnificent view of Lake Ostrovo and a little village to the east, small lakes to

the west, and hills to the north. Some enemy planes flew over very high, but did not drop anything. A number of our planes flew over too, and we saw white puffs of anti-aircraft shells bursting among them. One Yugoslav plane was brought down close to us, but it managed to land on the road, and we took the crew back to Ptolemais. It was strange to see once more the Slavonic uniforms I had learnt to know during my train journeys through Yugoslavia not so long before.

When things quietened down a little, I went with one of the other officers to the village beside Lake Ostrovo, where we bartered cigarettes for eggs and bread, with villagers who spoke Greek with a strong Bulgarian accent. 'I expect they'll be happy when the Germans arrive,' I thought. It seemed strange to be carrying out such a mundane task with a German attack imminent. It was my first experience of the way in which high drama can coexist with the most humdrum and familiar of chores.

Twice during the next two days I accompanied Colonel Waller to see the Greek general, General Karassos, to whose troops the 1st Armoured Brigade was attached. Once we met him in Perdikkas, the second time in a dugout close to our own position.

Then, accompanied by a lieutenant from our own D Battery, who had been in the area for some time, we did a reconnaissance to inspect a railway cutting. It was said to be impregnable

to tanks, but as an anti-tank expert, Colonel Waller disagreed. He turned out to be quite right when the Germans broke through soon after.

During a trip to Petrais, we saw Yugoslav anti-aircraft guns which had got through the Florina gap before the Germans. We also went up towards the front to try to meet the general commanding the Greek Dodecanese cavalry division at Kella. They were holding the heights in front of our division. We never met the general, as we were warned to turn back because the Germans were very close.

During that night there was a snowstorm as well as a lot of rain and wind. We slept in one-man tents over slit-trenches, with mud everywhere. We could hear desultory fighting on the 10th and 11th, and then on the 12th orders for a general withdrawal came. Rear HQ was to move that night, and that included me. B Echelon were sent right back behind the main line the Australians and New Zealanders were holding.

There had been desultory artillery fire for several days, but now it became very active. As night came on, I could see the flashes coming nearer and nearer. We heard that the Germans had attacked at Vevi, throwing wave after wave of infantry at our line. They simply walked across open ground towards our positions. After heavy casualties they broke through by sheer force of numbers, and our Rear HQ were now ordered to withdraw earlier than originally

planned.

As we prepared to move, we could see the 4th Hussars tanks taking up position on the ridge where we had had our slit trenches, and I thought that a rout was imminent. The RSM and I helped Major Pease to stake out positions for our anti-tank guns, from which they could enfilade the German tanks, and then we withdrew south.

As we went, we passed hundreds of Greeks struggling to the rear on foot. We stopped so that I could ask them who they were, and they said they belonged to the Dodecanese Division, the one that we were supposed to be giving armoured support to. Many of them tried to get lifts in our vehicles, but we would not take any. We stopped where a road branched off to Proasteion and saw our Rear HQ vehicles through. Then Major Pease arranged for me to take up position in a narrow ravine beside a cruiser tank of the 4th Hussars and interrogate the Greek soldiers as they passed, to make sure no Germans got through in disguise.

Major Pease took our vehicle off the road, parked it and went to sleep in it, while I put on my warmest clothes, realising that I was in for a long and very cold night's work, unless the Germans got there first. I stopped all Greeks, asked them their regiment or arm, and their destination. Most of them were from the Dodecanese Division, and they said that their officers had packed up and gone as the German attack began, and that they were now following.

There were very few officers among those I questioned, but there was one young, very junior one with a beard, who spoke excellent English and refused to speak to me in Greek until the subaltern commanding the 4th Hussars tank that was protecting me said to me, 'Shall I shoot him?', whereupon the young man rapidly began talking perfect Greek. He had learnt his English at Robert College, an American institution in Turkey.

All of the Greeks who passed were tired and wanted me to get them lifts, but I moved them on, briskly but politely, as we did not want a traffic jam in that narrow ravine if the Germans arrived.

Many of our vehicles came through too, especially RASC trucks packed with Greeks. They said they had orders to go to Kozani. Many of the drivers asked me the way and wanted to know how much further it was. Several times the tank commander got ready to fire as we heard tracked vehicles approaching, but they always turned out to be scout cars belonging to the Rangers. From time to time during the night the tank crew brewed up and handed me a steaming mug of tea, with lots of condensed milk and sugar. Once there was rum in it too.

We thought most of the Rangers must have been killed or taken prisoner, but after bad news about them early in the night, each truck that came in brought better news. The Germans had stopped for the night, and the Rangers

had managed to disengage and fall back. One of the officers who reported during the night said that the snowstorm was so bad on the Australian sector of the front that the Germans were digging in a few yards from them without either being able to see the other.

The commander of our D Battery, Major Barnett, arrived, and I turned him aside to Major Pease. Then a second lieutenant of our regiment came, looking white and shaken. He had had to leave the guns of the troop he commanded on the other side of a river to avoid being taken prisoner with his troop.

After a time a tank major told me to stop all fighting vehicles and tell them to report to him, as he wanted to make a line to be ready to stop the Germans if they broke through at dawn. He then went to sleep in the open. I stopped several convoys and told them to report, but most were reluctant to do so, and some just went on. I felt that they, like the Greeks, were demoralised.

After a time, some of our NH anti-tank portees arrived. They had fitted chains on their wheels because of the deep mud, and made an eerie clank as they approached.

Dawn came on the 13th of April, and I went to a nearby village and bought eggs for us all for breakfast. Major Pease said it was the coldest night he had ever known. 'It would have been warmer walking about than sleeping in the car,' he said.

The tank major came and thanked me for my help as we were having breakfast. 'One of our intelligence officers caught a German in Greek uniform trying to get round past your ravine across country,' he told me. 'He shot him on the spot.'

After breakfast we set off to see Major Barnett's new positions south-west of Proasteion, and then went on towards Koila, where Brigade HQ was. A German bomber appeared and we pulled off the road behind some rocks to let it pass.

In Koila we saw our regimental sign ('77') beside a Greek anti-aircraft gun which had been abandoned beside the road. We thought of commandeering the gun, but it had no ammunition. We found the rest of RHQ and part of C Battery in Koila. Their trucks were under camouflage nets beside some cottages. The inhabitants had mostly evacuated or were in hiding, and our indefatigable Officers' Mess sergeant, Sergeant Humble, had set up our mess in one of the cottages. I shaved and washed, just in time to be ready for our first serious air-raid, as the weather was fine. We heard terrific, sustained bombing south of us, in the direction of Kozani, and some of it was quite close, some bombs falling near Brigade HQ. Most of our Rear HQ slept, exhausted after a long night.

There was an abandoned stud farm at Koila, which I visited twice, once with Major Pease and the other time with our LAD officer. Being cavalrymen, they examined the place with expert eyes. There were chickens there, and as

they now appeared to have been abandoned, I collected some fine eggs, both brown ones and white. Back in the mess, I heard loud noises and poked my head out, to see bombers. Our A/A bren gunner opened up, and was cursed for his pains, for irritating the Stukas unnecessarily and drawing their attention to our position.

That evening we received orders to move, and as usual I went ahead with Major Pease. On our way to Kozani, a stick of bombs fell close to the road, and in Kozani, there were considerable signs of earlier bombing, including a crater in the middle of the road, which was being repaired.

At Kozani we branched west to Siatista, and after passing through that, the road ran through a ravine which was narrow enough and had steep enough sides to be easily defended, but beyond was the valley of the River Aliakmon, which ran north and south and provided a perfect route for outflanking this position.

We went down to the Aliakmon along a narrow road with a precipice on one side and a rocky cliff rising on the other. It was dark now, and the moon was not yet up, so I had to lean out of the window and give orders for turns and overtaking, in such a way as to keep us out of the ditch on one side and away from the precipice on the other. We could not, of course, use headlights, as there was a blackout because of the war.

Before we reached the Aliakmon, the trickle of Greeks in retreat swelled to a flood as we joined the main escape route from the Albanian front, where they had fought so valiantly for so many months against the Italians. Now, intimidated by the German propaganda of the invincible Wehrmacht, and particularly by a film that the Germans had shown the year before of their triumphant attack on Poland, they were packing up and going home, officers first.

We crossed the Aliakmon on a narrow wooden bridge and then there were more twists and turns up the other side. We met the Brigade HQ convoy, who gave us a military policeman on a motor-bike as a guide, but after a time this passed out, defeated by the deep Greek mud. The MP left it in a ditch to be collected later, and got into the front of the Humber Snipe with Johnson and me. Unfortunately, however, he could not find the area allotted to us in the dark.

When we reached the Mersina area, we found the RHA, the Rangers and our own B Battery, and I then pointed out where we had been told we should be, opposite Mersina village on the right side of the road. I was very tired and fed up by the time we stopped, having had no sleep for some forty hours, and Major Pease allowed me to go to sleep while he guided the rest of RHQ in.

The 13th had witnessed the battle of Ptolemais, which

we had been unaware of in Rear HQ. Colonel Waller had distinguished himself, and was awarded the DSO when we got back to Egypt, and one of our subalterns had won the regiment's first MC.

When I woke up on the 14th, I did not bother to dig a slit trench, as there was a nice ravine handy, with a small, narrow branch I could just fit in. As time went on I enlarged it. There were plenty of Stukas about, mostly bombing and machine-gunning the road. Our planes had been swept from the skies. We put up a mess tent, lent us by the RHA, and camouflaged it. I wrote a letter to my parents and gave it to the LAD officer, who was going to the Grevena post office by motor-bike. He was machine-gunned by a Stuka on the way, but not hurt.

During the day we heard very heavy bombing from the direction of Grevena, and I accompanied Major Pease back to Siatista to see the Greek general commanding the area about the withdrawal of our B Battery, since it was evident that the Greeks were going. The road was heavily pitted with bomb craters, and the MP's motor-bike was no longer where he had left it.

We passed large numbers of Greek troops retreating, including officers in staff cars. I suggested to Major Pease that the general might be in any one of them, as I was not keen on being caught on the wrong side of the Aliakmon by the advancing Germans. The bridge over the river was

being guarded by members of B Battery, and a Greek officer who was in charge of the bridge stopped us.

'Have you seen your general?' I asked him.

'Yes,' he answered, 'I have. He's still on the other side of the river.'

A British officer of the Royal Engineers came up and said, 'We've wired the bridge for demolition, but don't worry - we won't blow it until your Battery's crossed.'

We went on to the crossroads south-west of Siatista, and were told there that the general had not yet passed, but was expected at any moment. Instead of going north to Siatista itself, we took the Kozani road to find B Battery. I was then left at the turning into another branch road leading north to Siatista to stop the general if he came down that way. Greek soldiers were pouring down from the mountain side, and I felt it was extremely unlikely that the general would take this indirect road with its appalling surface. I felt quite abandoned, especially with no identification except my handwritten document from the Greek authorities, but after a time Major Pease came back with Major Wooderson, the commander of B Battery, and his interpreter, a neatly dressed Greek private.

We drove to Siatista, keeping a wary eye on a Stuka as we entered the town. It had quaint, narrow streets, and the church bell was ringing as an air-raid alarm. We went

up to the general's headquarters, which were in a house perched on the side of a steep hill, so that both the ground floor and first floor had doors at street level. We discovered that the senior officer there was in fact a colonel.

The Greek did most of the interpreting, but poorly. He was obviously not an exact or practised translator. Now and then I interrupted with corrections or additions.

Major Pease said to the colonel, 'Do you intend to hold the line when the Germans arrive?'

The colonel answered, 'Yes.'

Major Wooderson then said, 'Can we have infantry support during the night for my guns behind the anti-tank ditch I'm using?'

The colonel answered, 'I can let you have about 100 men.'

'I really need more than that,' the major said, but the colonel answered, 'We haven't got any infantry in the valley at present. They're in the surrounding hills, but at nightfall they'll come down and close in. It's a matter of honour for us to protect your guns.'

Then the colonel had to answer the phone. I could hear from what was said at the other end that the Germans were advancing and that the Greek artillery had withdrawn so far back that it could no longer give the infantry

fire support. The colonel was angry, and ordered the guns to move forward and open fire.

'A German mechanised column is near Xerolimni,' he said to us, 'and their infantry have reached Metamorphosis.'

We went back to Major Wooderson's HQ, where we found orders from the Greek general that he was to withdraw before dark, so Major Pease and I set off back to Mersina. On nearing our camp, we saw a Stuka very low. It disappeared behind a small hill, and I thought it was landing, so I took Major Pease's spare loaded revolver out of the holster and cocked it. He heard the click, ticked me off soundly for such dangerous behaviour and uncocked the thing. We advanced cautiously round the corner in our vehicle. There was no bomber to be seen, but only a blazing Greek ambulance and a crater in the road. Everywhere we could see abandoned cars, dead bullocks and overturned carts on the road, with wounded Greek soldiers, one lying unattended on a stretcher, others with the whites of their eyes rolled up. A Greek MO, who had been wounded in the leg, was attending to the worst of the casualties with superb cheerfulness.

Just beyond this scene of carnage, we met our Regimental Adjutant on the road. He said, 'Our camp's been bombed and machine-gunned. Robson (the driver of the mess truck) has been badly wounded. Ted Key (one of our subalterns) brought a Stuka down with a Bren gun.'

The mess truck was blazing furiously, so we put the

fire out with buckets of water from the water-cart, to avoid attracting more Stukas. We were told that we would be moving back again at 1 a.m, so I decided to sleep in the front seat of a truck.

When we set off again, the LAD officer led, because he was supposed to know the way, but he lost it in the dark and we had to retrace our steps. Then he went too fast for our slow convoy and we lost him. We came to Grevena town square, and stopped to let the rest of the convoy catch up. A Greek sentry tried to move us on, but we ignored him. The square was full of Greek soldiers shouting to each other. Most were mounted on horses, mules, donkeys or bullocks. The rest of our convoy arrived after a long time, and we moved off south again, into a gorge full of burning vehicles, stinking of burnt rubber and nitro-glycerine from bombed-out ammunition trucks. This was where the bombs we had heard the day before had fallen on a tightly packed mass of Greek vehicles.

We soon found ourselves behind our Brigade HQ convoy, to which two Yugoslav tanks had attached themselves. We were surprised to find that Brigade HQ had made little progress, but were told some time later that there was a colossal traffic jam ahead as what seemed like the whole of the Greek army in Albania tried to cross the narrow bridge over the River Venetikos ahead. Greek cars were trying to pass us, and soon there were three lanes of traffic

on the narrow road through the gorge. Arguments broke out between drivers as we crawled forward a few yards at long intervals. Whenever a tank started up, the Greek soldiers mistook the sound for a Stuka and took such cover as there was up the bare sides of the gorge, thus causing even greater delays.

At about 4 a.m. a German scout plane dropped a parachute flare ahead of us, and as 6 a.m. and dawn approached, we began to feel desperate. The gorge was packed with immovable traffic, offering a wonderful target for the Stukas, and we were sandwiched between ammunition and petrol trucks.

Major Pease got out and had a chat with the CO of another regiment, who advised us to get off the road and lie up until the traffic had thinned.

I went ahead on foot with Major Pease and found a suitable camping ground amid ravines on the right after the end of the gorge, before the road began to wind down steeply to the Venetikos. I went back to our convoy on foot to guide them, and found that the crews of the B Battery guns had already been marched out of the gorge, and the drivers left to get the portees through to join them.

Within an hour, RHQ and B Battery were off the road and under camouflage nets. We dug slit trenches, and then the bombing began again, the Stukas concentrating on the gorge behind us, and the road leading down to the Venetikos.

20th June 1941.

Mr. L. A. Hill

DR. to N.H.O.M.

To Messing in Greece during the period
19th March to 25th April 1941
@ 2/- per day

" Drinks	do.	380	PT.
" Messing in Egypt from 30th April 1941 to 26th May 1941		58	
" Drinks		225	
" Postages		44	
" Laundry		1.5	
" Shoulder Pips issued		20	
		8	
		<hr/>	

736.5 PT.



After some time we received orders from Brigade HQ to get on the road again and cross the Venetikos, so we pushed in among the mass of vehicles, mostly Greeks from the Albanian front. There was no road discipline, and casualties were heavy. As a vehicle broke down or was hit by a bomb, we would push it off the road down the precipice.

Whenever a Stuka dived, the Greeks abandoned their vehicles and took to the ditches, so progress was dead slow. Even when a Yugoslav tank started up, they mistook its whine for a Stuka and took cover. We passed dead bodies in the ditches at the sides of the road, and once when I took cover from a Stuka when our vehicle was halted, I found myself lying on a dead man.

After a couple of hours of this, we came in sight of the narrow bridge at the end of the steep, winding road. At last we reached it. Miraculously the Stukas had not managed to hit it. Our brigadier was standing at the far end and waving us on. He seemed cheerful, and this made us feel a lot better.

A mile the other side, we drew off the road again and dispersed the RHQ vehicles. We expected to be taken prisoner the next day, so we had a slap-up dinner in the officers' mess, with our best tins of M & V, and bottles of Cointreau and Kümmel. Unfortunately, the mess sergeant did not lose our mess bills in the evacuation of Greece, so we had a reminder of this night's 'party' when we were presented

with our chits when we got back to Egypt.

I slept that night in the front seat of a truck again, ready for a quick getaway, but the next morning was overcast and rainy, so there were no Stukas. As we moved on to the road again, we passed the mangled body of a Greek veterinary officer, with his guts spattered over the road by a bomb the day before.

We spent the next two days struggling along a terribly muddy minor road towards the line being held by the Australians and New Zealanders, with the Germans never far behind. The Duke of Northumberland's troop of guns protected our rear against German tanks. We lost all our motor-bikes in the deep mud.

We continued to pass Greek stragglers all the time, making their way back from the front. One was carrying a chair upside down on his head. The bombing had clearly deranged the poor fellow's mind.

One day a captain from one of our Batteries asked me what I would do if the Germans came up with us. 'Make for the hills,' I said, 'and take refuge with the local inhabitants.' He asked to come with me.

At last we reached the cliff monasteries of Kalabaka, which I had never seen before, but I was hardly in the mood for enjoying this remarkable tourist sight. Then we came to Larissa, which was in ruins from the bombing and

the earthquake.

Vehicles moving back usually travelled at night, and those going towards the front by day. This was to try to persuade the Germans that we were still ready to fight. We had more hair-raising night drives in convoy over winding mountain roads with precipices on one side, and some vehicles went over the edge. Major Pease, who did most of our driving, once asked me whether I could take a spell at the wheel, but I answered, 'I'm an extremely inexperienced driver, as we've always had chauffeurs.'

From Larissa we went to Thermopylae, where we held a line for some days, supporting General Freyberg's New Zealanders. We were subjected to intense Stuka attacks again here, as the weather had cleared. Our RHQ's position was at the edge of the coastal plain, where the mountains began to rise in rocky cliffs, and it was possible to get considerable protection from the bombing there by digging slit trenches close to the foot of the rocks. I had always enjoyed rock climbing, so got some exercise on the ones just behind our camp.

One day I accompanied Major Pease to a small railway station where there was a petrol dump, to arrange for fuel for our vehicles, but when we arrived, both the station and the dump were in flames, having just been bombed by Stukas. On the way back to Thermopylae from there, a couple of Stukas suddenly came over a brow straight along the

road, very low. The first one sprayed the road with machine-gun fire, the second the ditches into which we had thrown ourselves. I heard the explosive bullets approaching and then passing me, and the urgent praying of our padre in the ditch on the other side of the road. To my surprise, I did not feel particularly scared myself - only excited. One up for Hodgson, and one down for Simmie!

It was now clear that our days in Greece were numbered, and I was intensely sad at the prospect of having to leave the country of my birth in such circumstances. My mess mates noticed this, but thought I was worried about my parents in Salonica.

One day Colonel Waller told us that we were going to have to embark from an open beach to a ship lying offshore, and I offered to help with the rowing in view of my experience as an oarsman.

Then came orders to move to Athens, pass through and go to an embarkation area. People in Athens greeted us warmly, although they knew we were beaten. When we reached the olive grove we were to hide up in until we could be evacuated, I put my green mosquito net up under a tree and had a much needed sleep. But some of the NH officers had brought their mess kit to Greece and stored it in Athens before going north. They now asked me to go and collect it for them, with the padre. All the shops and offices in Athens were closed, there were no soldiers of any kind visible,

and a policeman warned us that the Germans were already on the outskirts. As there was no way of getting the uniforms out of the locked office, we left.

Stukas roamed over our olive grove the rest of that day, but could not see our trucks under them. Ever since then, I have had a particularly soft spot for olive trees.

When night fell, we moved off towards the small port of Rafina in a long column. When we got to the shingle beach there and made contact with the ship that had come to collect us, we removed the firing mechanisms of our two-pounder guns, ferried them out to sea and threw them in. At the same time, we drained the oil and water from the engines of the portees, and then ran them until they seized up.

The Assistant Adjutant found an abandoned British Service rifle lying on the beach and told me to take it. Then it was my turn to be ferried out to the naval auxiliary which was to evacuate us. The ship's boats that were doing the ferrying had motors, so I did not get a chance to do any rowing. We had to leave all our possessions except our arms behind to save space.

It was midnight before I could get into a hammock down in the bowels of the overcrowded ship, and soon it was under way. A second Dunkirk had begun for us. I slept heavily after many nights of insufficient sleep, and was awakened by the sound of bombs and rapid A/A fire. 'It

must be daylight,' I thought. 'The Stukas are after us again.' I fell asleep once more, only to be awakened by a terrific bang. At the same time the ship lurched heavily, all the lights went out, and I got out of my hammock. There was no panic, and we were all beginning to pile out to the companion-way when the ship righted itself, the emergency lights came on, and I realised that I was not wearing my glasses, without which I am practically blind. I went back to my hammock and luckily found them. Then I rejoined the orderly queue to go up on deck.

When we got there, a naval officer announced, 'There's been a near miss on our ship. A bomb fell in the sea just off our bow and blew our bow gun off its mounting.'

For several hours after that, our A/A gunners with their pom-poms fought a battle with wave after wave of Stukas, but we did not suffer any more damage.

Chapter 12: Egypt, OCTU and the Desert

We arrived in Alexandria to hear that half our regiment had been evacuated from Greece in ships which had made for Crete. Later, most of them were killed or taken prisoner when the German paratroopers attacked that island.

When we got to Alex, I was taken to an hotel for lunch with the officers, and there I lost the rifle our Assistant Adjutant had entrusted to my care. Outside the hotel it was put on a truck which was to take us to the railway station, and there it disappeared. The Assistant Adjutant said to me tartly, 'You're lucky it wasn't booked out to you, or you'd be facing a court-martial!' I wondered how I was supposed to nurse a rifle on my knees during lunch in a smart hotel, and also how I could be court-martialled when I had no army number, paybook or anything else, but I kept my musings to myself.

We travelled to Tahag Camp in the desert by train, and lived in tents there. It was extremely hot - hotter even than Salonica in midsummer, although it was still only April. I realised here that the Germans had taken just three weeks to drive us out of Greece.

I managed to find out that my parents had been evacuated to Cairo, and was given leave to go up and see them. Major Pease persuaded me to put a second lieutenant's pips up before I went. 'I'll take repsonsibility if anything happens,' he said, so I agreed.

Luckily my brother Dick, who was a regular in a tank regiment, was in Cairo on leave too. He was a captain by now. When I returned from Cairo to Tahag after my brief leave, he drove my parents down in a hire car to visit me, but the weather was so hot that the petrol kept on evaporating from the carburettor, so that the journey took much longer than it should have done. Meanwhile, I had to pay my mess bill from Greece, despite not having yet received any pay from the army. While I was at Tahag I also applied for an emergency commission, with Colonel Waller's blessing and sponsorship.

While I was waiting to hear the result of my application, I was sent on leave to Port Said and Alex. Hotel accommodation was very scarce, and I was not willing to go on wearing pips I was not entitled to, so I had to share rooms with some rather strange characters, including a sergeant who had the smelliest feet I have ever come across. Both in Port Said and in Alex I went to the Greek rowing club and was welcomed with open arms. In both of them I had pleasant outings in fours. It was particularly interesting to row a mile or so up the Suez Canal.

At Port Said I had a brief affair with a plump Egyptian belly-dancer, and decided I liked fattish women. I also became quite a connoisseur of belly-dancing, so that now, when I see some skinny woman attempting it on TV, I long for the good old days when it was done by women with real

bellies to wobble and gyrate.

I bought a lot of drinks for myself and the belly dancer on the understanding that I would go back to her flat and sleep with her after the show, but when we got to her door, she tried to prevent me going in. As I was stronger than her, I got in all right, only to find a couple of pimps there. I pretended that I was quite used to sitting with such men while waiting to have intercourse with their protege. They tried to warn me off, and even threatened to call the British military police, but I told them to go ahead and do just that, as I would like the police to know how I had been taken in.

While we were talking, the air raid sirens went, and the pimps suggested I might like to take shelter. I told them I had just been through all the bombing in the Greek campaign, so I was not in the least scared. In fact, there was an Italian air raid, some bombs were dropped and there was a lot of anti-aircraft fire, after which the pimps gave in and let me have my way with the belly dancer. She had a beautiful soft white skin, and I very much enjoyed my pneumatic bliss with her.

Later, in Cairo I was approached by a young man who asked me whether I would like to see an exhibition with a girl. 'She smoke cigarette with cunt,' he promised.

That I did not want to miss, so the man took me into the Burka, the brothel quarter of Cairo, which was supposed to be out of bounds to our troops, and there indeed, was an attractive young Egyptian girl in a large room hung with carpets. She proceeded to light a cigarette, put it between the lips of her vulva and make it glow by contracting the muscles of her vagina. The young man then said he would give me an exhibition of sexual intercourse with the girl, but I offered to take his place, and did so.

I flew from Port Said to Alex in a small commercial plane, bumping around alarmingly in the turbulence caused by the hot desert below. The flight confirmed my view that I did not like flying.

In Alex, as in Port Said, there were air raids while I was there. Very small numbers of Italian planes came over, there was a lot of noise from A/A guns, and a few bombs were dropped, but I was now a veteran of air raids and did not turn a hair.

As I had obtained my Certificate A in the OTC at school, it was decided that I should only do the last two months of the five month OCTU course in Cairo, so I duly presented myself at Kasr-el-Nil Barracks one day to start my training. As I was to become a gunner, I was sent off at once to Almaza outside Cairo in the desert, where

artillery training took place, to introduce myself to those running it, but when I got to the gate to leave Kasr-el-Nil Barracks, the sergeant of the guard objected strongly to the fact that I was wearing officers' suede desert boots. I explained to him my predicament, showing him my only identification - the pass written by hand in Greek, with a photo of me in civilian clothes. He was nonplussed, but let me through. For all he knew, I might have been a German spy.

At Almaza I met the major in charge of artillery training, and also one of the instructors, a CSM, who called me 'sir' on the strength of my suede boots, even though I was wearing no pips. When I got back to Kasr-el-Nil Barracks, the sergeant of the guard recognized me and, having had quite a lot to drink, was very humorous about interpreters in general and me in particular.

During the next week I drew my first pay in two and a half months of military service. Before that, I had been cashing cheques drawn on my London bank, The Guaranty Trust Company of New York, at a British bank in Cairo.

My artillery troop at the OCTU consisted of seven Australians, five New Zealanders and myself. The British cadets who had been in the troop for the first three months of the course had been sent elsewhere for their final two months of training. The Australians and New Zealanders were all senior NCOs or Warrant Officers, one

of them an RSM, and none of them could be RTU'd (returned to their unit as unfit to become officers) because the Anzac contingent had lost too many officers during the Greek and Cretan campaigns to be able to do without these extra ones.

The cadets therefore baited the poor OCTU RSM, a regular Coldstream Guards man, unmercifully, but they at once took me under their wing and could not have been nicer or more helpful, which was just as well, as I was shockingly untrained. We went on a formal parade once while I was at the OCTU, to be inspected by a visiting general, and I did not even know about falling in in threes instead of twos, as in my day in the OTC.

At Almaza, the CSM who had called me 'sir' was furious at having been taken in by my desert boots, but my Australian and New Zealand buddies soon put him in his place, and I secretly enjoyed the extraordinary liberties he took with the English language, such as using 'literally' constantly when he meant 'metaphorically', with hilarious results. I learnt all the theory and practice of firing 25-pounder guns, which was not much use to me, as Colonel Waller had applied for me to return to the NH, who had two-pounder anti-tank guns, and I was determined to do so.

At the barracks in town, we suffered constantly from bed-bugs. In fact the barracks had been condemned just before the war, and would have been pulled down if they

had not been needed to house us. We kept the feet of our metal bedsteads in tins of paraffin, and once a week we stripped the beds and went over them with a blowtorch, especially the joints, where bed-bugs could hide, but still these creatures attacked us every night. One theory was that they climbed up the walls to the ceiling, and then dropped on us from there. The only cure I found was to drink a couple of pints of the sweetish Australian beer we could buy in our canteen before going to bed, after which either the bed-bugs did not like the taste of my blood, or I did not feel the bites.

Occasionally we were allowed out to go to cafes or the cinema etc. On one of these evenings I saw the film 'Gone with the Wind', which deals with the defeat of the Southerners in the American Civil War, and their retreat before the 'Yankees' from the North. Having just taken part in a rather similar three weeks' retreat in Greece, my main reaction was one of relief that we had not been burdened therewith women, especially such spoilt, completely self-indulgent and unself-controlled ones as the heroine of the film, Scarlett O'Hara!

One of the best lessons I learned at the OCTU, which I have treasured ever since, was from the major in charge of our artillery course at Almaza. Again and again he drummed into us the importance of taking decisions quickly. 'If you make up your mind rapidly,' he would say, 'you may be wrong, or you may be right. If you're wrong, the result may allow

you to change your mind in time. The worst that can happen to you is that you will lose - your life, or your guns, or something. But if you delay too long, you're bound to lose.' When he was testing me on what orders I would give my guns if I was observing for them he would indicate a target on the sand-table and say, 'Engage it!' I would give the orders, and he would put his pointer down several hundred yards short of the target to indicate where my shells had fallen. If I then gave a second order raising the range by 200 yards, he would say, 'No, no! Raise your range 500 or 600 yards, so as to be sure of straddling the target. Then you can get a good idea of where to place your next shells. If you creep up, a couple of hundred yards at a time, your guns will be knocked out before you get anywhere.'

This lesson was reinforced after the war by a lecture given by Sir Paul Chambers, the President of the CBI, who said, A university education is the worst possible preparation for a business career, because at university one is taught not to make up one's mind until one has all the facts, whereas in business one must make decisions quickly or lose out.'

While I was at the OCTU, I was offered an immediate commission in the interpretation of aerial photographs, but did not take it.

In the final exam, I came second, just behind the Australian cadet who came first, in spite of the fact that I was by far the youngest and militarily least experienced

in the troop. Nevertheless, the major in charge of our artillery training kept me back for more training as a second lieutenant, so I had to transfer to the Almaza artillery depot as a very new subaltern wearing gunner's badges, and was given some more rather desultory training on 25-pounders. We lived and ate in tents, and the dry heat was intense. I had never been so hot before, not even in Salonica. I had little appetite for the stodgy, greasy food we were fed on in the officers' mess.

Then one day Colonel Waller came to see what was going on at the depot, and I met him on the ranges. 'Hullo, Leslie,' he said to me. 'I hear you deliberately got low marks in your final exam to make sure of getting back to us instead of going to a regiment with 25-pounders. That was a silly thing to do, because now they've held you back, and I can't get them to release you to me.'

I was understandably indignant at this, and hastened to reply, 'Far from trying to get low marks, I came second in the exam, just behind the cadet who came top!'

The colonel realised that someone had been dishonest with him, and soon arranged for me to rejoin the regiment. I gradually discovered that there was a lot of friction between the regulars who ran the artillery, and the Northumberland Hussars, who had only recently been converted from yeomanry (territorial cavalry), and although they were officially the 102nd Regiment, RA, insisted on retaining

their distinctive badges and dark and light blue shoulder flashes, instead of the dark blue and red of the artillery, and on using cavalry trumpet calls instead of the bugle ones used by other arms. There was talk at GHQ, Cairo, of disbanding the NH, especially after half the regiment was lost in Crete, but the NH won, probably with powerful support organised high up by the Duke etc, and the regiment was reinforced with Welsh miners (a lot of the original other ranks were miners from Northumberland and Durham), a disbanded mountain artillery unit, which had had mules, and a Rhodesian battery, which was all white apart from the officers' black batmen.

Before rejoining the NH, I was sent to Tel Aviv by train for a week's leave, and had an intense affair with a lovely young Hungarian dancer there, made the more poignant by the realisation on both sides that it was a romance with no future.

On the first evening that we met, this girl said to me, 'I wish you were a few years older.'

'Why?' I answered indignantly. 'I can do anything an older man can - and probably better!'

She smiled at my warmth and went on, 'I've always been afraid of young men. They're so confident and scornful of inexperience. So far I've only had older men as boyfriends. My present one's a major with Intelligence in Jerusalem. He

comes down to see me whenever he can.'

Then I returned to the NH camp, which was now not far from the Pyramids, and began training with the others for going up to the Western Desert. Although I knew nothing about cars, and could scarcely drive one, having missed the first three months of the OCTU course, where such basic things were taught, I was appointed MT officer for the regiment, and soon learnt enough about the very simple engines in our military vehicles to be able to spot faults or careless maintenance and to give an impression of knowledge.

I was also given the job of finding out how the sun-compass we had just been issued with worked, and then lecturing the other officers and later the NCOs about it. Although there were no instructions with the compasses, and I had never done a single science lesson at school, I soon worked out the problems of adjusting these compasses for longitude and for the differences between real time and regional times, and gave the officers a learned lecture and demonstration, rather to the chagrin of some of them I think, since they thought me a bit of an incompetent upstart. At the end of my lecture, it was decided that it would be too difficult for the NCOs to understand, so officers would set their compasses for them.

I was much less successful with my first attempt at Orderly Officer. One of the duties was to command the

church parade on a Sunday, and to march it past Colonel Waller so that he could take the salute. I had no idea where I should be in the march past, so I took up the position I had been accustomed to as a colour sergeant in the OTC at school, which was, of course, wrong. My battery commander, who had not been with us in Greece, was heard muttering rude things about people who were quite unfit to be officers.

When we finally moved up to the Western Desert, I was attached to an experienced troop commander for more training. He was a regular from an RHA regiment and I got on well with him, except once when he told me to wait with the rest of the troop beside a wadi while he went ahead to reconnoitre. He returned a quarter of an hour later, politely annoyed because I had not led the troop after him after an interval. Why I should have guessed that this was what he had wanted me to do when he had said nothing I do not know. After a few weeks he was transferred to another regiment on promotion to captain, and I took the troop over.

On the way up to our positions near the Libyan frontier, we passed a place where our troops had managed to halt the Germans' first advance into Egypt. A wide camel track led between a series of tells (small rocky hills), behind which our troops had hidden to enfilade the Germans as they advanced. Shortage of petrol and supplies as the German lines of communication lengthened

contributed to their being halted here. We could see burnt-out tanks of both sides, abandoned jerricans, wrapping paper from British army biscuits and German pumpernickel blowing around in the hot desert wind, and all the other pathetic debris of battle. It brought home to me with something of a shock and a sinking of my stomach that I too was soon to be tried in battle as an active participant, not an onlooker, and I was afraid - but it was not a fear of death or pain, but a much worse fear - the fear of fear itself - the fear that I might crumple under the test like men I had seen in Greece - apparently macho, swashbuckling men, who collapsed under the strain of battle.

Owing to the serious shortage of ammunition and my skipping the first three months of the OCTU course, I had never fired a weapon, apart from a .22 rifle at school, and had only the most rudimentary infantry training, based on First World War practices. However, commanding an anti-tank troop was much less complicated than many other activities a subaltern could be asked to do. We had no radio, and I therefore had to communicate with my troop by flag signals. If I wanted to get in touch with my battery commander or anyone else outside my troop, I had to seek help from the armoured cars or 25-pounders to which I was usually attached to provide them with anti-tank protection.

My troop consisted of myself, with driver and batman, travelling in an 8 hundredweight truck, two sergeants, each in a 15 hundredweight truck with driver, and four 2-pounder guns mounted on lorry chassis called portees, from which they could be winched down to the ground for static defensive roles. Each gun was commanded by a bombardier, with a crew of five men, including the driver.

I spent most of my time in the Western Desert right up on the frontier wire between Egypt and Libya, protecting our armoured cars against German tanks and armoured cars when they were on patrol. The wire had been put up on Mussolini's orders to stop the nomads crossing between Libya and Egypt, as they had been doing from time immemorial. At nights we went into night leaguer near a gap in the wire, hoping to catch any German vehicles that tried to pass through. Some of the time, however, we were in reserve, having a rest or digging emplacements for our guns in the sides of tells, in case the Germans again tried to break through and we had to go back to strong defensive positions.

We were chronically short of water, and most of the time subsisted on six pints per person per day for all purposes, including washing and shaving. Our regiment insisted on everyone being well turned out at all times. For several weeks our water was salty. The Germans were said to have salted the wells before their last withdrawal, but this was probably a myth: there was a lot of salt in the soil of the desert. Years later, when the Egyptians tried to

turn desert into rich agricultural land by irrigation, they were often defeated by salt being washed out of the ground. Actually, I got to like the taste of salty tea, and it probably did us good in the heat of the Egyptian summer. Tibetans drink their tea with salt instead of sugar (and rancid yak butter instead of milk!).

As for washing clothes, we used to do it in petrol, which was much easier to come by than water, despite the fact that the 4 gallon cans we used in those days before we borrowed the idea of the jerrican from the Germans leaked terribly, especially after a long journey up to us at the front.

When one wanted to go to the lavatory, one took a spade and a roll of paper, went a hundred yards or so away, dug a hole, squatted down, did one's business, wiped oneself and then filled the hole in again.

I had managed to get my lightweight mosquito-net out of Greece. I could put it over my hat and sit on a camp chair at my camp table with everything covered, which was a boon whenever we stopped, since flies would always appear in their hundreds to plague us. What they lived on, miles from any habitation, God alone knows. The net was also good camouflage.

In most of the Desert there was dry, scrubby vegetation and dormant snails, their entrances sealed up with a diaphragm.

Very rarely, it rained, and within hours the Desert burst into leaf and flower, and the snails came out to enjoy the only rain they had probably had for twenty years. Dry wadis suddenly became raging torrents for a few hours, tanks bogged down and everything had to come to a stop. This happened on the third day of 'Crusader', our attempt to relieve Tobruk in November 1941.

Our day when we were supporting armoured cars started with a stand-to before dawn in case of a German attack at first light, then usually an early morning rendezvous with a troop of four armoured cars to go through the wire and carry out a patrol on the other side. My four guns and my own command truck were usually in a staggered line on the enemy side of the armoured cars, well dispersed in case of air attack. We used to go through the wire at one of the points we had cut, after making sure that it had not been mined (a few months before our arrival the Germans had mined one of the points during the night and then rolled a British tyre over it to give the impression that one of our vehicles had already passed over the spot safely. The result was a knocked-out armoured car and several dead), and make a sweep into no-man's-land on the other side, always hoping to catch a German six-wheeler armoured car, which would have been a great prize, as they had only recently been introduced, and our superiors were anxious to get one for examination. But the Germans were obviously aware of this, because, although we occasionally

saw a German patrol, they at once turned tail and made off. As our armoured cars were not fast enough to catch them, and our vehicles were governed down to 50 mph, pursuit was soon hopeless.

Occasionally, too, we spotted an LRDG patrol on its way back from a raid deep into enemy-held territory, and had a few words with them after they had circled us warily to make sure who we were.

Rations were a problem. In theory we had so many ounces of fresh meat per person per day when we were not actually fighting, but the rations sent up from base included bone, and we kept on finding that, by the time they reached us right at the sharp end of the line, all that was left was bone! On one occasion I protested strongly to the 11th Hussars squadron which I was supporting at the time, and who passed our rations on to us from the rear, and once went as far as to authorise my troop to break into their iron rations, which was a court martial offence. However, the iron rations were quickly replaced, and after that we had a fairer share of the meat.

Under battle conditions our daily ration was two packets of hard army biscuits, a tin of bully-beef (melting in the desert heat), a raw Spanish onion, tea, condensed milk and sugar. We had two-thirds of a packet of biscuits, a third of a tin of bully and a bite of the very hot onion after standing to before dawn, the same some time in the

middle of the day when the battles allowed, and the same again in the evening after going into night leaguer.

We brewed up whenever we had a few minutes' stop, but never during darkness, in order not to give our positions away. As soon as we halted, someone would jump down from one of the portees with an empty 4 gallon petrol can which had had holes punched in the sides, fill it with sand, saturate the sand with petrol, set the thing alight and brew up a large kettle of strong tea on it. The petrol burned slowly because of the sand, but fast enough to produce a quick brew, unless we had to move on again first, in which case there was much cursing and swearing as the burning sand was tipped out, and the hot can and kettle bundled onto the portee again.

Before a battle we were also issued with a rum ration - a large tablespoonful per man; but I preferred to keep my troop's until after the battle and issue it then, so that they could shoot straight while this was necessary, and relax afterwards.

Cigarettes were another problem. Some of my troop smoked heavily, and soon got through their weekly ration, so, as I did not smoke myself, I kept what I called a 'poor-box', from which I issued my own cigarettes to those in need towards the end of the week.

Some people loved the Desert, others hated and feared it. I suppose it was the difference between claustrophobics

and agoraphobics. I loved it: the sense of being able to see for miles and miles around, the dramatically beautiful sunrises and sunsets, the absence of troublesome civilians, and the sense of power when one learnt to understand and use the Desert, filled me with joy. The fact that I had been brought up in arid countries probably contributed to this feeling of being in harmony with my environment.

When we were in reserve, a few miles back from the wire, we sometimes had to dig gun positions in the sides of tells. Often these were made of solid rock, and sometimes we had the help of the 4th Indian Div sappers to blast them for us. Most of my troop were miners, so they were handy with a pick and shovel, but they strongly objected to having to use them on solid rock in the heat of an Egyptian autumn on a ration of six pints of water a day.

It was during these digging-in operations that I first came across Viceroy's-commissioned officers in the Indian army. They wore the same pips and crowns as King's-commissioned officers, but were in fact non-commissioned officers. When I first saw one with crowns on his shoulders, I saluted him as if he was a major, which surprised him considerably. I also quickly discovered that most of these jemadars, subadars etc could only speak the most rudimentary English, although they readily understood our gestures for help in digging our holes.

During one period when we were engaged in this work, we

were visited by Colonel Waller. 'If you ever have to occupy these holes in a battle, you'll be expected to hold your positions to the last man and last round,' he said in his usual mild tones. I had heard this stirring order in films, but had never thought I would receive it in person - and so casually.

For a short time my troop was at Battery HQ, which had a proper officers' mess tent, and then I used to have to make my way in the pitch dark from my own troop's position quite a distance away to the tent to have dinner, and then back again afterwards. That was good training in developing a sense of direction, because in the complete silence and blackout, it was easy to lose one's way and perhaps stray miles off one's course, to die of thirst in due course.

Sometimes we had magnificent displays of flashing lights at night as a bombing raid took place too far away to be heard, but near enough to light up the sky. Occasionally too a plane dropped a parachute flare, which lit the desert up over a considerable area.

I was mostly attached to the King's Dragoon Guards, who had First World War Marmon Harrington armoured cars, which reminded me of those used by Lawrence of Arabia. Part of the time, however, I was with the 11th Hussars (the Cherry-pickers, as they were called because of the dark red trousers they wore with their dress uniform), and the South African armoured cars. The 11th were really

old hands in the Desert, with modern armoured cars, and tended to scorn our anti-tank support; and the South Africans were very welcome to me because they got a coffee ration instead of tea, and as we always got our rations through the armoured cars we were supporting, we got coffee too while we were with them. Whereas the KDGs were a reasonably sporting cavalry lot like ourselves, the 11th preferred to patrol alone, and the South Africans were very wary, and did not at all approve of my eagerness to chase Germans.

For a young second lieutenant (I was 23 at the time), command of an anti-tank troop up on the wire, with no radio, was wonderful. Most of the time I was many miles from any senior officer. We spent most of the day on our own, several miles from the armoured cars, keeping a watch on gaps in the wire, with our patrols with the armoured cars usually only in the early morning and late evening, and we went into night leaguer on our own too, so I was my own master most of the time.

At first I found desert navigation very confusing because of the lack of geographical features, the heat haze, which made bushes look like moving vehicles, the poor performance of our magnetic compasses in our metal vehicles, and the poorness of the maps we had, which, although they showed the occasional cairn of stones set up by the nomads, could not be relied on, as they all looked alike at first,

and they had sometimes been dismantled or moved. The sun compass proved a great help when I had mastered its intricacies in practice as well as in theory.

The surface of the desert over which we fought was seldom sandy. Usually it was rough and very stony, with occasional dried mud flats, on which we could take our vehicles up to their full governed speed of 50 mph. Choosing a line across the desert which spared our tyres (in spite of which punctures were frequent) and springs as much as possible needed practice, but I soon became good at it. As we moved in V-formation, with my command truck leading, I had to think of what the sergeants' trucks at the ends of the V would have to go over too. As I had a padded hole in the roof of my truck just above my head, I spent most of the time standing, with my head out, to see what was happening all around.

Sometimes we ran into patches of sand, and occasionally a vehicle would get bogged down in it, and we had to use our sand channels to get it out again.

I had always disliked modern paintings, including Van Gogh's, but then I began to see sunrises in the Desert which were perfect Van Goghs - huge, wild, tormented splashes of red on a livid background, which changed constantly as one watched. Since then, I have had a soft spot for Van Gogh.

Having suffered greatly from Stukas in Greece without

any relief from our own outnumbered planes, I was delighted to see the tables turned in the Desert. Sometimes we used to see dog-fights in the air, and once, on our way up to the Desert for the first time, one of our planes was shot down over my head, and the South African pilot, in khaki shirt and shorts, landed almost at my feet, his parachute having failed to open because he was not high enough when he jumped.

Another time a Stuka came over us low and I grabbed a rifle and pointed it at it, not with any hope of hitting it, but as a gesture of defiance, to relieve my own feelings of frustration after Greece. A senior officer who was passing at the time was most indignant, and told me not to irritate them!

Occasionally a light German or Italian reconnaissance plane, usually a Fieseler Storch, would buzz us. We sometimes took a pot at it, but with no success. It was rumoured that they were protected by thick armour plating.

Like many others in the Desert, I developed desert sores. These were open ulcers, which healed up, only to break out again in the same place, larger than before. Some people, such as my batman, had to be invalided out of the Desert with them in those days before gentian violet. When I went along to the Advanced Dressing Station, which was in a tent in a wadi, with these sores on the backs of my hands, a cheerful MO took out a pair of sharp scissors, and simply

cut the sores off my hands without any anaesthetic. I had always been a terrible coward at the dentist's, but decided that, as an officer, I should set a good example by not showing any pain, so I stood there while the very painful operation was carried out. Ever since then, I have found that I can stand pain better than most people. I think it is largely a question of mind over matter.

While I was in the Desert, orders arrived for me to be sent back to Cairo in preparation for being transferred to Intelligence and taken back to Greece by submarine and foldboat to join the Resistance there, but Colonel Waller succeeded in getting a delay, saying that he could not spare me at that time.

I think I was considered very much of an outsider and bounder by some of the officers of the NH. I had, for instance, bought a pair of strong brown boots in Cairo, and when my Battery Adjutant saw me wearing them in the Desert, his scorn was withering. 'The Northumberland Hussars always wear black boots,' he said. 'And brown leggings when we wear those.'

Once when my troop was in reserve, Colonel Waller and the Duke of Northumberland, who had taken over as Adjutant, came on a tour of inspection, very elegant in silk shirts, foulard scarves, soft corduroy trousers and fine desert boots (officers often also wore sheepskin coats with the wool on them in cold weather). Colonel

Waller said, 'Where's the HQ you're attached to to provide anti-tank protection?' 'I've no idea,' I admitted honestly.

Then in November 1941 came 'Crusader', our attempt to relieve Tobruk, which had been besieged by the Germans ever since their withdrawal from their last sortie into Egypt. I was summoned to the Regimental HQ of the KDGs, whom I was to support during our thrust, and there their regimental adjutant said to me loftily, 'British military plans are usually a cock-up, and this one's going to be a monumental cock-up brute force and bloody ignorance.'

I discovered that morale was low among the KDGs. The CO was the sort of officer who had joined in peacetime for the polo, pigsticking etc and had the reputation of being windy and not at all keen on getting involved in battles.

Anyway, one evening I found myself with my troop in a vast concourse of vehicles and men on the wire some miles south of the gaps we had been used to watching. The wire was cut over a wide area, and we began to advance westwards and then northwards through it.

I was attached to a squadron of the KDGs whose job it was to reconnoitre ahead of the main thrust. I had to provide them with support in case they ran into enemy tanks or armoured cars. We did not meet any Germans until late the next morning, and then our armoured cars

withdrew behind our tanks and 25-pounders, while my troop stayed between the tanks and the field guns to catch any German tanks that broke through and threatened the 25-pounders.

My troop took part in several battles in this way, with the tanks making great clouds of dust in front of us, so that we could not really see what was happening, the German guns firing over them and trying to hit us and the 25-pounders, and the latter replying over our heads. I was very surprised to find that the Germans were using a lot of what I took to be shrapnel. I had gathered, during my training on 25-pounders, that shrapnel had gone out with the First World War, and that now everyone used HE. By moving our positions frequently to confuse the German artillery spotters, my troop managed to escape damage or injury during these first battles.

As one battle was coming to an end one evening, I spotted a tank which had three flags on its radio mast instead of the two that our tanks usually flew. I was at once suspicious, so I raced over to my nearest gun in my command truck and told the bombardier in command, 'I'm going up to that tank to find out why it's flying three flags. If it fires at me, fire back.' Then I ordered my driver to drive right up to the side of the tank.

I banged on the side with my revolver, and a head appeared out of the turret. It wore a British black beret.

'Why are you flying three flags instead of two?' I demanded.

'Because I'm a squadron commander, old boy,' came the answer in unmistakable British tones.

'Oh, sorry, sir,' I replied, feeling a real fool. 'Nobody told us.'

'Oh, that's all right,' answered the major. 'At least you didn't fire first and ask questions afterwards.'

Then one afternoon we ran into a German column, crossing in front of us. The armoured cars withdrew, and I found my troop in the forefront, as our tanks were elsewhere. There was a troop of 25-pounder guns in the column behind us, and they quickly deployed and came into action at very short range over our heads. The Germans, too, rapidly unlimbered some small guns they were towing and began to reply. My troop stood its ground, waiting for German tanks to appear, but none did, and after about half an hour our 25-pounders withdrew, with us shadowing them to keep off pursuit.

That evening there was an acrimonious argument between the RHA troop of 25-pounders and the KDG troop of armoured cars as to which I should be attached to. Both had seen our stand in that afternoon's skirmish, the armoured cars from a point behind the guns, and both were now very eager to have us to protect them. As I had no radio to consult

my superiors, I had to do what the two troop leaders decided. The RHA won the day, so the next morning my troop went off with the guns.

At one point that day we came across a group of German vehicles which had been shot up. They included a cooking trailer which still had food simmering in it. We took a number of prisoners who had been trying to hide in the low scrub round about, and my men proceeded to take their watches and any other valuables they could find. I disapproved of looting, but had had no orders about it, so did nothing except collect the prisoners' paybooks for passing on to our Brigade Intelligence Officer. I enjoyed the German food in the cook truck, especially the pumpernickel, but my men found it sour and unpalatable.

That evening, when we went into night leaguer, the bombardier commanding one of my guns reported engine trouble, and the RAOC people who came up to service our vehicles at night confirmed that it would have to go back for repairs. I was thus left with three guns.

The next day there were heavy tank battles as we approached Sidi Resegh aerodrome. It was the 21st November. We came across the HQ of the 4th Armoured Brigade, to which Colonel Waller was attached as anti-tank adviser, and when he saw me, he asked why I was not with the KDGs. I told him what had happened, and he was annoyed, because

the gunners had had no right to take my troop away from the KDGs.

However, he said, 'I've had enthusiastic reports of the way you had stood firm against the German guns at close range yesterday, Leslie, and I'm pleased, although you should have loaded with HE and opened fire on the German column, instead of staying loaded with solid shot in case German tanks approached.' This was a new one on me: I had always gathered that our role was to act as a stop against tanks, leaving the destruction of soft-skinned vehicles to the 25-pounders.

However, Colonel Waller had been very happy at the flattering comments of the COs of both the 25-pounder regiment and the KDGs, and indicated that he was going to recommend me for an immediate MC. He had already decided to do the same in the case of another subaltern in my battery, Lieutenant Bernard Payne, who had engaged another German column at point-blank range, and even himself changed a wheel on one of his portees, when it had been hit by a German shell, a very short distance from the enemy.

Now Colonel Waller said to me, 'Well, anyhow, now you are to stay with 4th Armoured Brigade HQ to provide them with anti-tank protection, as the battle is very fluid. The brigadier's away with the heavy tanks fighting a battle somewhere else.'

It was getting towards evening and we were still talking when the second-in-command of the Brigade, a full colonel, who had been left in charge while the brigadier was away, called out urgently, 'Rob, Rob!'

Colonel Waller ran over to him and a few moments later ran back to me and said, 'There's a large body of tanks and soft-skinned vehicles coming in behind us. Get between them and our HQ and keep them off. But be careful: they may be the South Africans. We're expecting them from that direction.'

I at once ran to my truck, jumped in and raised my blue flag for the troop to follow me into action. We raced out towards the approaching mass of vehicles and then fanned out as we had practised again and again on manoeuvres, turning to point the guns at the enemy and then stopping. My binoculars had been damaged some days before, so that I could only see out of half of them, and there was such a shortage of equipment that I had not managed to get a replacement. I tried to see whether I could recognise the approaching shapes, but before I could be sure, they opened fire on us. As our portees were unique in the Desert, I took it as certain that the oncoming vehicles were enemy ones, so I raised my blue flag again for firing to begin.

I then ran over from my truck to the nearest portee, from which I could get a better picture of what was happening,

THE MILITARY CROSS

Second-Lieutenant Leslie Alexander HILL (217840)

Royal Horse Artillery.

On the 21st November, 1941, during the battle for SIDI RESEGH Aerodrome, a strong German column of about 60 tanks and several hundred lorried infantry attacked the rear of an Armoured Brigade.

Second-Lieutenant HILL with his troop was directed to cover Brigade Headquarters. This he did with conspicuous dash, courage and skill. Placing his guns between Brigade Headquarters and the advancing enemy, he quickly destroyed three tanks, and in spite of having two guns knocked out, he held off the column long enough to give the transport and Headquarters room to get clear.

(From London Gazette of 12.2.42)

BUCKINGHAM PALACE.

I greatly regret that I am
unable to give you personally the
award which you have so well earned.

I now send it to you with
my congratulations and my best
wishes for your future happiness.

George R.I.

Major L.A. Hill, M.C.,
Royal Horse Artillery.

RECEIVED
10/10/1914
10/10/1914

as the deck of a portee was some six feet above the surface of the featureless desert, and offered a wonderful view. The enemy had stopped and were firing heavily. The tracer was making intricate and beautiful patterns above and around us. Soon some of the tanks found our range, and the water container between the driver of the portee I was on and his mate was smashed into small pieces, the water spraying all over us.

Our three guns were firing rapidly, and I could see that we were scoring hits. My MC citation for this battle credited us with three tanks destroyed in a very short time, which was not bad, considering that our little two-pounder shells bounced off the German tanks at any range over 800 yards, while their guns could blow us to pieces at a very much greater range than that. However, as tanks are relatively blind when closed down, and we had such a wonderful view from the decks of our portees, we found that German tanks had a healthy respect for us, especially as we had the reputation of using dashing cavalry tactics - rushing in, turning, firing a few shots, and then dashing out again.

After a minute or two there was a flash of flame from our left, and the crew of one of my guns came running over. 'We're on fire,' they shouted, 'and Bombardier Tinling (he was the commander of that gun) has been hit right through the chest!' (Luckily, this was not true: I discovered after the war that he had been wounded, recovered by our

medical people, and brought back to full health).

A minute after that, my own command truck was hit and seemed to go up in flames. I thought my driver and batman must have been killed, but they both managed to get back to our lines and live to fight another day. The driver was ultimately killed in another battle, and the batman invalided out with severe desert sores.

The next thing that happened was that my other gun pulled out and began to withdraw fast without any signal from me. I thought the bombardier in command might have thought that I had gone up with my truck.

The enemy shells were getting uncomfortably close now, and Brigade HQ had disappeared into the coming dusk, so I gave orders to move too. 'But jink about as you go,' I told the driver of the portee, the only one now left out of my troop.

The driver set off, changing direction frequently to throw the enemy gunners off, and after a time we passed some of the 8th Hussar light Honey tanks, which were also going the same way as us, firing, moving, firing again, and so on. I ordered my driver to stop too, so that we could get in a few more shots to discourage pursuit, but he was either not keen to do so, or could not hear me amid the din of battle, and I had to bang him several times on his helmet with my hand before he obeyed.

'Go on firing,' I then ordered. The gun-layer and bombardier on our portee fired off some more shots, and then we moved on again. We did this several times before reaching Brigade HQ, which had retired rapidly to a point where a wide desert track began to thread its way over the Escarpment, which lay between the desert and the coastal plain. I reported to Colonel Waller, and then sought out the portee which had left our battle so suddenly. The bombardier in command claimed that it had had an axle broken by a German shell, but I had no time to verify his story.

Bernard Payne now arrived with his troop intact, and as it was practically dark, we were told to form a night leaguer, with the Honey tanks and our own portees on the perimeter, and the soft-skinned staff vehicles, including the brigadier's ACV, in the centre.

When I had time to think, I began to wonder how it was that I had not thought it crazy to oppose 60 German tanks with three small guns whose shells bounced off them at 1,000 yards range. I, who had been brought up as a coward, had not really felt scared - more elated and excited. I have always had a strong will to win, and a hatred of losing (witness my feelings in the race against the school at Henley); and also, I think, I had been stung by Colonel Waller's criticism of me for not having opened fire on the German guns at my previous encounter with the enemy. This time I had been determined to show

him!

The 2-in-c of the Brigade was now beginning to get anxious about protection for the night, as the heavy tanks were still out with the brigadier, and our infantry, the Scots Guards, who protected us at night, had not yet arrived. Our guns were practically useless at night, and we relied heavily on infantry protection to give us warning of approaching danger so that we could avoid it. The 2-in-c therefore lit the light on top of the brigadier's ACV and started to send up Verey lights. Sure enough, after a few minutes, we heard the rumble of approaching tracked vehicles, and the colonel went out to greet them. But they did not stop when they reached our leaguer: they raced through it at speed, and we suddenly realised that they were German tanks and motorised infantry in half-tracks. Colonel Waller ran to Bernard Payne and me, said, 'Don't move and don't fire,' and then disappeared. We later learned that he jumped into his Humber Snipe and escaped. That was the last I ever saw of him. He retired as a brigadier the next year, I believe.

As for us, the German tanks and infantry quickly surrounded our leaguer. One tank drove in on the blind side of my guns and Bernard's. It stopped about five yards away, and the commander put his head out of the turret and began to shout to us to surrender.

Bernard jumped onto the nearest portee and began

to traverse the gun, but he was immediately blown off by a shell, fired at point-blank range, from the tank. He luckily only sustained a wound in the hand, and stayed with us until the next morning, when he was taken off to hospital, to rejoin us later in a POW camp.

We were meanwhile lying on the ground, not knowing what to do. We had no infantry weapons against tanks, no sticky bombs, and no Boys anti-tank rifle, since ours had gone up with my truck. We had also not had any infantry training. While we lay there, I had my last encounter with our Assistant Adjutant. It was like seeing again a film which one remembered from the last time: he came towards us in the darkness, as on the beach at Rafina, saw an abandoned rifle lying on the ground near me and said, 'Come on, pick that rifle up, man, and do something!' Before I had time to ask him what he suggested I should do with an unloaded rifle against a German tank about five yards from me, he disappeared again. Later I found out that he had shortly afterwards been badly wounded in the leg, put in a German ambulance, and rescued by our side again the next day when another of our brigades once more overran Sidi Resegh.

After a few minutes, the Germans fired at one of the soft vehicles in the centre of our leaguer and set it on fire. This gave them enough light to see us by. I could see that the staff officers had already surrendered, and that there was no way of getting away through the

close ring of German infantry around us. I therefore removed my regimental badges, as regulations laid down, destroyed my marked maps and keys to codes as best I could, and then led my men to the centre of the leaguer to surrender. I was surprised to see that I was the only officer to have removed his badges, and for half an hour after we had been packed into trucks for the night, I could see staff officers surreptitiously destroying secret papers. I was also surprised to find that the Germans, whom I had always thought so efficient, although they did in fact search us, did so only perfunctorily, to remove weapons, field-glasses and other military equipment.

Before we were put into the trucks, Field-Marshal Rommel himself arrived and wanted to shake hands with our Brigade 2-in-c, but the latter refused because he claimed to have been caught by a trick. I thought, 'All's fair in love and war, isn't it?' but kept my mouth shut.

Soon after I was taken prisoner our regiment exchanged their poor but gallant little two-pounder guns for much more powerful six-pounders, and after that the survival rate among subalterns rose enormously. Later the regiment even got self-propelled seventeen-pounders, after which casualties were negligible.

I have always been bitter at the pacifism and self-indulgence ('butter - and jam - before guns') of the pre-

1939 British, which had sent me into battle so ill-equipped, ill-armed and ill-trained. This bitterness changed first to incredulity, then to scorn and finally to resignation as I saw exactly the same errors being repeated by post-1945 British governments for the same reasons.

Chapter 13: POW in Libya and Italy

When we officers had been packed into a German truck for the night, Bernard Payne tried to lift a floorboard, despite his wounded hand, to escape. Although regulations stated that it was the duty of all POWs to try to escape, some of the senior staff officers in our truck, who had clearly had enough excitement for the time being, and did not want to run the risk of being shot up again, strongly dissuaded him. This confirmed my view that certain peacetime regular officers, unlike Colonel Waller, had joined for the fun and games, and took a very poor view of actually having to risk their lives in battle.

At dawn we were taken across Sidi Resegh aerodrome, where we were stopped by a very pale Luftwaffe NCO, who looked as if he had recently been violently sick. He had been taken prisoner by our side the day before, and had had his watch pinched. Now he had been released again by the German advance, and was obviously hopping mad and determined to get another watch from one of us in exchange. I showed him that mine had a broken glass, patched up with sticking-plaster, and he rejected it disdainfully.

We were then put in trucks and taken to a POW cage in the open desert, where we were handed over to the Italians. There was nothing but sand in the cage and for miles around, and we were left there for a long time without food or water until billy-cans of macaroni boiled

in water were brought round. From there we were taken on from one cage to another by scruffy, dirty, unshaven little Italians. They were a complete contrast to the front line troops of the German Afrika Korps. Whereas the latter were polite and correct (more so than some of my own men, I have to admit! For one thing, they did not loot prisoners), the Italian L-of-C troops were thoroughly unpleasant little bullies.

In one cage I met a regular lieutenant in the Royal Tank Regiment, David Taylor, who later became my main friend as a POW. He was a few years younger than me, very blond, with a big nose and fleshy lips. He had been taught the code which enabled POWs to communicate with the War Office through letters home, and he soon arranged for me to have a code too.

The Benghazi camp was an improvised one, dirty, and short of everything including water. A lot of us made plans to escape, but the place pullulated with little Ities, and there was also the problem of how we would get back hundreds of miles across arid desert to our own lines with no food or water.

Then one evening we were taken down to the Benghazi docks, devastated by our bombers, and embarked on an Italian destroyer for the trip across to Sicily. We were dirty, hungry and unshaven, and the immaculately dressed Italian officers reeking of cheap scent were disgusted by our

appearance and clearly did not look forward to the idea of having to clean their ship up after us. However, we were packed into the forecastle and set off.

The weather turned out to be exceptionally severe. We were soon rolling and pitching about in our own vomit in that crowded forecastle. We had with us a remarkable RNR lieutenant-commander, 'Skipper' Palmer, who had been captured running arms and supplies into besieged Tobruk in a small sailing-ship. He had a plan to take the destroyer over and sail her to Malta, but his second-in-command, an RNR lieutenant, was strongly critical of this plan, calling it suicide. As Skipper Palmer went round trying to find a team to help him take the destroyer over, the lieutenant followed, discouraging them. In any case, most of us army types were too sick to help. I would have been delighted if the destroyer had sunk with all hands, particularly myself.

The destroyer finally had to turn and make for Tripoli because of the enormous seas, and from there we were taken to a camp at a place called Tarhuna. There two of our number managed to escape temporarily, despite the fact that we were even further from our lines, across inhospitable desert, than we had been in Benghazi.

This led to an amusing statement by the little Italian interpreter, who had been living in the USA for many years, and had been caught and forced into the army while on

holiday in his Italian birthplace. This man announced to us one day that the escapers had been shot, and were now 'kicking up the daisies.' In fact, they were returned to our camp soon after, safe and sound.

We finally crossed to Sicily in Italian transport planes, flying very low to avoid attacks by British fighters based in Malta.

Other POWs being taken from Tripoli to Italy a few days later spotted a German cruiser in Tripoli harbour, and reported this to our security organisation on arrival. I therefore sent off a coded message to the War Office in a letter to my parents, and a friend of mine, who is a computer expert, managed to decipher the message recently (1988). It read GERMAN RQ CRUISER THREE FUNNELS IN TRIPOLI TWO DAYS AFTER XMAS DETAILS LATER.

We spent Christmas 1941 in a de-sanctified church near Castelvetro in Sicily, where a kind Italian priest managed to get us a few tasty morsels to add to our boiled macaroni. From there we were taken by train, in third-class carriages, to Capua, which was our first experience of a proper camp built to house troops. On the way there, I made mental notes of coastal guns which we passed, and reported their position to the War Office in my first proper letter home.

At Capua we not only suffered from cold and hunger, but also from lice. This was not surprising, as none of

us had had a change of clothes since our capture. I had had plenty to do with fleas and bed-bugs before, but had never seen lice. Now the Italians began to boil our clothes periodically while we showered and then sat wrapped in thin Italian army blankets; and on fine days we sat outside in the sun nit-picking, which consisted of removing the pretty, pearl-like eggs which were clinging to the hair on our chests. I remembered the delousings at the Zappeion in Athens in my childhood. As the NH RSM had predicted during our walks in Greece, the higher class an officer was, the less he was capable of dealing with such things as lice. The Guards Brigade ones, who had presumably been looked after by plenty of servants since birth, were the most helpless.

At Capua, David Taylor and I teamed up with a nice pair of New Zealand brothers who had been captured almost at the same time. One was small, wiry and a second lieutenant, the other large and a sergeant. To remain together, the sergeant had claimed to be an officer, and he went through his time as a POW without being challenged. That first winter, before we had pens, pencils or paper, the Porters and we played endless games of bridge, a game I had never played before; but as soon as I got a pencil and some paper, I changed to more interesting occupations.

As soon as we had got into Italian hands in Libya I had begun learning Italian. I found it very easy, as I



LAH as a POW in Padula, Italy



David Taylor as a POW at Padula

knew Latin and Spanish. In fact, Italians and Spaniards can communicate quite well, each using his or her own language. At Capua I began more systematic studies of Italian.

At Capua too we got to know Lieutenant Alastair Cram, who was quite a bit older than us, small, very fit, very Scots, with a red face and fair, curly hair. He had already escaped once and been recaptured, but he was a fanatical escaper, and was to make many attempts to get back to Britain during the following three and a half years, none of them successful. I was one of those who suggested, in my debriefing report, that he should get an MC for all these attempts, which he in fact did. At Capua we soon christened him 'the Baron', because just before the war there had been a famous German tennis player called the Baron von Cramm.

As news of the war continued to be very bad, our morale became worse and worse, and although we still believed we would win in the end, we expected the war to continue for anything up to twenty years before this happened, with our fate as POWs in the interim a very grim one.

During the winter of 1942 we were moved from Capua to the very beautiful Carthusian monastery at Padula in Salernitano, south-east of Naples, where David and I remained for one and a half years. As one approached the main gate, one passed under an arch with the words 'Abandon hope, all ye who enter here' in Latin over it. Then one came to the cloisters, a building which ran round the four sides of a

grassy courtyard, about 100 yards long and 50 yards wide. The upper storey was supported on massive pillars, and off the cloisters at intervals were doors leading into monastic cells, which were now the quarters of the senior officers - majors and above. We junior officers lived in long corridors on the upper floor, our army beds separated by narrow gaps. When the weather was wet or cold, we spent most of our time there, going down to collect our meagre food, and then bringing it up to eat on our beds. We had no chairs or tables anywhere. On fine days we sat or walked in the courtyard, or an adjoining grassy field which was within our perimeter wire. We were not far from a typical little Italian village, perched picturesquely on the top of a hill.

During our first few months in Padula it was still winter, and we were very cold and hungry. David Taylor and I had managed to obtain a little powdered maize somehow, and occasionally made gruel in the field outside the cloisters, using empty cigarette packets as fuel. It was surprising what heat one could get from burning these carefully one at a time.

Then suddenly a consignment of sweetened condensed milk arrived from Milan. It had been sent by the Red Cross for starving children, but we were able to divert it to ourselves by some devious means involving bribery. By the International Red Cross Convention, we were paid by the Italian authorities in POW chits every month according

to our rank, and they then recovered the money from the British Government through Geneva. With something like 1,000 officers in our camp, some of them majors and above (two were in fact brigadiers), our purchasing power was considerable.

As we had been starving for six months, our stomachs were not used to such strong food as sweetened condensed milk, and most of us ate it too fast anyway, with the result that we were sick. Soon after, however, the Italian padre who saw to the spiritual needs of our guards organised a large-scale and very successful black market. Railway wagons full of such things as whole sides of beef arrived regularly from Naples at the tiny railway station a mile or two away, and this food was used to augment our meagre rations. We also started getting Red Cross parcels, which were an enormous help, as they contained really nutritious food.

Some of the village women used to make ice-cream and bring it down for sale, and this led to a raid by the Carabinieri the Italian political police. The jilted lover of one of the ice-cream women claimed that she was going to our camp for prostitution, and also tipped the Carabinieri off about the black market. However, we received a tip-off too, and all the illicit goods were quickly distributed and disposed of, so that when the Carabinieri duly arrived, they found nothing.

We used to be taken for walks in small groups through

the beautiful countryside round us about once a week. Several people tried to escape, but none were successful in getting out of Italy: our camp was too far south, and the population were too alert and hostile. They spoke a dialect which one could cut with a knife, so that an escaper speaking high-class Italian at once gave himself away. Once, when the author George Millar escaped, he was beaten up on his return to Padula, a fact that I duly reported to the War Office, with the suggestion that the Italian commandant of our camp should be put on the list of potential war criminals.

By now I was reading the Italian papers easily, and dictating a summary each day to David Taylor, who then put it up on the notice-board for everyone to read. When the Axis forces occupied Tobruk in 1942, there were huge headlines 'TOBRUK OCCUPATA!' in the papers. David cut one of these out and kept it. Then, when our forces reoccupied Tobruk after the battle of El Alamein, he triumphantly pinned this headline up on the board, to the consternation of the Italian guards.

I occupied my time at Padula learning languages, and teaching Modern Greek. Another POW received the Russian Linguaphone Course and Hugo's Method from home, and kindly let me use them to study Russian, which I did for eight hours a day. We also had Norwegian, Danish, Swedish, Czech and other officers in our camp, so I took the opportunity to get a smattering of these languages too.

One of my fellow prisoners in Padula was Captain Roy Lowndes. Little did I guess that many years later I would meet him again as the brother-in-law of the woman who was to become my second wife!

When Sicily was occupied by our forces, and the danger of an invasion of the mainland of Italy grew, we were told that we were going to be moved north. We had to pack all our possessions, which were then taken down to the railway station and put in a railway truck there to await our departure. The Italian commandant of our camp, who was beginning to see the way the wind was blowing, was persuaded that we should have one of us on guard over the truck at all times, so we fixed up a roster of good Italian speakers to do this work. I was one of those chosen. We each had to promise not to try to escape while we were on this assignment which our Senior British Officer allowed us to do, as it was an invaluable way of gathering intelligence, both about Axis troop movements, and for our own purposes in case we were threatened by the Germans and had to make a mass escape.

Every day one of us Italian speakers was taken down to the station on foot by a couple of guards, and we received Italian rations while we were away, including a harsh red wine which had to be diluted with plenty of water to make it drinkable. It was summer, and very pleasant to get out into the peace of rural Italy.

When one was doing this job, one slept on a marble-

topped table in the station waiting-room, and I quickly discovered that, with my boots under my head as a pillow, and lying with the little pad of flesh in front of my hip-bone taking most of my weight, I could sleep quite comfortably.

At about this time, the Allies started bombing Naples heavily, and one night a trainload of distraught evacuees arrived and wanted to sleep in the waiting-room where I was already ensconced. I did not much fancy being found there in my British uniform by an angry crowd who had been bombed out of their homes by our planes, but luckily the two Italian soldiers guarding me managed to dissuade them from breaking down the flimsy door.

After lengthy delays caused by other more pressing demands on the Italian railway system, we were finally moved to Bologna in comfortable second-class railway carriages, with one longish delay in the Pontine marshes south of Rome, caused by allied bombing further north.

We had acquired a secret radio receiver while at Padula: our RE officers only needed valves from outside to make a serviceable machine which could easily be taken to pieces and hidden when necessary, and valves could be obtained by barter with disaffected or greedy guards. Now, at Bologna, we received secret orders from the War Office not to leave the camp in case of an armistice, but to stay put and await relief by our forces. David and I made

emergency rations for escape purposes, which we called
shit-cakes because of their brown colour, caused by the
chocolate in them. They also contained condensed milk,
oatmeal, sugar, cocoa and other highly nutritious ingredients
from Red Cross parcels.

Chapter 14: On to Germany

The armistice with Italy duly came, and our Senior British Officer passed on the War Office's orders, in spite of which several of the people in our camp decided to leave. The Italian guards remained, but did not stop anyone going.

Then the next night, a German Waffen-SS regiment suddenly arrived and took the camp over. Next day they herded us into cattle-trucks to take us back to Germany. The trucks had wooden floors, and we managed to pull up some boards, but whenever the train stopped, which was often, the SS guards, who, we discovered, were going back to Germany on transfer to the Russian front, got out and prevented escapes. At one stop, a guard noticed our loose floor-boards and wired a hand grenade under them, so we stopped trying to get out. In other trucks some of our fellow-POWs were luckier, and quite a few escaped into North-West Italy, where they were sheltered by farmers and helped to cross into Switzerland.

At one North Italian station, we saw hundreds of young Italian men being herded into another train of cattle-trucks by another SS group, to be deported to Germany as slave labour. One young man did not move fast enough, because he was talking tearfully to his girlfriend. He was shot on the spot.

Going through the Brenner Pass into Austria it was

very hot, and we became extremely thirsty. When we got to the other side, it was dusk, and I managed to persuade a kind-hearted railway worker to fill our water-bottles for us at a station.

In the morning we arrived at Moosburg, a huge POW camp outside Munich, where there were Russian, Yugoslav, French, Italian etc prisoners. We were supposed to be segregated according to nationalities, but the Russians were a very tough lot, and managed to get everywhere, so I had my first chance of trying my Russian out for real communication purposes. To my delight, it worked fine. I learnt that the Russian POWs were very badly treated by the Germans. The USSR had not signed the Geneva Convention, so there was nothing the Red Cross could do to help. In fact, the USSR, like Japan, strongly disapproved of its men allowing themselves to be taken prisoner, and was very afraid of ideological contamination if any returned to their country after having seen the standard of living in the West. When large numbers of Russian POWs and slave labourers were forcibly returned to the USSR after the war, most were summarily shot by the authorities there on arrival.

At Moosburg, I was told by my new Russian friends, their officers were treated in exactly the same way as their other ranks by the Germans, so that generals and privates lived and worked and starved together. They had

once managed to catch one of the vicious Alsatian guard dogs the Germans used, and had killed and eaten it. One of the things they were particularly incensed about was that when Russian women arrived at the camp, German officers photographed them naked in the showers.

Before we left Moosburg, David and I gave some of our shit-cakes to the Russians, and one of them gave me a pre-1917 book of Lermontov poems in exchange - a very strange item to find in such a place.

After a few days at Moosburg, we were transferred to Strassburg and put in an underground fortress overlooking a moat, but we did not stay long in that eerie place. Next we were moved to Weinsberg near Heilbronn, where we were joined by a lot of South Africans who had been captured at the surrender of Tobruk in 1942. They included Sir de Villiers Graaff, who was later the leader of one of the parties in the South African Parliament.

One day the Germans asked for volunteers to go to a new camp in the Sudetenland, and David and I were among those who volunteered, with a lot of our friends. The journey was by train in second-class compartments, which were a great improvement on the cattle trucks we had been moved around in in Germany till then.

At one station in the Sudetenland, which had formerly been part of Czechoslovakia, women waiting on the platform

for a train noticed that we were prisoners, and began to wail loudly, presumably because they thought we were Czechs being taken off to a concentration camp.

One of our party managed to escape from the train, but did not last long in the cold and snow, and rejoined us at our next camp, Oflag VIIIF, soon after. That was near Moravská Třebová (Mährisch Trübau in German).

Chapter 15: Escape to Prague, & a prisoner of the Gestapo

Oflag VIIIF was a massive grey concrete building, four storeys high, situated in a bleak part of the Sudetenland, an area which had belonged to Czechoslovakia before the war, but which had contained a German minority. The Germans had incorporated it into their own country after their occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1938. The camp was surrounded by two barbed wire fences with a 20 foot wide path between for the sentries to patrol. As usual, there were machine-gun posts on raised platforms at strategic intervals along the outer wire.

My friends and I were allotted one of the dormitories on the top floor of the junior officers' building. Majors and above lived in wooden huts, as did our batmen and the German personnel, but the latter's quarters were outside the inner wire.

One of the first people I recognised when we reached this new camp was Bernard Payne, who was in my regiment and had been captured with me. We had parted company at Bologna, and now we met up again for the first time in Germany.

'Hullo, Leslie!' he shouted with his usual enthusiasm. 'Any other Noodles (our affectionate name for our regiment) with you?'

'No, none, Bernard. Any here?'

'No, we're the only ones.'

'How are things here?'

'Nothing special. We're getting Red Cross parcels regularly.' Then he lowered his voice. 'And there's a very good chap in charge of escaping. David Stirling.'

I whistled. 'Not the David Stirling? SAS and LRDG?'

'That's him - three DSOs - so far.' (This was not in fact so: he had one.)

'What's the place like to escape from?'

'Well, I've got plans...Would you like to be in on them? With your knowledge of German it'd be easy.'

'What about getting through the wire?'

'Come on and I'll show you what I've spied out.'

I wasn't much impressed by what Bernard showed me. He was one of the bravest men I had ever met, but he admitted that he had little brain. His idea was to cut through the wire immediately under a machine-gun post and then crawl through, preferably during an air raid, when the lights were out. Of course, all the machine-gun posts were sited to give each other covering crossfire, and we were not allowed out of our quarters at night.

I met Bernard and his wife in London after our release,

and was very sad to hear, not long after, that he had been killed climbing in the Alps. Having no concept of danger, he had probably just climbed up and up till he fell off.

That evening there was the usual parade of all officers to receive orders and hear the news which had been collected from our secret radios. These parades were held in the corridors outside our dormitories, each floor of the main building meeting separately under a senior officer. Just before our parade ended that evening, our CO, a lieutenant-colonel, announced, 'All new arrivals who have intelligence duties or escape plans are to report to Colonel Stirling in Hut 3 tomorrow. Dismiss!'

I was one of the small group of officers who used the War Office code, and I also wanted to escape, so the next morning I went along to Hut 3. There were a couple of officers lounging about in the doorways despite the intense cold, and I immediately realized that they were 'sentries', posted to warn David Stirling if Germans approached. The warning cry was 'Goon up!'

Lieutenant-Colonel David Stirling, DSO, was the legendary founder of the Special Air Service (SAS), which had carried out daring raids long distances behind the German lines in the Desert. He had himself been captured on such a raid. He shared a hut with his second-in-command in our escape organisation, Major Jack Pringle of the 8th Hussars, the light tank regiment which I had last seen in

action at Sidi Rezagh when I won my MC.

I was disappointed in my first sight of David Stirling: lean and aristocratic-looking, he nevertheless gave an appearance of intense worry and nervous strain which surprised me. I later came to the conclusion that he was one of those supremely brave people who take risks not because they are stupid or lacking in imagination or swashbuckling (perhaps like Bernard Payne!), but because they have a great inner urge which overcomes psychological handicaps.

The escape organisation in our camp had many ramifications. Besides the contacts with London through our coded letters home, and through secret radio receivers (we could not, of course, broadcast ourselves without being quickly tracked down by direction-finding equipment), and contacts with the outside by batmen's fatigue parties, church visits, visits to doctors etc, there were contacts with guards, who were blackmailed into providing us with German money, sample identity cards, radio valves, etc by starting with the offer of a Red Cross cigarette, then a packet of them in exchange for a German soldier's hat, then coffee for a jacket, and so on. If they demurred at any point, they were threatened with betrayal to their superiors.

Then there was a tailoring department which produced civilian clothes, German uniforms, Russian slave workers' uniforms (they were green) etc; a department for forging

passes (I had been doing Germanic signatures on these ever since Padula days); a department which copied maps on very thin paper, from the silk ones sewn into RAF uniforms; etc.

We received gold for barter in such things as chess sets sent by our 'families'. And I do not know whether some officers were deliberately allowed to become POWs in order to smuggle important orders and/or goods to us.

'Good morning, Hill,' Colonel Stirling said to me. 'I hear you speak practically perfect German.' Apparently Bernard Payne had spoken to him about me.

'Yes, I have on occasion been able to pass for a German. And I can get on with Czech too.'

'Would you be willing to help us gather information for escapes?'

'Yes, certainly. And I'd like to be in on them too.'

'Of course, but there's a queue, you know.'

'Fair enough.'

'But if you did help us, you'd get an early chance once you'd done what was needed of you.'

'What is it that you need?'

'Well, as you know, officers get no chance to get out of the camp and make contacts, but our batmen do. There's a chance of getting two officers out on fatigues in this

way, because the batmen here haven't been photographed yet, What I want is for two officers to take the places of two batmen, get their photos on their identity cards, and then pose as them on outside parties. It would mean doing a complete swop - living as batmen in the batmen's quarters and doing all the other fatigues too.'

'All right, I'll do it. Who's the other chap?'

'Have you ever come across Alastair Cram?'

'Alastair?' I cried out in delight. 'Of course I have! He's a first-rate escaper. And he speaks quite good German.'

'Well, he's agreed to do the job, so you'll be working with him. 'Ill get him now.'

'Hullo, Baron!' I said when he arrived. 'I thought you'd be in Switzerland by now.'

'No, I was free for several days after I jumped the train bringing us from Italy through the Brenner Pass, but then the SS caught me.' He winced. I heard later that they had given him a bad beating-up.

'Well,' said Stirling, 'you both know what the job is. We need maps of the area round the camp, contacts with foreign workers in the area, and any other information that might be useful to escapers. You may also be asked to help people escape - for instance in the laundry bags

you take down to town. And you may be able to plant caches of food, civilian clothes and so on outside the camp for escapers to use. I'll get the Regimental Sergeant-Major who's in charge of the batmen and introduce you. He's a South African.'

The RSM soon arrived. 'Mr Arhus,' said Stirling, 'this is Lieutenant Hill. He speaks perfect German, and he's going to change places with the other of your men and work with Mr Cram. As you know, you will see to it that he gets on as many outside fatigues as possible without arousing the Germans' suspicion, and when the two men are called for to be photographed and fingerprinted by the Germans, you will arrange for Mr Hill and Mr Cram to take their places.'

'Yes, sir,' answered the RSM. He did not seem to relish the assignment. When he had gone, I said to David Stirling, 'Oh, there's another thing I should tell you. I operate the WO code.'

I went back to my dormitory.

'Well, how did it go?' asked David Taylor, who had been to report to Colonel Stirling already.

'I'm changing places with one of the batmen so as to get out of the camp and spy out the land for escapes. I'll be doing it with Alastair Cram. He's here too.'

'Changing places with a batman! Do you mean he's going to be coming and living in here with us? Are you sure you can trust him not to give the show away to the Germans?'

'That's a risk we'll have to take, isn't it? You chaps will have to keep him on the straight and narrow.'

Alastair and I went along to be photographed in place of the two batmen (we found that their fingerprints were already on their cards), and then duly took our places in one of the huts, where we shared a room with six other soldiers. At the same time, our 'doubles' took our places in our respective dormitories, putting on the shoulder stars we took off.

POW officers did not have personal batmen. At first we had some trouble with the South African RSM, who kept on sending us on fatigue duties inside the camp instead of on outside parties, but some forceful words from Colonel Stirling soon had us going out to take dirty laundry down to the neighbouring town and to collect turnips there, using a cart pulled by an old horse.

One day Alastair and I borrowed a prismatic compass from a friend who had managed to smuggle it through many searches, suspended between his legs (the Germans had a horror of touching anywhere in this area!), and we got up on to a forbidden roof to make a map of the surrounding countryside. While we were doing this, we heard Teutonic steps coming up the stairs. Alastair went white and seemed

quite panic-stricken. After his beating up by the SS, he had obviously become apprehensive, and he knew that he was a marked man. But this did not stop him making another escape a month later. He was a very brave man.

While we were posing as batmen, Alastair used to get up early in the morning, strip naked and massage himself all over vigorously and systematically. It was apparently a patent keep-fit routine, which caused a lot of hilarity and leg-pulling among the batmen.

One member of our escape organisation was a New Zealander, and one day I heard that he was to be transferred to another camp. Colonel Stirling sent for me a few days later and said, 'Captain Stevenson was killed jumping out of the train taking him to his new camp. Of course, he wouldn't have had time to destroy his coded addresses, money etc, but luckily when his body and effects were brought back here for the funeral, everything was intact. Either the Germans did not notice the things, or they're being very clever.'

'Or they may have killed him themselves for some intelligence reason!' I thought. 'Perhaps after torturing him to find out more about his codes.'

One of our hazards was the British corporal in charge of the outside working parties, who had been commissioned by another branch of David Stirling's escape organisation

to pick up any tools which might be useful for cutting wire, digging tunnels etc. After a time, the laundry in the town complained that tools were disappearing, and one day, as we returned to the camp, we were suddenly searched. Luckily, the corporal was not carrying anything illicit at the time, but our identities were carefully checked against our cards with the photographs and descriptions on them. I normally wore glasses, but to look as different as possible from the photo on my original card as an officer, and to look as much as possible like my 'double' so that he would not have trouble when we changed back, I had had myself photographed without my glasses, and whenever there was an identity check I took them off. However, on this occasion, the intelligence officer, an ancient major with a thin, mean mouth, who had obviously been brought out of retirement, noticed the mark across the bridge of my nose.

'Do you wear glasses?' he asked in good English, but with a strong German accent.

'I sometimes do,' I mumbled, pretending to be a stupid peasant, 'but not usually.'

He seemed satisfied, but made a note.

Another alarm came when this same intelligence officer received official information about Alastair's escape from the train, and a request that the German authorities at the camp should keep a special eye on him.

The escape organisation learnt that the intelligence officer had been making special inquiries about Lieutenant Cram, so Stirling sent for him.

'I think it would be wise for you to return to your own identity,' he said to him, 'so as to avoid drawing attention to our plans. Hill will continue to do the work meanwhile.'

During my stay in Oflog VIIIIF I had to have two teeth out, the first since I had had my permanent ones. We had an excellent dentist, who worked in the Harley Street area of London in peacetime, but he had no equipment or facilities for filling or capping teeth, so they had to come out. As they were near the front of my mouth, this was particularly embarrassing until, after my release, I was able to get fixed bridges.

Then one day David Stirling sent for me.

'We're planning a mass escape from the camp, with the purpose of getting as many officers as possible to join up with the Czech partisans across the frontier with Czechoslovakia before the Russians come,' he said. 'We're building ladders to storm the wire with, pretending they're part of the scenery for a play (the Germans encouraged us to occupy ourselves with drama). However, we need to get a small advance party out first, to make contact with people whose addresses we've got hold of, and to prepare the ground

for the mass escapers. We were hoping to get hold of the key of the side gate in the inner wire, but we haven't managed to. Would you be willing to get a party of escapers out that way? We need someone who speaks extremely good German.

'You'd have to dress up as a German corporal and march the rest of the party out dressed as Russian slave workers (parties of these used to be brought in every day to clean etc). If you're caught in German uniform, you'll probably be shot as a spy. What you have to do is wait till they unlock the gate to change the guard, and then persuade the guard commander to let you through with your "Russians" while the gate is open for a minute or so.'

I thought for a minute and then said, 'Can I have a proper chance to escape too?'

David Stirling and his second-in-command looked at each other. Then Stirling said to me, 'All right, we'll bring you in on the team and give you the same chance as the rest, but your prime job will be to keep me informed from outside of what the prospects for the mass group of escapers are. That's what the rest of the advance guard have to do.'

'All right, I'll do that.'

'Another piece of information, which you must guard

with your life...' Stirling seemed rather dubious about telling me this. I wasn't surprised. If the Germans caught me in their uniform and decided to shoot me, they would probably try to extract information from me first. 'You know that there are two Czech electricians working in this camp during the week? They live in Prague and go back there every weekend. They're helping us. You'll be given their address, like the others in the advance party, but you're to use it only in absolute emergency, as we don't want them compromised if we can avoid it.'

The other members of the advance party of escapers turned out to be Major Wadeson, Captain McKenzie and Captain Wood. Two subalterns were also going to join our party for the escape, partly to make the squad of 'Russians' more normal in size, but they were not to have any intelligence duties.

The members of the advance party proper had a briefing meeting that evening. 'When we get clear of the camp,' Major Wadeson explained to me, 'we'll make for the wood south-east of here which you and Cram mapped. There we'll remove our German and Russian uniforms and go on in the civilian clothes we'll be wearing under them. We'll break up into three pairs, Captain McKenzie and I in one, Captain Wood and you in the second, and the other pair in the third. My pair will make for Prague direct, Wood's group for Brno, where he'll go east to Slovakia while you take the train to Prague, and the third pair have their

own escape plans. The less we know about each other's assignments the better. We'll have a rehearsal of our plan as far as the inner gate at 1045 hours tomorrow. The guard changes at 11, and we want to get our timings from the dormitories to Colonel Prior's room on the ground floor, and from there to the gate, absolutely right so that we turn up just as they're opening the gate to change the guard. Captain McKenzie will stay behind to brief you on your assignment, Hill. The rest of us will go. Good night.'

When we were alone, McKenzie said, 'You operate the WO code too, don't you? Well, you can use that to encipher the information I'm going to give you about addresses in Prague. Write them in the cipher on tiny pieces of paper, and hide those in your boots.' He gave me three addresses, the last being that of the electricians, which I was only to use in dire emergency.

David Taylor and my other friends were glad to see me back in my old dormitory that night. Cross had done very well in my place, and the Germans had never for a moment suspected him, even during checks, when they compared his appearance with my photograph.

When I told David and the others about the escape plan, they were as excited as I was - and they knew the importance of security, of course, and of keeping their mouths shut, having helped in a number of earlier escapes

in Italy and Germany.

The next day, we escapers rehearsed the timing of our approach to the gate, were measured for our uniforms and civilian clothes, and provided with German ration cards, food, money and maps. Then we went to see Major Clayton about identity cards.

Major Clayton had spent years mapping the Western Desert between the Wars, and was a wonderful draughtsman. When I went to see him, he looked at me carefully and then said, 'Mm, shouldn't be too difficult.'

He fetched a box out of a hole in the floor and rummaged through its contents. Then he took out a photograph.

'But that doesn't look anything like me!' I protested disappointedly.

'It will, laddie, it will,' he chuckled, and began to work on it with a fine pen and Indian ink, looking up carefully every now and then as if he was painting my portrait.

In next to no time it was finished. He gave a sigh of satisfaction after the intense concentration of the past few minutes and then showed me the result.

'Incredible!' I gasped. 'It's the best photo I've ever had taken of myself - or rather the best photo anyone else has had taken of me.'

'And here's your identity card. You're a Dutch technician who's being sent to Prague to work for the Germans there. I hear you're expert at doing Germanic-looking signatures, so you can sign this one and the others as well.'

I had learnt to write Schriftddeutsch very well at Cambridge, where one got extra marks for being able to write one's composition in it in the Tripos. That was probably why I had got my First in German language but only a 2ⁱ in my other papers.

Then the big day came: we assembled in the room nearest the inner gate, and sentinels were posted to warn us of any approaching Germans. A quarter of an hour before H-hour we put on our civilian clothes (I had a pair of dark blue Royal Navy trousers and a converted Italian army jacket of green cloth), then our German or Russian uniforms over those, and took the little bags in which we would carry razors, soap etc to keep ourselves clean and tidy (in those days, an unkempt, dirty person would at once have aroused suspicion). One of the 'Russians' carried my bag, as it would have been beneath the dignity of a German corporal to have been seen with such a thing when on duty. I had a revolver holster at my side, but it was stuffed with paper only.

'OK, this is it,' one of the sentinels announced.

'Good luck, chaps.'

I took off my glasses and we went out. All the other POWs had been warned not to crowd round or look at us as we went, but I felt extremely conspicuous as I strode forward towards the gate to meet the new guard, with the 'Russians' shambling behind me.

It was all over in a few seconds: I said, 'Just a moment! I've got to get this lot through,' the guard stood aside, and I shepherded my 'lot' out.

Slowly we strolled round the perimeter of the camp between the two wire fences and under the menacing machine-gun towers. At one point I started to walk faster, and the 'Russian' who was the major whispered, 'Slow down, old chap! Look natural!'

A lot of the POWs were exercising in the yard on the other side of the inner wire as usual, but they dutifully avoided staring at us - not that I would have noticed very much, as I was not wearing my glasses.

As we rounded the last corner and were in sight of the outer gate at the far end of the camp, a German officer appeared, marching purposefully towards us. This was one of the hazards we had prepared for. We began to march a bit more smartly, and I gave the officer a proper German salute as he passed. He scarcely deigned to look at us.

Once out of the outer gate, we turned left and made

for a wooded hill about a quarter of a mile from the camp. No one challenged us, or even saw us go. I put my glasses on again, and when we were safely under the trees, we stripped off our uniforms, myself with an intense feeling of relief, and prepared to go off in our pairs. We hid the uniforms as best we could, but did not have time to make a very good job of it, as we feared that the alarm might be given at any moment, and the search for us begun.

I was given my precious string bag, and then we wished each other good luck, split into our pairs and began to move away through the wooded hills.

The weather was fine and we made good progress. It felt wonderful to be free and walking through beautiful woods along a ridge of hills. We heard wood-cutters in the distance several times, but saw no one that day.

After a couple of hours we felt thirsty. The only water was in cart-ruts on the track we were following. 'We've had our typhoid shots,' I said. 'Let's risk it. We've nothing to lose really.' So we crouched down and drank copiously from the muddy pools. It gave me an extraordinary devil-may-care feeling to do something I had always considered very unwise. It also satisfied my thirst.

As the evening came on, the weather changed and it began to drizzle persistently. Both of us put on

the thin waterproof coats we had brought with us and sat down to eat some of our emergency rations of special chocolate. We were both very hungry after all our walking, but did not dare to eat much.

We had been examining our maps as we went along and knew that we were not far from the frontier between Germany and Czechoslovakia. We had been warned that, although there was no wire, it was patrolled, so we decided to spend the night on the German side, and then cross the next morning in daylight, so that we could see what we were doing better.

We put one of our raincoats on the ground, huddled together on it for warmth, and spread the other one over us to try to keep out as much rain as possible. In that way we slept fitfully until dawn, when we washed in a small, very cold stream near by, shaved carefully, had some more of our chocolate and then moved off towards the frontier.

As we approached it we heard the sound of an engine. 'Half-track,' my companion whispered. 'We'd better get down. It's probably a patrol.' We sank into the bushes and waited while the German half-track infantry carrier passed slowly along the path, its crew alert and scanning the woods on both sides of them.

We waited until the sound had died away and then Wood said, 'Come on. Let's get it over.' We looked along the

path in both directions, then crossed rapidly and dashed into the cover of the woods on the other side.

A few hundred yards further we came to the frontier. As we had been told, it consisted of a shallow ditch with red and white posts at intervals along the top. We had a good look in both directions and then hurried across into the continuation of the woods on the opposite side. We were in the German 'Protectorate' of Czechoslovakia now.

At about midday we came to a bare ridge of hills which crossed our southward path, and decided to risk crossing it in daylight, as we could see no one about. When we were near the top, we sat down to eat some of our chocolate, and while we were there we heard cowbells coming from over the brow of the hill. A minute later some cows appeared, closely followed by a girl.

There was nowhere for us to hide, and we thought that precipitate flight would look suspicious, so we decided to brazen it out. The girl had long, blond hair, and wore rough peasant clothes. 'Homespun and home-woven wool, like the Greek peasants,' I thought nostalgically.

The girl noticed us. She seemed uncertain what to do for a time, but then suddenly she began to walk towards us in a determined sort of way.

'Ay, ay!' said Wood. 'What's she up to? You'd better handle this, Leslie.'

We stood up as the girl reached us. She had the most beautiful blue eyes I had seen since Miriam's in Salonica, and she was smiling shyly. I suppose she was about eighteen years old. We smiled back rather uncertainly.

Without a word she held something out to us, and we suddenly realised that she was offering us her lunch - a hunk of coarse brown bread, topped by a lump of smoked bacon fat. While a blush spread over her face, I felt tears beginning to come to my eyes. When I looked at Wood, I realised that the same thing was happening to him.

'Thank you very much,' I said in my best Czech. She looked at us with her blue eyes from a distance of a few feet - close enough to have touched - and I am sure that she realised how moved we were, because as she answered, 'You're welcome,' her own eyes filled with tears before she turned and ran off.

'Well, what do you think of that?' exclaimed Wood after clearing the lump from his throat. 'She obviously recognized that we were on the run from a mile off.'

'Perhaps she's got a father or a brother who's in a concentration camp,' I said, 'so she's particularly sensitive to people who need help.'

We had decided before we left our camp that we would stay in the shelter of the woods until we were well into

Czechoslovakia, but that we would then continue as far as Brno (Bren) on roads, so as to make faster time. Our next target was Blansko, which we hoped to reach that day.

After a few miles, we therefore left the woods which had given us such good shelter the day before, and followed the main road south. We passed through plenty of villages on the way without incident, and were not stopped by any of the Czech police we saw. Obviously we looked to them like normal workers moving from one place to another. There was very little traffic on the roads, and it was clearly much more usual to go everywhere one wanted to on foot.

As evening approached we saw factory smoke in the distance and knew we were coming to the industrial town of Blansko. We debated what to do, and finally decided we should go into the first small inn we saw and have some beer and perhaps a meal. We had food coupons which we had been provided with by our escape organisation before we left the camp, and also German money, which we knew to be legal tender in occupied Czechoslovakia.

The road turned a corner, and there was a small inn. It was on the outskirts of the town, and had a wood coming down to the edge of its garden, offering the possibility of escape into the darkness if danger threatened. We walked in and sat down at a table.

I at once noticed that there were a number of poorly dressed men in the inn, but nobody in uniform. 'So far,

so good,' I thought. Most of the men were playing or watching billiards round a small table and drinking the weak beer (% alcohol) which the Germans allowed their conquered peoples. We were well accustomed to ersatz products from our years as POWs, but the Germans never allowed us beer or any other alcohol, however weak. Our 'coffee' was made from roasted acorns, our 'tea' from Heaven knows what kinds of local dried leaves, and our soap was reputed to be made of sand and the boiled-down fat of murdered Russians.

I went to the bar and said, 'Two beers, please,' in my best Czech. As soon as the men round the billiard table heard my voice, they froze. After a few seconds during which one could truly have heard a pin drop, they had a quiet conference, and when I went back to the table with the two beers, one of the men followed me. I motioned him to sit down, and though my heart was in my boots, smiled at him.

'Good evening,' he said in German, but with a strong Czech accent, which I recognized because the man I had learnt my Czech from at Padula, a Jewish doctor who had managed to escape from Prague when the Germans occupied Czechoslovakia, and join the British army in Palestine, had spoken German like that.

'Good evening,' I answered in Czech. I did not want him to think I was a German spy, and I also wanted him to speak Czech so that I could assess whether it was his mother-tongue, or whether he was a Sudeten German, who

would, of course, be able to speak Czech, but with a telltale accent.

He seemed to catch my intention, because he smiled slyly and continued in Czech: 'Is there anything we can do to help you?' There was no trace of German accent in his voice, but Wood and I had previously agreed to be very careful in making contacts, so I answered in my poor Czech, 'No, thank you. We're Dutch workers who've been transferred to Czechoslovakia by the Germans to work for them, and we're just passing through Blansko.'

The young Czech smiled with indulgent disbelief and again said, 'Well, if you decide we can help you, please tell us.'

He went back to the game of billiards, and I spoke to Wood in a quiet voice: 'He's a Czech all right. No trace of German accent.'

'Well, he might be able to tell us where to find a warm, dry place to sleep, and what we should do to get some hot food without arousing suspicion. And he might be able to get us on a train. There are checks at the stations, and it isn't easy to get through them.'

After we had had a couple of glasses of beer, we felt rather more courageous. It was surprising what even half a percent of alcohol could do. 'Come on,' said Wood. 'Let's risk it. After all, if they're German stooges, all they can

do is recapture us and send us back to camp.'

I had been thinking exactly the same, but also remembered Alastair's beating-up. I got up and went over to the billiard table. Again there was sudden silence, and everyone returned my nervous smile. I beckoned to the man who had spoken to us earlier, and he returned to our table with me.

'We're really escaped British POWs,' I told him. 'This is Captain Wood, and I'm Lieutenant Hill. Our camp's at Moravská Třebova.'

The man's face lit up and he grasped our hands warmly. Then he said a word or two to his companions, and two of them disappeared into the darkness outside.

'We have to be careful,' the young man said. 'There are German spies everywhere.' One of the two men who had gone out returned and winked. At once all the men crowded round to shake hands with us warmly. I told them that we had walked for nearly two days and were tired, cold and hungry, and a discussion began among the men. Then the one who had first approached us, who seemed to be their leader, said, 'You will spend the night in my home and have a good hot meal. But you will have to be very careful, and if the Germans catch you, you must not tell them what house you spent the night in, or that anyone helped you in any way, or they will kill me and my wife and baby. I have already spent a year in a concentration camp in

Germany, and they still have me on their suspected list.'

I quickly interpreted to Wood, and we both assured the young man that our lips would be sealed. Arrangements were then quickly made for convoying us to our new friend's home. Two men went ahead, with orders to signal if they met any Germans, then we followed with our friend and another man, and two others brought up the rear.

We walked through small dark streets without incident. The few men we passed on the way showed no interest in us. Then we reached a big ugly block of flats and ducked in through the front entrance. We went up flights of bare concrete steps and came to a door on one of the landings. Our friend unlocked it and ushered us in.

It was relatively warm inside, and we could hear a female voice. Then our friend's wife came along the passage and stopped in surprise when she saw us. Our friend quickly explained who we were, and we could see joy and fear chasing each other over her face. She was obviously eager to help us, but also terrified of the Gestapo. We shook hands with her, the first woman I had touched for two and a half years, and I assured her in my broken Czech that we would never give her away to the Germans.

In a few minutes we were sitting down to a huge meal of delicious dumplings and bread. Wood ate voraciously, but I have never been able to eat much at a time, especially

after a long period of semi-starvation, so I was soon full.

After we had eaten, we began to talk.

'Stay here in Blansko,' our new friend said. 'You'll be safe here. Then we'll pass you on to the Czech Underground.'

'I'm sorry,' I said, 'but we have our orders. We can't stop here, or all our friends back at the camp will be let down.'

'If you continue your journey on your own, you're likely to blunder into German hands, and then they might torture you and force you to give us away.'

'We won't do that. We'll pretend we've walked the whole way without meeting a soul. And the only suspicious things we've got are ones that were made or bartered for in our camp. Captain Wood has to go to Slovakia, and I to Prague. We have addresses to go to there.'

'All right,' our friend agreed reluctantly, 'but tomorrow we'll buy your tickets to Brno for you.'

'Thank you very much. We'll certainly accept that kind offer.'

'I've been in a concentration camp in Germany, as I told you. They suspected me of being in the Underground, and took me off with a lot of my friends. But then they needed skilled workers for the factories here, so they brought us back. But they gave us a bad time in the camp.'

I don't want to land up there again. I doubt whether they'd let me out another time if they caught me again.'

After talking for an hour or so, we were taken to see the baby, innocently asleep in its cot, and then to our bedroom. We slept in a huge double bed with a duvet over us. I had often slept under one in Germany before, but had never managed to master the art, so was always either much too sweaty, or freezing cold.

The next morning we were escorted to the station in the same way as the evening before, along equally mean little streets, our tickets were bought for us, and we set off for Brno in the dawn workers' train.

The trip went off without incident, and we soon found ourselves on the bleak platform of Brno station. Here we were to split up, Wood going east, and I north-west to Prague. I bought both tickets, gave Wood his, we wished each other good luck, and then went off to our separate platforms.

The train to Prague was crowded during the first part of the journey, and I had to stand in the corridor with a lot of other people. Railway police checked identity cards and tickets on the way, but they showed no interest in me: my fake identity card was obviously a convincing one.

Just after the check, however, a middle-aged peasant

woman who was standing near me in the corridor sidled nearer.

'Get out with me at the next station,' she whispered in Czech, 'and we'll help you. We'll get you to the Czech Underground.'

I realised that, unlike the railway police, she had at once recognised me as a fugitive.

'Thank you very much,' I answered, 'but I have to go to Prague.' It was only later that I realised that that was my second chance of a real escape gone.

We had to change trains about halfway to Prague, and after that I managed to get a seat in the corner of a compartment which was otherwise occupied by German soldiers. I remembered with wry amusement my previous equally illicit journey from Salonica to Serrai, the only British person in a carriage full of Greek reservists. The German soldiers on this journey laughed, joked and smoked smelly wartime cigarettes all the time, but did not bother me, apart from occasional curious or contemptuous glances in my direction to see whether I understood their coarse jokes.

David Stirling had warned me that Prague Station was a particularly dangerous spot, since the check at the barrier as one left the station was very thorough. He had advised me to go down to the public baths and have a bath before going through the barrier, so that I could choose a moment when there were not many passengers going

through and the inspectors were slack. I did this, and enjoyed a really hot bath, but with the nasty, abrasive soap which the Germans produced in wartime (the kind that was supposed to be made of Russian POW fat).

When I finally emerged from the underground bath establishment and went through the barrier, the two officials on guard there examined my identity card carefully, and then waved me through without comment.

David Stirling had also told me that there was a Bierkeller across the square from the station which would be a good place to go to get my bearings, decode the addresses I had been given, and prepare for my next step. I therefore went to this place, ordered a large glass of beer, took out the narrow strip of crumpled paper on which I had written the coded addresses, and began to decode them. I did not write anything down, but just carried the details in my head.

When it began to grow dark, I left the Bierkeller and asked a passer-by the way to the first street I intended to visit. The man stopped dead, looked at me with the greatest apprehension in his face, and then walked on quickly without answering.

'Good Heavens!' I thought. 'Am I so clearly a dangerous character?' I did not know whether my accent in speaking Czech was obviously English, or obviously German - or perhaps

obviously Jewish, since my teacher at Padula had been a Jew! If it was German, the man might have been afraid of getting involved with an agent provocateur employed by the Gestapo to smell out members of the Underground posing as allies.

I tried again, and got the same frightened response, but this time the woman I had approached pointed along one of the main streets leading out of the square. I had noticed that trams ran along this street, so I boarded one and asked the conductress to drop me as near the street I was looking for as possible.

Her response was an angry one: she punched me a ticket without saying a word, and I was still on the tram when it reached the terminus. My attempts to find out from the conductress where I should have got off were met with nothing but scorn and fury, so I wearily got out in the darkness and decided to find somewhere safe to sleep. There was a curfew from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. in Prague, and I knew it would be dangerous to be out in it.

I set out in the direction away from the centre of the city, my British army boots ringing on the cobbled road, between rows of poor-looking workers' houses. After a time I found myself surrounded by large factories, working away at full pressure despite the late hour, with great red furnaces visible through some of the windows. At last I came to a small patch of trees and grass outside one factory, crawled into a ditch under the branches of a

tree, wrapped myself in my thin raincoat and tried to sleep, despite the roar of the factory, which went on without stop all night.

I did manage to get some fitful snatches of sleep, but was up again at dawn to find somewhere to wash and shave. By getting right out beyond the belt of factories I managed to find a small stream in a wood, where I washed, shaved and ate some of my chocolate. By now I was feeling very tired, hungry and cold.

By retracing my steps, I was able to find the tram terminus again, and I took an early tram back to the centre of the town. There I began to search for the address I had been looking for the night before. I had been given the district of Prague in which it was supposed to be situated, so I first found that. All the street names had the name of the district on them as well, which was a help. Then I asked people in the district the way to the street I wanted. None had ever heard of it. I therefore began a systematic search of the whole district. I found no street of the name I had been given.

At lunch time I tried my second string: I had been given the name and address of a restaurant, and had been told to go there, ask for the head waiter, and order [^]crème de menthe liqueur with my soup. This would be a secret password, and he would then help me.

I went to the square I had been told to go to, but

did not find a restaurant of the name I had been given there. However, there was a restaurant with another name close by, and I thought that perhaps the person who had given our escape organisation the name had made a mistake, and that he had meant this one. By now I was so tired that I was rather light-headed and willing to take gambles which I would not have taken under normal circumstances.

The restaurant turned out to be one of the best in Prague, and I looked quite out of place, in my Italian soldier's jacket and British army boots, among the senior German officers, lounge-suited businessmen, and officials having their expenses-paid lunches. The waiters wore black jackets and ties, and the head waiter looked as resplendent as in a good London restaurant. It was therefore a daunting prospect to sit at a table, call him over and order a creme de menthe. However, I did it, and the head waiter neither behaved like a character in a Bateman cartoon, nor called the police, nor, alas, showed any sign that the order was a password. I had a meagre lunch in exchange for some of my precious food coupons and German money, and then went out into the square again, no nearer making contact with anyone I was supposed to.

By now what I needed more than anything else was a good sleep to clear my head so that I could think what to do next. I still had the address of the Czech electricians from the camp, but a sixth sense kept telling me that, as

all the rest of my information had proved wrong, this last address might prove mortally dangerous to me and my mission.

I got on a tram and tried to sleep on that, but I kept on having delusions, as I dozed off, that other passengers were speaking to me, and I was afraid I might suddenly wake up and answer in English. I therefore went to a cinema, and managed to sleep in its warmth for a couple of hours, but only fitfully.

As dusk fell, I realised I would have to get out of the city again before the curfew. This time I took a tram in the opposite direction from the night before, walked for a mile or so from the terminus and found an unoccupied house with a convenient verandah. I seemed to be in a middle-class suburb here. The house had a fence round it which shielded me from view from the road, so I curled up under my raincoat and went to sleep on the verandah at once.

When I woke, I had a strange urgent feeling that it was almost dawn and that I had to get up and go back into town again to continue my search. I hurried to the tram terminus, got on a tram that was waiting there and went to the centre of the city again.

Unfortunately, however, it was the last tram that night, not the first one the next morning, and I suddenly found myself - now quite clear-headed after my short sleep - in the middle of the silent city, with the curfew on. I clattered along the cobbled pavements, heading out again

as fast as I could, when a patrol of Czech police came round the corner.

'Halt!' cried the sergeant. 'Where are you going? Don't you know there's a curfew?'

'Yes,' I answered in German. 'I'm sorry. I'm a Dutch worker, and I've been transferred here. My train was late, and I'm looking for a hotel.'

'Papers, please,' the sergeant said.

He examined my fake identity card and then gave it back to me. 'There's a hotel round the next corner,' he said. 'I should hurry up and get there if I was you.'

I thanked him and set off in the direction he had indicated, but as soon as I was out of sight of the patrol, I changed direction, aiming to get out of the city again.

I had not gone more than a few hundred yards when I ran into the same patrol again. We had taken different circuitous routes to the same point. This time the sergeant was annoyed.

'I'm very sorry,' I said. 'I lost my way in the dark. Where was that hotel again?'

The patrol took me there, watched me register, and then the sergeant took my identity card. 'We'll check this and give it back to you in the morning,' he said. 'Good night.'

'Good night,' I answered faintly, and went up to my bedroom. Of course, I expected to hear a hammering on my door at any moment, so I destroyed my maps, codes and food coupons, keeping only my money, to pay the hotel in the morning if I had not been arrested meanwhile. I was so tired that I slept until rather late the next morning.

I awoke to find with surprise that I was still a free man in my little room in the hotel. I washed and shaved in warm water for the first time for some days and went down to breakfast, which was coupon-free and extremely frugal, acorn coffee and a little black bread. Then I went to the reception desk, paid my modest bill, and collected my identity card, which had been returned by the police meanwhile.

By now, however, I had decided that it would be safer to get out of Prague, so I set out on foot in the direction of Kutna Hora, to the east of the city. I had vague ideas of trying to contact the Czech Underground and get a message to David Stirling through them, telling him that the main body of escapers could not rely on the information that had been collected, and giving him the position of the inn outside Blansko and that of the village the old woman had wanted me to accompany her to. Then, I thought, I would have done my duty, and could try to get to Switzerland or Spain by contacting the French deportees who worked on the railways, and getting myself sealed into a truck going to unoccupied France.

However, I soon discovered that the people of Bohemia (the western part of Czechoslovakia, in which Prague lies) were not at all friendly or helpful, quite unlike the inhabitants of Moravia (the area round Blansko), who had been so eager to help. I approached several people, both in the street and by knocking at the doors of houses, but everywhere I was turned away with fear and trembling, although I was not actually betrayed to the Germans. It was not till later that I learnt that Heydrich, the German Governor of Czechoslovakia, had been killed by British agents, and that the Germans had therefore instituted a reign of terror, including the notorious Lidice massacre.

I walked all that day, and slept in a wood that night. It was very cold. The next day I was just as tired, hungry and light-headed as I had been before my night in the hotel. I decided that I had to get back to our camp to warn David myself of the situation in Prague, and the much better opportunities in Moravia, and try my luck again in the mass escape. It was a heartrending decision to have to make after the ease with which I had managed to move about, both in the towns and in the countryside, but my complete inability to contact the Underground in Bohemia, and my poor physical and mental state after days with insufficient sleep and food, did not leave me much choice if I was to do my job of warning David Stirling.

Before I reached Kutna Hora, which was at about midday,

I stood on a small bridge over a stream and dropped my German coins into it. I also tore my identity card up and scattered the pieces on the water. On entering Kutna Hora I passed an SS headquarters, which I carefully avoided, remembering how the SS had treated Alastair Cram, and finally walked into the Czech Police Headquarters.

'I'm an escaped British POW,' I said to the surprised Czech police sergeant at the charge desk, 'and I've come to give myself up. I'm footsore, hungry, cold and tired (all of which were true - I had big blisters on both my feet), and I've walked all the way from Moravska Trebova and can't go any further.'

The Czech police were extremely kind and friendly. At first they did not really want to know anything about me. In fact, I got the impression that they were thinking of helping me to continue my escape. But then a German police officer, who was obviously attached to the HQ to keep an eye on the Czechs there, came in, and the game was up. However, the Czech policemen managed to get permission from this sour-looking German creature to give me a really good hot meal, for which I was extremely grateful (I had told them I had not eaten for five days, which was, of course, not strictly true).

After an hour, I was told that I was to be taken to another town, Kolin, which was some miles away. I supposed that that was where I would be taken back to

Oflag VIIIF from. One of the kindly Czech policemen who had fed me was to accompany me.

In the train I suddenly remembered, to my dismay, that, although I had thrown all my coins away, I had failed to dispose of my German banknotes. I did not want to have to explain where I had got them to the Germans, so I managed to get them out of my pocket, screw them into a ball and throw them under my seat without being seen. I have often wondered who found them. Some deserving Czech patriot, I hope.

When we reached Kolin, the policeman took me to a forbidding grey building which was the local prison. 'You'll be all right here,' he told me with a reassuring smile. 'The Czech prison guards will treat you well, and you'll soon be back in your POW camp with your friends.'

We climbed the stairs, floor after floor, and came to the top. There was a big steel grille across the entrance to that floor, and the word GESTAPO above it. 'Look,' I said to my escort, my heart in my boots.

'Don't worry,' he said with another charming smile, and it occurred to me that he had probably been stringing me along the whole time to keep me quiet on the trip.

The cheerful policeman took me into a guardroom and handed me over to three guards in SS uniform, whom I was to get to know very well during the following six weeks.

The head guard was short, brisk in manner and humane, though strict. His deputy was a tall, thin, bad-tempered, bullet-headed man, most people's idea of the typical Prussian bully boy. The third was rather plump, good-tempered and always smiling. I quickly realised that they were Sudeten Germans from their accent.

A few minutes after my arrival, the local Gestapo chief arrived too, beaming all over his plump red face at the news that he had a British officer in his prison. He was hot and puffing after hurrying up the stairs. When he arrived, my search and interrogation began.

'How did you get out of your camp?' the Gestapo man began.

'I climbed the wire at night,' I answered, putting on an execrable German accent and pretending to be a stupid, harmless idiot.

'And why did you give yourself up?'

'Because I walked the whole way from Mährisch Trübau, and I was cold, hungry, tired and had blistered feet.' I took off my boots and socks and then said, 'Could I please have a doctor to treat them?'

I could see that the Gestapo chief was frankly incredulous about my version of my escape from the camp, but that he accepted the rest of my story quite happily.

'Why didn't you ask for help from the Czechs?' he asked slyly.

'I kept right away from the people,' I answered. 'They'd have been afraid to help me even if they'd wanted to, wouldn't they?'

He beamed all over his fat red little face and answered, 'Yes, you're quite right. Most of the Czechs are very happy under our strict but just rule. They have work and bread. And those who are not happy dare not do anything about it.' He smirked in a self-satisfied way.

'Why are you not wearing your identification tags?' he asked at last. 'Do you realise that there is nothing on you that can prove that you are really an escaped British prisoner of war? In fact, I could have you shot as a spy!' He smiled triumphantly.

'Well,' I answered, looking as stupid as I could, 'I took off my tags to have my hot shower before I left the camp, and I forgot to put them on again - but look, I'm wearing British boots!' I showed them to him with a look of simulated triumph in my eyes.

He laughed scornfully and said, 'We'll check on your story. Meanwhile, you'll stay with us.'

The chief jailer then took my glasses, my belt and my boots away and led me to the last cell but one on that floor. He unlocked the door after sliding a steel cover

off a spyhole in it and looking through. He told me to go in, and as the door opened, five men in scruffy clothes stood to attention in the cell, and one of them said, 'Zelle 5, fünf Mann!' ('Cell No. 5, five men!') I went in.

The jailer went out, locking the door again, and the five crowded round me and began asking me questions. I knew that any of them might be stool-pigeons, so I did not tell them anything I did not want the Germans to know. They asked me for news about the war, but I told them only what I had read in the German papers.

The five were political prisoners, taken by the Gestapo and held in this prison before being sent to Prague for interrogation, or to concentration camps in Germany. They were naturally frightened and uncertain of their fate. Some had already been in concentration camps before.

There were six paliasses on the floor of the cell, which was only built to accommodate two prisoners, and there was a lavatory and wash-basin in one corner. Anyone who wanted to relieve himself had to do it in public.

Night came, and we bedded down. Then began a hammering on the pipes of the wash-basins throughout the prison (the lower floors were ordinary civil ones) which mystified me until I realized that the prisoners were communicating in code. Two or three times the bad-tempered SS man opened

the door and shouted to us to stop the noise, but there was really nothing he could do about it, because as soon as the door rattled, the banging in our cell stopped. I presume that information of my arrival in the prison was passed on in this way.

The next morning, we were each brought a bowl of ersatz coffee made from roasted acorns, and a small hunk of dry bread with caraway seeds in it. These seeds were typical of Eastern Europe, and I had loved them ever since my days at Kniephof. But even if I had not liked caraway, I would have eaten the bread voraciously.

A few minutes later, the head guard came in and told me to follow him. 'Well, this is it,' I thought, but he only took me to the next cell, the last in the corridor. It was empty except for a bed and the inevitable lavatory and wash-basin.

'We've had orders from higher up to keep you away from the others,' the SS man said, and left me alone in the cell.

So began two weeks of solitary. I was not allowed to have anything to read, I was not allowed to lie down during the day, there was nothing to look at, as there was only one small, heavily barred window high up in one wall, I had to clean the place myself, including the lavatory, once a day, and I had to stand at attention and say, 'Zelle 6, ein Mann' whenever any of the guards

came in. I protested about the cleaning and standing at attention, saying that as a British officer I should not have to do these things, but I was roughly told that, as a Gestapo prisoner, I had no rights. Realizing that, if I continued my pretence of being a harmless, rather stupid fellow, there would be more chance of my getting back to Oflag VIIIIF, I did not make an issue of these things.

The light in the cell would be put on from time to time during the night, from outside, and an eye would appear at the spy-hole, checking that I was not trying to dig my way out.

Once a week, I could hear the other prisoners being taken out into an exercise yard, cell by cell, to walk round for half an hour, but I was not included. Once a week, too, they were taken down to the ground floor for a hot shower, and this I was included in, although I had to go alone. All prisoners were supposed to provide their own soap, but as mine soon ran out, and I had no money to buy more, I was given a piece by one of the guards. During my weekly shower period, I was also given back my razor so as to have a shave.

Food was brought three times a day by one of the prisoners, a tall, gaunt Czech who was obviously a 'trusty'. We soon became very friendly. He would give me extra pieces of bread and extra large helpings of the

thin soup which, with the bread, constituted our midday meal (the other two were 'coffee' and a little more of the coarse bread).

While he was giving me my food, this man and I managed to talk briefly. 'My name's Jarka - Jarka Jelinek (Jarka is short for Jaroslav). And my address is...' He gave me an address. 'Here's a bit of pencil and some paper.' 'I'd better not let the guards find your address on me,' I answered. 'I'll write it secretly.'

'That's a good idea. And can I have your name and address? We can write to each other after the war.'

'If we both survive,' I thought grimly. But I gave him my name and the address of the Guaranty Trust Company in London, and scratched his address in cypher on the side of one of my boot heels.

We did in fact correspond after the war until his tragic death, which was a delayed result of privations and tortures in Nazi concentration camps. I still have a photo of him, and letters, including one from his sister describing his last months in hospital. He was one of the best. While I was in the gaol in Kolin, Jaroslav was always cheerful and happy to see me. He did more to keep up my morale than anyone else in that grim place.

The junior of the SS guards was also a help. He continued smiling and cheerful, often winking when he came into my

cell and telling me that everything would be all right. I heard later from Jaroslav that this guard was in fact a member of the Underground, and had passed on information about my whereabouts soon after I arrived.

Then suddenly one day the door opened, and the senior guard came in, closely followed by Jarka carrying a second bed. They both left without a word, and a few moments later the senior guard returned, and ushered in a short, stocky man dressed in British battledress, and with one arm out of the sleeve and under the jacket. This man was clearly as surprised to see me as I was to see him. Both of us at once suspected that the other was a stool-pigeon, put there to get information about the other. We were therefore very wary at first. I told the newcomer my name, rank and POW camp, and he told me that he was Captain James McNair of the SAS, also from Oflag VIIIF. We had never met each other there, so could not confirm each other's identity in that way.

However, we gradually began testing each other by exchanging unimportant information about the camp until we were both satisfied of each other's bona fides. Then we got down to serious talk, one of us whistling while the other talked, in case the cell was bugged.

'The two other lieutenants who escaped with you were recaptured the same day,' he told me, 'and then the Germans held a big roll-call which went on for several

hours. Although the escape organisation tried to confuse them by swopping people about, by the evening they knew exactly who was missing.

'Then a few days later Captain Wood was recaptured too. He walked into a checkpoint in the dark on the frontier between Moravia and Slovakia.

'Soon after that it became clear that the Germans were in a great flap, and our SBO (Captain Micklethwait, DSO and two bars, of the Royal Navy) was notified that the camp was to move in 24 hours' time. Meanwhile German security precautions were doubled.'

'Any news of the Czech electricians who worked in the camp?' I said.

'Funny you should ask: they disappeared a few days after the escape was discovered. Of course, the news of the move caused a great flurry in the Escape Organisation, which I was in. Alastair Cram hid in the roof of the main building and was left behind. The Germans thought he'd escaped. (I later heard that he had managed to get away after the building was evacuated, but that he was recaptured at the barrier at Prague station. He managed to get rid of his incriminating materials by pretending he was going to be sick, going into the lavatory and flushing them down it. The Germans had a horror of being contaminated by vomit). Others prepared to escape from the train on the way to the new camp.

'I managed to break the lock on the door of the cattle-truck we were travelling in and jumped while the train was moving fast. I'd been trained for that sort of thing in the SAS, of course, but in spite of that I fell awkwardly and hurt this arm rather badly.

'As I was wounded and in battledress, I didn't last long. The German doctor who came to clean and bandage my arm here took a sadistic pleasure in hurting me. He was one of those SS bastards.'

We spent the next three weeks in that cell together. James suffered from asthma, which was no doubt aggravated by the emotional stress of confinement in such close quarters and by the straw in our paliasses. His agonising attempts to breathe were very distressing, and several nights I had to call the guard to try to help. In the end the doctor prescribed some suppositories, which worked quite well.

Then one day the head gaoler came in. 'Orders have arrived for you to be transferred to the main Gestapo gaol in Prague,' he said to McNair. 'You will come with me now.'

'And what about me?' I asked indignantly. 'I've been here longer than he has.'

'I know, but I've had no orders about you yet.'

James left, and a few days later I was allowed to join the half-hour exercise in the yard with the inmates

of the next-door cell. We went round and round in the fresh air, and I could see the green copper dome of a church over the high wall at one end of the yard. It was wonderful.

One of the other prisoners walking around with me was an escaped Russian POW, wearing the green uniform that the Germans dressed their Russian captives in. The others were clearly all Czechs.

During the next weeks I was visited several times by curious SS men from the neighbouring garrison, who had come to gloat over a British prisoner.

'The Second Front's going to start any day now,' one of these men said to me (it was the second half of May 1944), 'and we're going to throw you and the Yankees back into the sea before you manage to get off the beaches.'

I smiled diplomatically and answered, 'Well, we'll see.'

With James's departure I had nothing to occupy me except my thoughts. I was not allowed to sleep during the day. I tried making up crossword puzzles in my head, but it was difficult to remember the other words while one was working on a new one. I tried various children's games, like thinking of animals, towns, insects etc beginning with A, B, C etc right through to Z. I tried tracing routes in great detail, e.g the one from my college at Cambridge to the boathouse. I tried remembering poems

I had learnt by heart at various periods of my life. And I tried lots of other ways of keeping my brain active and sane.

After I had been in that cell five weeks, I said to the head guard one day, 'You know, I think I'm beginning to go mad, sitting in here with nothing to do or look at day after day. Couldn't I at least have a book to look at?'

He was sympathetic. 'I'll see what I can find,' he said. He went out and came back with two small paperbacks in German. One was a school text dealing with symbiosis, I remember.

'I'm just as eager to get you out of here as you are to go,' the head guard said to me. 'The other cells are absolutely bursting. I need this cell to put some of the other prisoners in. I've been pestering Prague for a decision about you, but they haven't said anything yet.'

I devoured the little books eagerly, learning more about the ways of pilot fish, sharks, egrets and rhinoceroses than I had ever known before.

I had always been shortsighted, but those six weeks in a small cell without my glasses caused my sight to deteriorate noticeably, and ever since, it has been possible to see the whites of my eyes round the irises when my eyes are open normally.

A few days later the head guard came in with my glasses, boots and belt. 'Put these on,' he said. 'You're leaving.'

Pleasure and fear alternated rapidly in my brain. 'Where am I going?' I said.

'I don't know,' he said. 'A policeman has come to collect you.' I put the glasses, boots and belt on, noticing at once that the former did not help my eyes as much as they used to, and that I had to tighten the belt a couple of notches further than when I had left Oflag VIIIF. Then I went to the guardroom. There was a junior police officer there in the green uniform of the civil police. So far so good.

'I have orders to take you to Brunswick,' he said. 'I also have orders to shoot you if you try to escape.'

'Don't worry,' I answered. 'I'm too weak and starved to try that.' Brunswick meant nothing to me.

The policeman laughed goodnaturedly and we left. I was very glad to be out of that prison at last, and in the open streets.

The journey was in an ordinary third-class compartment in a train. The other passengers looked at the policeman and his prisoner curiously, but said nothing.

The policeman proved to be a friendly, kind-hearted

man. He bought me bread and sausage and weak beer at the railway station where we changed trains in the middle of the night, and chatted pleasantly. In the lavatory in the station, I was intrigued to see slot-machines which dispensed contraceptives. 'How thorough and Germanic!' I thought admiringly.

Chapter 16: Oflag 79, Brunswick

We reached Brunswick after a 24-hour journey, during which I saw badly bombed cities, slave workers busy on the railway under their SS guards, and soldiers everywhere.

We got to Brunswick on the 6th of June, and when my guard asked the stationmaster the way to Oflag 79, I realized that I was in fact going to a POW camp and not to another gaol. The stationmaster began talking excitedly to the policeman, but the latter at once hushed him up, pointed to me, and took him aside. They whispered together for a few minutes, and then the policeman came back and escorted me to Oflag 79 (it was only later that I realized that the policeman and the stationmaster must have been whispering about D Day).

At the camp, I was taken in to see the Deputy Commandant and the Security Officer, whom I recognized at once. I had come to the camp I had been in before I had escaped, only now it had been moved to a spot about a mile from Brunswick in the centre of Germany, and had had its name changed.

The German officers interrogated me in the presence of the policeman. 'How did you escape?' asked the fat, red-faced Deputy Commandant.

I repeated my story about climbing the wire.

The Security Officer smiled nastily and said, 'Actually, we know how you escaped. You waited until the side gate

was open for the changing of the guard, and then one of you, dressed as a German, marched the rest, dressed as Russians, out. The German corporal who let you through was severely beaten up and put in prison.'

I was still trying to speak German with a bad accent and bad grammar, as I did not want the officers to suspect that it was I who had dressed up as the German, but now the police officer spoilt everything by saying, 'He speaks better German than I do!', which was true, because he spoke with a strong Sudeten German accent. Unfortunately, I had relaxed my guard in his company on the train, and spoken my so-called 'Bühnendeutsch', which was supposed to be the best variety.

I thought the Deputy Commandant was going to return me to the camp at once, pending a decision about my punishment for escaping and possessing civilian clothes, but the Security Officer now whispered into his ear. I heard what he said: 'We'd better not let them know in the camp that he's back until we hear from the High Command.' The Deputy Commandant, who was basically a kindly man of the old school, was not very happy about this, but Security Officers had connections with the SS, and therefore what they said went.

'I sentence you to 10 days in cells for escaping and having civilian clothes,' the Deputy Commandant said to me.

'But I've already done six weeks in cells!' I protested.

'We have no cognizance of that,' he answered. 'You were outside the jurisdiction of the German Army. In fact, you are very lucky to be back.' (It was not until I got back to the camp that I realised how lucky I had been: the big escape from the RAF camp had taken place at about the same time as ours, and over 40 of the escapers had been shot on Hitler's orders).

I was at once taken to a German Air Force prison which was situated near the outer gates of Oflag 79 and put in a cell there on my own.

At first I was given German officers' food from their mess, which was incredibly good compared with what I had lived on for the past six weeks, but then the camp was informed of my return, and food was sent in from the Oflag 79 mess, together with my battledress. Also I was given letters and a book which had arrived for me during my absence. It was a Czech grammar, which I had asked for through the Red Cross when I got to Moravska Trebova. The Security Officer brought it to me personally, and grinned sardonically as he handed it over. 'A bit too late, eh?' he said.

The main trouble in the Luftwaffe gaol was that there was no lavatory in the cell, so whenever I wanted to go, I had to bang on my door and call, 'Abort!' The gaolers, who were ramrod Luftwaffe policemen, were thoroughly surly and unaccommodating, and took a sadistic delight in keeping

me waiting. I sometimes had a pang of nostalgia for my Kolin cell with its private lavatory.

I was not allowed to communicate with the other prisoners, who were all Luftwaffe men and clearly completely disaffected and anti-Nazi. The first morning, when one of them was scrubbing the corridor outside my cell, he whistled first 'God save the King', and then the 'Marseillaise'. I thought this was merely to show sympathy with the Allies, but I realized later that he was trying to convey to me the fact that we had landed in France at last.

Almost every night there was an air-raid warning, and sometimes this happened during the day too. Whenever the siren went, the prisoners were quickly ushered into a cellar, all except me. Several times there were raids very close to us. Brunswick was heavily bombed, and there was an underground aero-engine factory a quarter of a mile from us, and a Luftwaffe aerodrome half a mile away on the other side. I made a point of not showing the slightest concern at being left in my cell during these raids.

When my ten days were up, I was taken in to Oflag 79. Before being allowed to see any of my friends, I was interrogated by David Stirling and his Number Two, who also brought me up to date with all the news I had missed while away. The ashes of Major Wadeson and Captain McKenzie had been sent back to the camp, with the 'information' that they had been recaptured and then shot while trying to

escape again. I passed on the news that I had seen Captain McNair, and that I had reason to believe that he was in Prague Gestapo gaol. This information was passed to the German Commandant of Oflag 79, who obviously made forceful representations to the High Command, because a few days later James arrived, none the worse for this time in Prague.

Alastair Cram was back too, and I went to see him in his room. He told me how he had been recaptured, and I congratulated him on getting rid of his codes etc so cleverly. 'That was quick-witted of you,' I said. 'But what bad luck to be caught again.'

After the war, Alastair worked with the British War Crimes Executive for some time, investigating, among other things, the murder of Wadeson and McKenzie, about whom he wrote to me officially in case I had any clues to how they had perished, which I unfortunately had not. Later he was a magistrate in Kenya during the Mau Mau troubles, and after that Chief Justice in Malawi, where I met him in 1966. Many years later I wrote to him to find out whether the investigation into the fate of Wadeson and McKenzie had produced any results, and he answered: 'I recollect that I heard that the two were taken out by guards for alleged contact with partisans and shot at the side of the road. As British War Crimes jurisdiction did not extend ...into the Russian zone and we were not permitted to investigate there, inquiries came to a dead end and, as far as I know, the Russians either did not bother

or failed to find out anything or any culprits.'

David Stirling, his Second in Command and I speculated on why I had not been able to find the addresses we had been given in Prague, and on whether Major Wadeson and Captain McKenzie might perhaps have fallen into a trap at the electrician's home, with or without the electricians' connivance. Anyway, I felt doubly lucky to be still alive.

Years later, while researching in the Public Records Office at Kew, I discovered that it was not only Alastair Cram that had got into the roof at Oflag VIIIF and thus escaped. Another officer did this, and managed to make contact with the Czech Underground and stay with them until the end of the war. I have often wondered whether he got the information on where to contact them from Captain Wood.

After that there were no more escapes from our camp. The German army authorities warned us that they were powerless to protect us from the Gestapo and SS once we were out of their hands, and even sent a senior staff officer from the High Command to reside at the camp and be responsible for protecting us. He was a retired Luftwaffe colonel, reemployed for this task.

A friend of mine, Captain Herbert Buck, MC, and I were detailed off by David Stirling to cut our way out of the camp and be its eyes and ears in case of danger from the SS, but luckily we never had to put this hazardous plan into operation. We just sat and waited for the Allies

to relieve us, which they did on a memorable morning in April 1945.

Herbert Buck spoke quite good German, and had led a raid on Tobruk when it was in German hands. He had dressed as a German, and taken a truckful of German refugees from Hitler, dressed as captured Allied POWS, through the German defences. He had been lucky to get out of his German uniform before he was captured. We met in London and his home at Yateley in Hampshire a number of times after our release, but, tragically he was killed in an air crash on his way back to India to rejoin his regiment (he was a regular officer in the Indian Army) shortly after he married and his repatriation leave finished.

Some weeks after my return from the Gestapo gaol, one of my friends, who had escaped during the rail journey from Mährisch Trübau to Brunswick, but had been recaptured, was taken off for trial in a civil court on charges of sabotage, because he had got out of his cattle truck by breaking some floorboards. He was sentenced to a term of imprisonment in a civil gaol, but was released in due course by the advancing Allied forces.

Another event was the sudden removal to Colditz, the high security POW camp for escapers and prominent people, of David Stirling and the other two top people of our escape organisation. I was given the job of drafting the coded letter to the War Office informing them of this event, in case they were liquidated on the way.

After my return to the camp, I was put in a room with 11 other officers, most of whom were old friends, chief of them David Taylor. I was put on medical Red Cross parcels for a few weeks because of the weight I had lost while on the run and in the Gestapo gaol. Most of the people in my room formed a syndicate for pooling rations and Red Cross parcels, and took turns to prepare meals, but I was too busy studying, meditating and doing intelligence work to participate. Also, I was saving out of my Red Cross parcels in case Herbert Buck and I had to live without food for some time outside the camp if an SS threat materialised.

The syndicate's cooking was done in the cellars we used as air-raid shelters, and the fuel was wood, obtained by breaking up beams taken out of the attic of the next barrack building in our camp. Once, in spite of the fact that I did not participate in the syndicate, I was made to go and help bring a beam in and break it up - presumably so that I would be equally guilty if the Germans found out. It was an unwise thing to do, as the camp might have desperate need of my services in case of an SS threat. However, I was not allowed to mention this task to anyone, so had to take the risk.

The flow of Red Cross parcels soon diminished, and finally we had none for our last seven months of imprisonment, the Germans saying that this was due to the heavy Allied bombing of the railway network. As we ran out of Red Cross parcels, cigarettes became a great problem to the many

smokers in the camp. Some took to making their own out of dried leaves of various kinds, rolling them in newspaper. Others bought non-smokers' saved-up rations for as much as five pounds a cigarette, which was a very big sum in those days. The price was paid by cheques on British banks, which could, of course, only be cashed after our release. Some of the Sikhs, being non-smokers by religion, did good business this way. Whether they ever got their money after our release I do not know.

I was a non-smoker, but never sold a single cigarette. I hoarded mine under my bed, with oatmeal, sugar etc, in case I had to use them for bribery and barter if I had to break out with Herbert Buck.

I was quite friendly with a couple of Greek officers who had been caught in the Greek mountains as guerrillas and unaccountably sent to us instead of being summarily shot. One of these was a heavy smoker, and one day he came to me and asked to borrow 50 cigarettes till the following week. He assured me he would be able to pay me back punctually, but of course he did not. When I told him that I really must have the cigarettes back because I needed them for security purposes, he threatened to go to the Germans and reveal the existence of our secret radios, but I warned him that if he did this, reprisals would undoubtedly be taken on his family in Greece, and in due course on him. I reminded him that the Greeks could be extremely unpleasant about these

things, and he agreed. In the end, he paid me back by buying 50 cigarettes from a Sikh.

The last year or so in captivity was a nervy time, because we were discouraged by our own authorities from escaping, we knew that the SS and other Nazi fanatics might decide to liquidate us before our release, and we were starving. Unlike camps for other ranks, we could not get out to supplement our rations by scrounging or barter while on work parties. We lived mostly on turnips, and I decided that they gave so little nutriment, and used up so much energy to digest, that it was better to drink the soup they were in and give away the actual turnips. Doctors have since told me I was wrong.

To find peace of mind, I began to go in for meditation. We had quite a lot of Indians in our camp, some of whom I gave English lessons to. From some of them I learnt a technique of meditation. I used to go into an attic, sit cross-legged, and roll myself up mentally, first the extremities, then the torso, then up to the neck and into the front part of my brain, until I was quite unconscious of my body, and felt that "I" was only a consciousness with no physical dimensions, floating in a void, with no emotional or mental attachments. I could maintain this, with perfect serenity of mind, for long periods, and the benefits carried over into my daily life too, so that I no longer worried about air raids or the dangers that might face me if the SS threat materialised.

What this meditation taught me was that one does not need to have a secret word to repeat to oneself in order to keep one's mind perfectly blank - in fact the repetition of such a word interferes with this process; nor does one need the help of a 'guru'; nor does one need to believe in anything or anyone outside oneself: one can simply 'lift oneself up by one's own bootstraps'. I have found this ever since, and it has made me particularly suspicious and scornful of self-appointed 'gurus' who live in great luxury off the donations of poor shop-girls and typists. Two and a half years in India many years later confirmed this, and I was particularly glad to see that, although educated Indians respected the genuinely religious fakir who lived in perfect poverty, they despised the get-rich-quick faker as much as I did.

We often saw enormous formations of American planes flying over our camp on their way to bomb Berlin or Hanover. The Americans came over by day, and the RAF by night. There were shelters we could go down to when the hand-operated siren at the nearby underground aero-engine factory went, and we then used to hear the thud of heavy bombs quite near. I did not bother to go down.

Then one day, as I was crossing from our barrack building to the next one to go to the camp library while planes were approaching, the siren began. I sauntered on, but was surprised to see a marker fall next to me. Such

markers were dropped by the pathfinder aircraft to guide the less experienced other members of a formation on to a target.

I speeded up my walk, but before I reached the other building, I heard the familiar whistle of descending bombs, and then the deafening crash of explosions. After a quick inner consultation, I decided that self-preservation was better than pride, and ran for it.

Several of our buildings were hit, including the cook-house, and some officers killed. For several days after, we had no hot food, and were issued with small pieces of raw meat to cook as best we could. I made kebabs out of mine, roasted them over scraps of wood from the bombed buildings, and enjoyed them thoroughly. They reminded me of Greece. It was weeks before we had any hot water for showers or washing clothes, and we had to dig a long trench in the camp grounds as a latrine, with a tree trunk fixed above its length to hang our bottoms over when we wanted to perform.

After that attack, I used to go down to the air-raid shelter when I heard bombs falling near us!

We had an efficient security system in our camps. Whenever there was a new arrival, he was interrogated by our security officers, and had to show that he was really what he claimed to be. Usually he knew one or more of

the 2,000 officers already in the camp, or could give details that could be corroborated by someone already inside, and which he could not have known if he were not genuine.

Then one day a British 'officer' arrived whom no one could vouch for. It turned out that he had been captured by the Germans in Esthonia as a civilian teacher of English before the Russians seized that country, and had been intimidated by the Gestapo into becoming a stooge. He claimed to be a composer of music, and communicated with the German camp authorities by a code composed of musical notes written on the usual staves.

He was excluded from all secret information, including the news reports based on secret radios, which were read out each evening to each room, one after another.

However, shortly after he arrived, there was a large-scale raid on the camp by the Gestapo. We were kept out of our barracks, in the open, for several days and nights together, while we and all the buildings were thoroughly searched. Nothing was found, not even the full-sized army prismatic compass which my friend had lent me and Alastair Cram at Mährisch Trübau, which he hid between his legs as usual during the search.

When the parachute attack on the bridge at Arnhem failed, a number of the officer prisoners came to our camp, among them several Polish parachutists.

Towards the end of our time as POWs, our guards

became younger and younger, or more and more maimed. Fully grown, physically and mentally able people were needed to fight on the fronts, especially the Russian front. One of the young fanatical Nazi guards shot one of our Indian officers. The latter was playing deck tennis with another officer, and the quoit went over the trip-wire, which was a few yards from the main fence. We were not supposed to cross this wire, but it was accepted that we could do so with the permission of the nearest guard, to retrieve objects that had crossed it.

The Indian officer duly indicated that he wanted to retrieve the quoit, and the young guard nodded consent. But as soon as the Indian crossed the wire, the guard shot him dead.

One of the most popular subjects of conversation towards the end of our time at Oflag 79, often leading to heated arguments, was the relative merits of different football teams in England - a completely closed book as far as I was concerned. However, I was saddened to read in the papers, not long after my return to England from prisoner of war camp, that a man from Rochdale, who had been in the batmen's hut with me in Oflag VIIIF, had been crushed to death in one of the first big football crowd disasters after the war. He was tall, dark-haired and gangling, wore glasses and was a vociferous supporter of some club or other when I knew him briefly.

Quite a different character was Gunner Almond. He was plump, smoothskinned and red-headed, and dabbled in poetry. Life as a batman-impersonator at Oflag VIIIF had been too busy for me to get to know Gunner Almond's talents, but in our next camp we had plenty of time, and he often used to consult me on his poetic efforts when he discovered that I had a Cambridge Arts BA. I have sometimes wondered how he got on as a poet after the war, but not having any interest in this field myself, I never found out.

Chapter 17: Release, Repatriation & the British War Crimes
Executive

We were all following the advance of the Allies through Germany both in the German newspapers ('Our gallant troops took up new defensive positions to the rear') and on our secret radios. We heard that a number of POW camps had been moved back away from the advancing Allies, and were on tenter-hooks as to whether we would be unlucky too. Herbert Buck and I made our final preparations for the breakout in case we were attacked by the SS.

Then one day we heard artillery fire in the dim distance. Gradually it drew nearer. Then it started to encircle us. We could hear the guns to the south, in the direction of Brunswick town, and to the north towards the Lüneburger Heide. By evening, I was confident that liberation would come the next morning, so I triumphantly broached my emergency supplies of porridge, chocolate, cigarettes etc, which I had been saving for seven months, since our last Red Cross parcel, in case the SS threat materialised, and the 12 in my room then had a feast the like of which we had not had for a long time.

The next morning an American jeep drove in through the gates, and that was it! We were free at last - some of us after nearly five years.

The jeep was at once surrounded by cheering officers and batmen, while its officer went to see our SBO.

Within minutes, Herbert Buck and I were called to the SBO's office and told that we were to go to Brunswick immediately, with another British officer, Saepe Britnev, who had been dropped at Arnhem and was an accomplished Russian speaker, to help the British Town Major there. We commandeered a truck belonging to the German garrison of our camp, and drove out through ranks of our former German guards and officers, now paraded by the Americans to be taken prisoner in their turn.

The Town Major's HQ was Brunswick Town Hall, which had miraculously escaped the heavy allied bombings, and that evening we had what was for us an enormous meal, with some wine, and I for one was violently sick during the night, not being able to take much food at a time after seven months' starvation.

The next morning Saepe and I went round Brunswick in a loudspeaker van, warning all foreign workers to return to their camps, and telling them that looters would be shot. There were concentration camp inmates in striped pyjamas, Russian slave workers in their green uniforms, and others of all nationalities roaming the town. I broadcast in German, French and Italian, and Saepe in Russian.

At one point a group of German civilians crowded round, complaining that a young Russian was stealing a bicycle. We caught him, and Saepe threatened to shoot him. The boy began to cry and to take his trousers down. Presumably

he had been accustomed to floggings as a slave worker. We bundled him into the back of our truck and locked him up for a few hours in the basement of the Town Hall before releasing him and advising him to get back to his camp as fast as possible.

Then the Town Major told me to go to a POW cage, pick up the members of a German ambulance unit, take them to collect their ambulances, which they had left in various places when they were captured, and then bring them and the ambulances back to look after the many sick slave workers. He gave me a German luger pistol and ammunition.

The German doctors and ambulance men were delighted to be out of the cage, and very amenable. We set off to the spot where they said they had left half their ambulances and other vehicles, and soon found them. They were being guarded by Americans, but after I had talked to them briefly, they let us take them away quite happily. I then suddenly realised that I had no written authority to take these vehicles, but hoped for the best when we went to get the other half.

We went on towards the second spot along forest tracks. I knew that we were very near the front line between the American and German forces, but had no idea where it lay. I could hear artillery fire close at hand, and was wondering whether we would blunder into German positions.

At last we came to an American HQ, and I stopped and asked the guard at the gate where Wolmirstedt (the second objective in our search for the ambulances), was. He was amazed to see a column of German vehicles outside his HQ, and promptly called out the guard. I asked to see the Provost-Marshal, and when he came, asked him for permission to go to Wolmirstedt to collect the rest of the ambulances. He asked me for written orders, which I did not have, of course. He then asked me for identification, and I did not have that either, being a newly released POW, so he arrested me and the entire column. I was interested to see the American guards looting the Germans' watches just as my men had done in the Desert.

Inside the HQ, I discovered that there was another officer from Oflag 79, who was visiting an American relative there, but unfortunately he did not know me.

After some hours, I suddenly remembered that I was carrying the War Office notification that I had been promoted from second lieutenant to lieutenant, which was automatic after three years, so I went and showed this to the Provost-Marshal, who had meanwhile been trying unsuccessfully to get in touch with the Town Major in Brunswick by phone.

The War Office notification did not mean much to an American, but after consulting the British officer from our camp about it, he said I could now collect the rest

of the ambulances and take the lot back to Brunswick. He sent a young officer to put me on the right road, but after a quarter of an hour we met a very excited young American in command of a troop of armoured cars, who flatly refused to let us go on, as he was guarding a vital bridge and was afraid we might blow it up. We therefore went back to the American HQ and spent a noisy night there with shells falling all around us.

Next morning we were taken back to Brunswick as part of an American convoy, with no more alarms.

I spent the next few days swanning around Brunswick, helping the displaced persons, taking an abandoned car, running it until it ran out of petrol, then taking another, and so on. They had no keys in those days: one simply turned a switch to start them.

Several times I was approached by distraught women for help in saving friends and relatives from rape by released prisoners and slave workers, mostly Poles, but I always explained that I was myself only a released POW and therefore had no authority to do anything.

Soon, however, I managed to get a group of Polish parachute officers from our camp to patrol Brunswick and tackle their fellow-countrymen when they misbehaved. It was very effective.

Our camp was close to a Luftwaffe aerodrome, and we

now received orders to stand by to be evacuated to England by air, so I returned to the camp. David Taylor and I began to go out on foraging parties, trading cigarettes for eggs etc. On one of these, we were surprised and, for a moment, shocked to see a German officer suddenly appear out of a house in full uniform. He proved to be one of the doctors I had taken to collect the ambulances, doing his rounds for sick DPs.

We met a lot of DPs on the farms round Brunswick, where they had worked. Some of the Russian and Polish girls were keen to sleep with us, but we were afraid of diseases.

We met one group of Russian men and women who were living together in a house they had taken over. They were drinking the sort of alcohol that was used to dilute the paint for planes, and wanted us to join them, but we refused, having heard stories of the blindness, madness and even death caused by the stuff.

Finally the day for our evacuation came. We left our belongings, except what we could carry in our hands, carefully labelled in our camp, having been assured by the army authorities that they would be packed and returned to us by land, but in fact we heard later that they were looted by the DPs as soon as we left. I lost my books and manuscripts, alas.

On arrival in England, we were given clothes, passes, ration books etc, and then sent off on leave for a month.

As I had no close relatives in England, I stayed with friends.

During that month I had language tests from the Intelligence Corps, and got high grades in German, French and Italian, an adequate one in Russian, and was passed as bilingual in Greek, the examiner knowing far less than I did, and giving me a piece written in medieval Greek as a reading test!

I also had a medical, at which I was passed fit, but had to have ultra-violet and infra-red treatment for malnutrition sores on my hands for several months. To get to the hospital, which was about 60 miles from the house of the friends I was staying with, I bought a little old Austin 7 for £25. The insurance company said they would not have insured it if I had not been in the armed forces. I had never taken a driving test, but was issued with a certificate by the army to the effect that I was competent to drive a car and ride a motorcycle (I had never been on one of those in my life!).

During my repatriation leave after my release from Oflag 79, I was accosted many times, especially in Piccadilly in London, but only once accepted, when a very pretty girl offered to let me bugger her as well as the usual thing. I had never done this, and as I have always believed in trying everything once, I accepted. Unfortunately, however, after my years of abstention, I could not prevent myself having an orgasm almost as

soon as I entered the girl's vagina, so we never got on to the anal stage, apparently to her great disappointment.

After my leave, I was posted to the Intelligence Corps Depot at Rotherham, in the magnificent house of the Earl of Northesk, where I met David Taylor again. We were to await posting to the Far East as captains in staff posts in Intelligence.

David Taylor and another member of our group of coders at Oflag 79 had been awarded the MBE, and David Stirling the OBE.

Before we could go to the Far East, VJ day came, and I was posted to the British War Crimes Executive (European Section) and had to report to the Marylebone Hotel in London, which was then an army transit centre. Among the other officers and ORs waiting there to go to Europe with me was a darkly handsome officer of great charm whom no one could fail to notice. I soon discovered that he was a German Jew who had escaped from Hitler before 1939, and joined the British army when the war broke out. He had learnt excellent English, and was a suave and experienced man of the world. We were soon to become good friends, at first as members of the British War Crimes Executive in Paris, where we were to start making preparations for the big trial of the major war criminals.

We were both lieutenants at the time, but at the Marylebone Hotel we were told to get captains' stars on our uniforms at once.

We crossed the Channel in an LST to Ostend, and then stayed there for a few days. The day we arrived in Ostend off the boat, Wolf set about getting himself a girl. We met an At on the beach, and Wolf proceeded to make an assignation with her on the same beach for that night. When he arrived back in our billet after midnight, he was giggling.

'D'you know,' he said, 'it's the first time I've ever fucked a girl with my hat on. We had to do it standing, and the beach was so bloody wet and dirty that I couldn't take my hat off and put it down!'

The seaside resort of Blankenberghe was out of bounds to British troops at the time, but Wolf wasn't one to be put off a pleasure by regulations, so he persuaded me to go there with him on Sunday, find the Town Major's HQ, and ask to see him.

One of his staff saw us, and I said to him in my best official voice, 'We're members of the British War Crimes Executive, and we've come here to look for documents in connection with the forthcoming trial of the major war criminals.'

The officer went in to see the Town Major, and when he came out to us again he was not exactly rude, but

advised us to get out of Blankenberghe within ten minutes, or else! I felt put down, but Wolf said, 'One must learn to take the rough with the smooth. And nothing venture, nothing gain!' That was certainly part of his philosophy - charm and cheek, plus not taking it seriously when these were occasionally unsuccessful.

In Paris we were billeted in a small hotel, where I shared a room with Wolf. We ate mostly at the British Officers' Club, which belonged to the Rothschild family and was close to the British Embassy.

There I learnt what a real character Wolf Frank was. He had been a rich playboy on the European circuit, a keen and expert skier among other things, before the rise of Hitler had driven him to England.

When the war began, he had joined the Northumberland Fusiliers because, as he told me, their officers' epaulettes had a badge at their base which looked like an extra pip. This meant that, as a second lieutenant, he was often mistaken for a lieutenant, and when he became a lieutenant, he was taken for a captain. When he and I were made captains in the hotel, his epaulettes began to look a bit overloaded!

I had met several wolves before this time, but Wolf Frank gave me the first chance to observe a perfect specimen from close up. He was Wolf by name and a wolf by nature!

The most important thing in life, for him, was the

collecting of women. Once he had had sex with one, he began to lose interest, especially if she became serious about him. Then he would ditch her rapidly, sometimes offering her to me to get rid of her.

Apparently there was one girl he had really loved deeply and still wanted to have - if not to marry. He carried photos of her - some in the nude on a beach - in his wallet, and when he showed them to me, he said to me indignantly, 'D'you know, she ditched me for an impotent man!'

I had no idea, in those days, what such a man could do for a girl sexually, so I was completely nonplussed. I now know better.

In Paris, he took up with a prostitute who serviced him free of charge. She could not get enough of it, but after his first session with her, Wolf said to me, 'Ugh, I was really put off by the enormous mat of thick, coarse hair she has round her cunt. It was really difficult to get through the stuff. I always seem to finish up with women with that sort of rampant, wiry hair! They seem to be the ones that find me most attractive.'

I said, 'D'you use contraceptives?'

'Never!' he answered emphatically. 'It's up to the girl to take precautions if she wants to. But once I picked up a dose of gonorrhoea from a girl I thought would be

the last person to have such a thing.' In those days, of course, the Pill did not exist yet.

It was in Paris too that he said to me very seriously one day, 'One should never give a girl the impression that one's sex-starved. There's nothing as off-putting to a girl than that hungry look in a man's eyes, because it means he isn't successful at satisfying women.'

I started work in the BWCE in Paris, where I met Colonel Phillimore (later Lord Justice Phillimore), and Lieutenant-Colonel Mervyn Griffith-Jones of the Coldstream Guards (later the Common Serjeant), who were going to be members of the British prosecuting team for the Nuremberg trial of the major war criminals.

One day while we were still in Paris I heard that the BWCE needed majors, so I went to see Colonel Phillimore. 'Sir,' I said, 'I'd like to be considered for promotion, since I've been held back by being a POW.'

He answered, 'I'll think about it,' and soon after, my promotion from lieutenant to captain was cancelled, and replaced by direct promotion from lieutenant to major and DAAG (Deputy Assistant Adjutant General, which was a staff post).

When I had told Wolf that I was going to try to get promotion to major, he had done everything he could to

dissuade me. 'We'll have much more fun as captains, without too many responsibilities,' he urged. But I was very ambitious, and put rank before women.

I was then sent in a Humber Estate staff car with a batman and driver to take over a BWCE team in Hamburg from an ex-POW friend of mine from Oflag 79. On the way, a wheel came off, and we had to spend a few days in Belgium, waiting for a replacement to be sent. Luckily the wheel was a rear one, and we were not moving very fast when it came off.

Two of the members of the team I took over in Hamburg were German Jews who, like Wolf Frank, had escaped from Hitler's Germany in time, and who were now in the Intelligence Corps, one as a CSM and the other as a sergeant. They were later with me at the Nuremberg trials for a year. They always made a point, when talking to Germans, of speaking with a strong English accent.

I was puzzled by this, and asked, 'Why don't you speak German with the proper pronunciation I know you're capable of?'

'Well, you see, sir,' one of them answered, 'During the war we did under-cover intelligence work among German POWs which might be resented by people with Nazi sympathies, who might therefore try to assassinate us now.'

There was, in fact, still a danger of our being attacked by fanatics. We always had a strong metal upright on the

bonnet of our jeeps in case anyone tried to behead us by stringing cables across country roads. It had happened several times, so it was wise to be prepared.

From Hamburg we moved to various parts of the British zone, looking for documents for the big trials. I carried a letter from 21st Army Group HQ requiring all documents I needed to be handed over to me.

At one place I had reason to believe that important documents were to be found in a certain safe in a bombed-out Gestapo HQ, so I got hold of a safecracking expert to cut his way into it. Unfortunately, when the man finally opened the safe, it contained nothing but ashes of papers. It had not been fireproof.

At Grasleben close to the new frontier between the British and Russian zones of Germany, we searched a salt mine in which archives evacuated from Berlin had been placed. We had to go about a mile down a shaft, accompanied by a German miner, and then a long distance underground, bent almost double because of low ceilings, to reach the areas where the documents were stacked. I had always suffered from claustrophobia, so it needed close control of my emotions to do this work day after day. We found nothing incriminating, and heard later that sensitive files had been destroyed by the Germans before Grasleben fell to the Allies.

At Grasleben our hosts were the Royal Horse Guards,

who had armoured cars. One of the officers was the brother of an old Corps friend of mine. One night in the mess, I had forgotten to transfer my major's crowns to my jacket (having only just been promoted, I had not yet managed to get more than one pair), so I appeared at dinner as a private.

At Grasleben I also met Annie, a stunningly beautiful Belgian DP. The end of the war had found her a slave worker in Germany, and being so beautiful, she had been taken under the wing of one of the UNRRA workers in Grasleben. I was instantly attracted to her, and she to me. We would sit in the garden at RHG Headquarters till late at night, talking and holding hands, but that was as far as she would go. When I had to leave Grasleben, I used to drive some 50 miles each way to see her after work. Military vehicles had a governor which did not allow them to exceed 50 miles an hour in those days, and the Autobahn I used was pitted with potholes, so it was an arduous journey.

After I had been posted to Nuremberg, Annie and I wrote to each other frequently, and in her first letter she wrote, 'I have a confession to make: I am in fact the mistress of my UNRRA protector here, and I have picked up VD. That is why I always refused to sleep with you, or even kiss you.' It was a pretty hopeless romance, and petered out as so many such do, however intense they are at the time.

Chapter 18: The Nuremberg Trial of the Major War Criminals

I was the second British officer to arrive in Nuremberg for the trials. The first was an administrative officer, but my job was now to organise the translating and interpreting side of our work there. Nuremberg was in the American zone, and soon after my team and I had crossed the border from the British zone, we were stopped by an irate and self-important provost sergeant for speeding. 'Don't you know there's a speed limit?' he stormed. 'Have you got an appointment with death?'

'I'm very sorry,' I answered politely. 'What is the speed limit?' I made sure my driver kept to it thereafter. After half an hour or so we were overtaken by the same sergeant, obviously checking up that we were doing as we had been told.

In Nuremberg we were lodged in the half-bombed Grand Hotel, and before the rest of the British delegation arrived, we had a visit from the then Lord Chancellor. He was obviously vain about his appearance, asking me how old I thought he was, and showing chagrin when I made a pretty accurate guess.

I was soon moved out into a house in a neighbouring village, which had been commandeered from its owners. I had German servants, ate breakfast in a neighbouring American officers' mess (I was there introduced for the first time to waffles and maple syrup eaten with bacon), lunch in the cafeteria in the Court House in Nuremberg

itself, and dinner at the Grand Hotel. Later, when the rest of our delegation arrived, we had both breakfast and dinner in our billets, although we could always have dinner at the Grand Hotel instead, where there was a good cabaret show every night.

The Court House at Nuremberg was the first place where I came across self-service and segmented metal trays for meals. I had already come across American army field rations when I was working for the Town Major in Brunswick. They seemed magnificent after our two packets of biscuits, tin of bully and Spanish onion from Desert days. The food in the Court House cafeteria also seemed sumptuous compared with what we had had at the I Corps Depot at Rotherham. It was all very well organised: prosecutors, military officers and other ranks all lined up democratically, and German kitchen staff slapped the food on our trays, each type of food in its own compartment, after which we went to eat it at tables with the companions of our choice.

We were also allowed to use the American PX, where we could buy things undreamt of in wartime - and postwar - Britain or the NAAFI.

Sir David Maxwell-Fyfe arrived to take de facto charge of the British team of prosecutors (he had been Attorney-General when the plans for the trial had been made, but had been superseded in that post by Sir Hartley Shawcross

when Labour won the 1945 General Election. Sir Hartley was the titular head of our delegation, but being busy with his government job, spent very little time at the trials. Sir David Maxwell-Fyfe later became Lord Chancellor, with the title of Lord Kilmuir). Others to join the delegation were F. Elwyn-Jones, later also Lord Chancellor, 'Khaki' Roberts, an extremely extrovert QC who had been a famous rugger player, and Major Airey Neave (he became a lieutenant-colonel soon after), who had been the first ever to escape from the supposedly escape-proof POW camp at Colditz to which David Stirling had been sent from Oflag 79. After reaching England, Airey Neave had done highly secret and dangerous work for British escapers and evaders in France and the Low Countries.

Several translators and interpreters also arrived to join my department - a Polish captain, a middle-aged British squadron-leader, an old lady of Russian extraction and several sergeants and privates of German Jewish origin from the Intelligence Corps.

We were now the best organised of the translators and interpreters at Nuremberg, and were therefore able to give a lot of valuable help to the others, particularly the Americans and the French. Most of our work consisted of translating German into English, but we also did French and Russian into English, and I translated extracts of Count Ciano's diaries from Italian into English. Sometimes,

also, we translated the other way. Some of the work consisted of translating the legal pleas of prosecutors and defence counsel, but most was documents put into evidence for the trial. I had to check all translations done by members of my staff, and sign a certificate of accuracy of the translation.

When the British judges, Lord Justice Lawrence (later Lord Oaksey) and Mr Justice Birkett (later Lord Birkett) arrived, there were discussions in closed session between all the judges to prepare for the trial, with me interpreting from French to English for the French judges.

Simultaneous interpreting had been used once or twice before, but was still relatively unknown. Its first big world trial was at Nuremberg, and my friend Wolf Frank at once became a star interpreter from German into English and English into German. This work needed a special type of brain, and could not be done for long at a stretch. One of the problems with German into English was that the verb is often at the end of the sentence in German but not in English, so that the interpreter has to wait for some time before being able to get past the subject of the verb.

Everyone in the court room had a pair of earphones and a switch which could be used to select the language he or she wanted to listen to, either the original being spoken by the judge, lawyer, defendant or witness, or the

translation coming from one of the four in the interpreters' box. If the speaker was going too fast, interpreters could press a button to light up a yellow light, whereupon the chief judge, Sir Geoffrey Lawrence, asked the speaker to pause and go more slowly. When a red light was lit, the speaker was asked to stop completely. Interpreters were greatly helped by the translations of set pleas and documents which we translators provided them with, which they just read into their microphones for the record. Every word in every language was taken down in a special kind of mechanised shorthand by a team sitting below and in front of the judges.

Life at Nuremberg was bizarre, with the contrasts between the badly-bombed city, peopled by pale, half-starved Germans, the gaiety and glitter of our night-life at the Grand Hotel, with the biggest selection of drinks at the bar I have ever seen, and the terrible things we had to translate during the day.

As I indicated in the introduction to this book, we translators and the administrators took turns to go into the court room, sit at the British prosecution's tables, listen to the proceedings and look at the defendants.

Most of us men went wild about women, and I, after so many years, first in the Desert and then as a POW, was no exception. We were not, in theory, allowed to fraternise with Germans, but many of us did. There were also plenty

of attractive British, American, French and Russian girls at the trials, many of them in uniform. I had a number of girlfriends too, and finally married the last, a Welsh girl who was secretary to one of our prosecutors.

Having been accustomed to pre-war Parisiennes, who always dressed beautifully, however poor they were, I was at first puzzled by the very tatty clothes the girls of the French delegation wore. I soon discovered, however, that there was a good reason.

'You see, during the German occupation,' one of my French girlfriends enlightened me, 'the only well-dressed French women were collaborators, and the worst dressed were members of the Resistance. As a result, none of us French girls here at Nuremberg would be seen dressed as anything but a ragbag.'

It made sense - more sense than the fact that, just now, in the 1980s, no British girl would either.

Wolf Frank started off in our mess, but he quickly quickly left it and set up on his own with a German woman. This was strictly against all rules, not only because fraternisation with German women was banned, but also because we were supposed to live in the billets requisitioned for us by the American Military Government, and nowhere else.

To attract women, Wolf got hold of a great dane with

eyes of different colours. What woman, seeing this strange creature, could resist stopping to look at it more closely, thus providing Wolf with a perfect entry into chatting her up?

He was very snobbish about what women he would chase. Like a true collector, he selected the most desirable ones - the ones that other men were after so that he could tick them off on his list of conquests.

He came to me one day, looking very embarrassed, and said, 'You know the Passionate Haystack, don't you?' She was one of the French interpreters, and had acquired that nickname because of her amorous exploits and dishevelled, unkempt blond hair.

'Yes,' I said. 'Don't tell me you made a pass at her! You are slipping!'

'That's just it,' he groaned. 'I didn't make a pass at her. She did it to me.'

I guffawed.

'Yes,' he went on, 'she pinned me down last night and more or less raped me. For Heaven's sake don't tell anyone else about it.' She was obviously definitely not on his collecting list.

'And d'you know,' Wolf added indignantly, 'she refused to have any foreplay, but made me get down to the penetration

straight away!'

Soon after getting to Nuremberg, Wolf became friendly with Count Faber-Castell, the pencil king, and one day he took me riding on the Count's estates on his horses - only the second time I had ever been on a horse, despite my Northumberland Hussars connections. I did not enjoy the experience!

As a result of my work translating and interpreting at Nuremberg, as well as observing the work of others like Wolf and my own team, I came to the conclusion that interpret and translators are born, not trained. To be really good, one needs to be able to empathise with what the original speaker or writer was trying to say, then to hold it in some sort of non-linguistic limbo in one's brain, and then recreate it in the new language in such a way that one produces not only the same denotative message, but also all the original connotations, such as arousing the same emotions in the listener or reader.

Training no doubt teaches one a few useful tricks, and helps one to practise the technique, but without that unconscious something, one gets nowhere. Some of my team at Nuremberg were bilingual, but after a year were still turning out pathetically lame translations.

Later, when I was training teachers of English as a foreign language, I found that a good teacher, too, is born and not made. He has to have the instinctive ability

and the wish not only to transmit knowledge or skills to others, but to see into the minds of his students, to find whether they are in fact learning, and if not, to change his approach again and again until they are.

I have seen brilliant scholars, with doctorates in English, teaching away without any reference to what their students are absorbing; and I have seen other teachers, with only a limited knowledge of their subject, making a perfect job of passing this on to others. A CSM who helped to instruct us in gunnery at the OCTU in Egypt was a brilliant example of the latter.

One of the funnier stories Wolf Frank told me depends on a knowledge of Yiddish. The story goes that a Jewish prostitute in Berlin wanted to advertise discreetly, without the police knowing what she was up to, so she put the following notice outside the front door of her block of flats:

Wänze

Fichten

Wollen

Gänse

Affen

1sten Stock.

This means literally:

Bedbugs

Fir trees

Wools

Geese

Monkeys

1st Floor.

Read aloud, however, it means in Yiddish:

If you want to fuck, go to the 1st floor.

One day during the trial the Passionate Haystack brought proceedings to a halt when one person after another realised that her blouse contained three breasts instead of the usual two. One of her falsies had slipped, and the court had to take time out to allow her to go and adjust it.

As a major, I had a personal jeep at my disposal, which I used for going into town in the evenings to the Grand Hotel, and on Sundays (we worked a full six-day week) for excursions, sometimes again into town, to walk among the ruins or up to the medieval castle, or further afield, to such beautiful places as Dinkelsbühl and Rothenburg ob der Tauber, where I remembered my visit with Uncle Adalbert. Usually I took a girlfriend with me.

Occasionally in the evenings I had had rather a lot to drink, and once my jeep skidded on a wet road, spun around twice and ended up going backwards into a

house wall - luckily quite slowly and gracefully, so that no damage was done.

Each delegation had a guard of honour which raised the national flag with due ceremony outside the Court House every morning, and the two officers of ours, usually from the Brigade of Guards, lived in our mess while they were there. The guard changed every month or so. One of the pleasant officers I got to know in this way was Viscount Gwynedd of the Welsh Guards.

Once when we were having a riotous party at our billet with two other Guards officers, one of them seized my current girlfriend, who was a German Jewish emigree, naturalised American, and working in the American delegation, bundled her into my jeep and began to drive away. I rushed after him, hanging on to the jeep and threatening to have him court-martialled. He stopped before I fell over, and the next day, when he was sober, came and apologised. I accepted his apology, and that was the end of that incident.

Another time, we were playing games in the drawing-room of our billet when an amusing but at the same time embarrassing thing happened. One of our administrative officers was a very prim man, who had nevertheless managed to attract a pretty girl in the French delegation. We used to tease him about his old-fashioned ideas.

'At least kiss and cuddle the poor girl!' we used to urge him, but he always refused indignantly, saying rude things about the indecent behaviour of the rest of us.

One of the games we played involved a circle of chairs, with an officer standing at attention, hands at sides, behind each. On all of the chairs except one sat a girl, and it was the job of the man behind the empty chair to signal to one of the sitting girls, by discreet winks and gestures, to escape from where she was sitting and run to sit in his chair. If she succeeded in doing this, it was the turn of the officer behind the newly-empty chair to try to lure another girl to it, and so on. But the man behind the chair of the girl trying to escape had to try to prevent her doing so as soon as she began to move, by grasping her shoulders. Captain Jones, as I shall call our prudish colleague, was standing behind his French girlfriend's chair when suddenly she sprang towards the empty one. Jones made a grab, missed her shoulders and came away with a postiche (false hair-piece) she was wearing on the back of her hair!

There had been occasional teasing between our junior billet and the British secretaries' billet which was just up the road from us, so as I joke I drew up a Non-Aggression Treaty, along the lines of some of the ones I had been having to translate from German etc, between them and us, and bound it in with the menu of one of the dinners we invited them to.

As another joke, I pretended I had found a partly burned document, which turned into our mess's invitation to a group of seven girls from the French delegation to a similar dinner.

In April 1946 I was invited to a party at Count Faber Castell's to play skittles (Kegeln).

Another evening party was punctuated by violent explosions as the Americans had chosen that same night to blow up a German ammunition factory, and the thing got rather out of hand.

On the way back from leave by train from Paris to Nuremberg on New Year's Eve 1945, most of the passengers were Americans, who got merry and started shooting out of the train windows as midnight struck. There was no dining car on that train, and it was a long journey, so we stopped for meals at station restaurants and cafeterias on the way. New Year's Eve lunch was turkey, macaroni cheese, fruit salad and pineapple pie.

In February 1946 I was offered a job with War Crimes in Japan, which I was keen to take, but my bosses at Nuremberg would not release me because they could not replace me.

In March, a quiz was held among the members of the British and American delegations at Nuremberg. I was chosen to represent the male side of the British

delegation, and won (the prize was a bottle of champagne) with 450 points out of 600. Next came an American female captain with 366, and equal last a male American major and a British civilian girl with 300 each (their 'prizes' were an aspirin each).

I soon got fed up with the food we had to eat. I had been told at Corpus that cold beef and beer were the normal breakfast there last century, and that whenever the former prime minister Stanley Baldwin had visited the college, he had had this, and as at Nuremberg we had considerable control over what we had for breakfast, at least, since we had it in our own billets, I started having steak tartare (raw minced beef) and beer for that meal. Once I actually had raw minced pork instead, but found that too fatty. Captain Jones was naturally disgusted, and called me a cannibal.

When I was moved to the more senior billet, I ate with the bigwigs, but slept in a house a couple of hundred yards from theirs. I did not at all like the dreary nursery food they ate, so had myself appointed Mess President and began having good German food. In this mess too, I saw much more of the senior members of ^{the} delegation, and was able to get my ideas about the trial straighter.

In spite of my abhorrence of the Nazis' cruelty, I had a strong sense of fair play, and was not at all happy

about the cynical way in which everything was weighted against the defence lawyers in the trial. When, therefore, my department was asked to translate Professor Jahrreis' plea in defence of the Leadership Corps from German into English, I did all the work myself, and tried particularly hard to make the German concepts clear in English. As a result, I had a very nice letter from Professor Jahrreis himself, and also one from Sir Geoffrey Lawrence.

It was very easy to distort evidence, either consciously or unconsciously, when translating or interpreting. Few of the prosecution's translators and interpreters had been in Germany during the war, so their German tended to be rather old-fashioned, and they were ignorant of many of the subtleties introduced by such people as Rosenberg, the philosopher of Nazism. As I had been reading the German papers for the previous two years as a POW, I was much more conversant with contemporary uses of German, and could therefore strive to give a fair picture to the judges, explaining terms which were unfamiliar to them.

Before I moved to the senior billet, I was the only major in a billet otherwise inhabited by captains and lieutenants, so I had a room to myself, rather away from the others, on a landing opposite the communal bathroom. Late one night, when I was reading in bed, I heard a timid knock at my door, and went to investigate. It was one of our German maids, a plump woman of about forty, with a mop

of dyed, heavily sprayed black hair.

'Oh, Herr Major,' she said, 'I am in such trouble! I was working late in the kitchen and forgot the time, and now I am too late to get home to my flat before the curfew! What shall I do?'

'Can't you hide somewhere until the morning?' I said rather impatiently.

But that was not what she was after at all. 'Can't I spend the night in your room?' she pleaded. 'I'll be no trouble.'

'Well,' I answered doubtfully, 'I've got a camp bed you could have.' I hauled it out and put it together. But as soon as she tried to get on it, it turned over, tipping her out on the floor.

'Ooh,' she said, rubbing her bottom gingerly, 'I don't know whether I'll be able to manage that. Perhaps it's intended only for people with lovely slim bodies like yours.'

'Oh, well, you'd better sleep at the other end of my bed. Then we won't interfere with each other,' I conceded. I untucked the sheets and blankets, put one of my pillows at the bottom of the bed, and she stripped down to her shift and panties and got into bed.

Of course, it did not last long that way. The warmth

of her body against mine, because the bed was too narrow for us to remain apart, was too much for me, and soon we made love. The penny took a long time to drop, but I realised before morning that the late work in the kitchen and the fear of the curfew were a put-up job.

The first time that Connie came to my room I used a condom all three times that we made love, but the following Saturday, when I took one out, she said, 'Do we have to use those things? It spoils the fun.'

I was surprised, as most women I had known had been keen to use one, but I put it away, and did not use one again with her.

A few days later I discovered that I had body-crawling lice in my pubic hair, and at once thought that Connie was the cause. I went along to our stores, and the sergeant said sympathetically, 'Lots of people are getting those, but don't worry, sir. This powder will deal with them.' It did very quickly.

When I told Connie the next Saturday, she said, 'Don't blame me. It's probably one of those English secretaries you're sleeping with.'

'I am not sleeping with anybody except you,' I answered indignantly and she laughed.

When I was told that I was being transferred to the senior billet, Connie said, 'You can come and sleep

with me in my house in the village.' I did so once, but decided it was too risky as an officer to break the rules so blatantly.

Connie never asked for a thing from me except sex - and the only thing she pinched was a group photo of us officers which one of us left lying about downstairs. At least, I am practically sure that it was she who took it - as a memento of our times together.

My next mistress was a French girl. She was working as a secretary in the French delegation, and we met at one of the frequent cocktail parties. When I propositioned her, she accepted at once, but by the time I got her away and to my billet, she was very drunk. Instead of having a nice cosy night with her, I had to hold her head while she was being sick.

However, she was obviously grateful for my civilised behaviour, because after that she used to come to me often. She loved being massaged, so that was the way we usually started our sessions. She too did not like condoms, but always went to our bathroom after each love-making to use her vaginal douche.

Then I met the girl who later became my first wife, and decided that I could not go on leading a promiscuous life. My last meeting with the French girl was one afternoon in my room, when we could not risk getting undressed, so

she removed her panties and sat astride my lap on a chair to perform. I had said to her, "I'm sorry but I'm in love with someone, so I must regretfully bring our affair to an end," and I can still remember that intense and emotionally painful last love-making with her, when she bitterly bewailed the end of our affair as she was having her orgasm. It reminded me of my last meeting with the Hungarian girl in Tel Aviv.

The Russians were more cooperative at the trial than ever before or since. They used to come to all the parties, but disappear all together at a given moment, presumably on a signal from their political commissar. When Vichinsky, the USSR Minister of Justice, visited the trial, the Russian delegation gave a dinner in his honour, to which I went as interpreter - although, luckily, the Russians had one who knew English much better than I did Russian! We had course after course, each accompanied by another glassful of vodka and another long speech.

Then Sir David Maxwell-Fyfe gave a dinner in honour of Vichinsky. Luckily, it was the turn of the Scots Guards to supply our guard of honour, so there was a piper to pipe in the haggis, no doubt the only time that Vichinsky ever tasted this delicacy (it was my first time too). We cut the things open, poured superb liqueur whisky over them, and found them quite palatable.

Our drivers tended to be very naughty about breaking

German traffic regulations, e.g by passing stationary trams on the inside while passengers were trying to embark and disembark. The Germans would swear and shake their fists, but our drivers enjoyed getting their own back, as they thought, for what we had suffered from arrogant Nazis during the war.

As soon as the Germans had withdrawn from Greece in 1944, my father had returned to Athens from South Africa, with the rank of full colonel, to direct oil supplies for the country. He met my Greek uncles there again, and was in the midst of the civil war between Communists and non-Communists which raged even inside Athens itself.

One night he dreamed that Uncle Costa Kanellopoulo, the retired admiral, who was a vociferous right-winger, was being taken away, out into the countryside, by the Communists, and that he was shouting to my father, 'Arthur! Arthur! Save me!'

The next day he heard that this was exactly what had happened that night: Uncle Costa was one of many people kidnapped by the Communists. He was never heard of again.

While I was at Nuremberg, I received a letter from my mother telling me that Uncle Adalbert had been arrested as a potential war criminal by the Americans (he had held various important naval posts in Occupied France, including that of Seekommandant, Gironde, at the time of the Allied raid on St Nazaire, when nasty things were done to the

French who tried to help the raiders. He finished up as Admiral, South France, with the rank of rear-admiral). Aunt Lopie was naturally extremely upset, and Mother wanted me to go and collect her from Bad Pyrmont in the British Sector and take her to Nuremberg.

At this time, a strict policy of non-fraternisation with the Germans was in force, so I was very dubious, but applied for permission to do as my mother requested, only to be turned down flat, as I expected.

Uncle Adalbert died shortly after this under mysterious circumstances, still as a prisoner of the Americans, and Aunt Lopie in due course went to live with my parents in Greece. She willed herself to death there 25 years later, at the age of 97, still in full possession of her faculties, but tired of life.

After I had been at Nuremberg for several months, my turn came for demobilization, but it was deferred because I could not be spared. This did not worry me at all. When I was finally demobilised, just before the sentences on the defendants at the trial were pronounced, I married the Welsh girl who had been a secretary at Nuremberg with me, and then began looking around for a job. Through Pat Charvet, my old Director of Studies at Corpus, I was offered a wonderful job with Shell. It would have meant a couple of years training in their London office, followed by their managership in Austria.

However, after a week or two in drab postwar London, with all the shortages, and a Socialist government, I did not fancy spending two years there.

I was also offered a post in Intelligence with the Control Commission for Germany, but this entailed leaving my wife behind, as there was no married accommodation. Having lived for four years without women, I did not want another dose.

So I returned to the British Council, who offered me the tempting prospect of a job in the sun in Iran. Soon Margaret and I found ourselves on the Manchester Ship Canal on the way to pastures new. But that is another story.

A postscript: several people were given honours and decorations for their work at Nuremberg. Airey Neave got the OBE for liaison work with the defendants, and our head of administration, a colonel, got the same for good administration. Before I left Nuremberg, this colonel called me in to tell me that the American and French delegations had tried to give me decorations for all the help I had given them, but Sir Hartley Shawcross had refused to let them, saying that the war was over, and such exchanges of decorations had to cease (I have nevertheless seen many gazetted since then).

Chapter 19: My views on the trials and some of the main participants

Firstly, I felt very proud to have reached the rank of major and DAAG after languishing as a lieutenant while a POW.

Then I felt pride at taking part in such a historic event as the Trial of the Major War Criminals.

My attitude towards the Americans was ambivalent: some of them were nice and helpful and interesting (and in due course very grateful for my exert help); others were rude, brash and hostile (the attitude being "We had to come in and save you Limeys from defeat once more").

My attitude towards the Germans was also ambivalent: on one side, I had been brought up to like and understand them; my favourite uncle was a German rear-admiral, and now a prisoner of the Americans as a potential war criminal; I had seen the Nazis quickly pull the Germans up from being a cowed, decadent, immoral, hopeless lot, riddled by civil war between Nationalists and Communists when I had first stayed in the country in 1929, to a proud, hardworking, disciplined, moral people in 1945, when I had last been there as a civilian. I also could not help feeling sorry for the German civilian population who had suffered the terrible and indiscriminate destruction of their cities that I had seen with my own eyes, notably in Brunswick, Hamburg and Nuremberg itself. And I did not see the Nazis

as in any way worse than the Communists under Stalin - perhaps better. The Russians tried to make us believe that the Germans had carried out the Katyn massacre of large numbers of Polish officers in 1939, but we knew it was the Russians who had in fact killed them - and been responsible for the disappearance of large numbers of other Polish officers.

And in fact Stalin had been responsible for killing some 16 million Russians, Ukrainians etc, many by starvation, whereas Hitler's total of Jews was only 6 million. Only Pol Pot broke Stalin's record, for percentage of population slaughtered, when he took over in Cambodia after the Americans left ex-French Indo-China.

However, the claim of tu quoque (trying to excuse one's own crimes by claiming that one's opponents had committed similar ones) had been disallowed by the Court, so that attempts by the German defence to say that the Germans had invaded Norway to forestall a planned British invasion of that country, and to point out that the Russians had been as guilty as the Germans of the carving up of Poland in 1939 (they had also, incidentally, agreed with Germany at that time to annex the Baltic States), were ruled out of order.

In spite of my abhorrence of the Nazis' cruelty, I had a strong sense of fair play, and was not at all happy about the cynical way in which everything was weighted against

the defence lawyers in the trial. When, therefore, my department was asked to translate Professor Jahrreis's plea in defence of the Leadership Corps from German into English, I did all the work myself, and tried particularly hard to make the German concepts clear in English. As a result, I had a very nice letter from Professor Jahrreis himself, and also one from Sir Geoffrey Lawrence. Incidentally, the Leadership Corps was declared innocent.

It was very easy to distort evidence, either consciously or unconsciously, when translating or interpreting. Few of the Tribunal's or prosecution's translators and interpreters had been in Germany during the war, so their German tended to be rather old-fashioned, and they were ignorant of many of the subtleties introduced by such people as Rosenberg, the philosopher of Nazism. As I had been reading the German papers for the previous two years as a POW, I was much more conversant with contemporary uses of German, and could therefore strive to give a fair picture to the judges, explaining terms which were unfamiliar to them.

On the other hand, I still resented the way the Nazis had brainwashed my Greek Christian friends into being beastly to my Greek Jewish friends in 1939-41, on which I blamed the defeat of the rowing four I had coached with such dedication in the 1940 Greek championships; and as a POW and Gestapo prisoner, and during my time helping released slave workers after my own release and before my repatriation

to England, I had seen the terrible ways in which the Germans had treated their helpless victims.

I was aware that concentration camps were a British invention: we had inaugurated the practice during the Boer Wars of 1899-1902. I was also aware that the Russians had had terrible prison camps for many years before the Nazis, camps in which far more people had died than the Germans had managed to dispose of. I also knew that the German annexation of Czechoslovakia, part of Poland, etc etc was paralleled - and in fact far outdone in square mileage - by the Russian annexations of the Baltic States, part of Poland (in agreement with the Germans in 1939), and vast areas of South and East Asia.

My attitude towards the Russians was also ambivalent: on one hand, I liked some of the individual ones I had met in POW camps, and I was very grateful to Russia for having fought so effectively against the Germans, thus shortening my time as a POW. On the other hand, all my early teaching as a child, from my English governess, my Russian tutor, and also my parents, had made me hate and fear the Soviets like the Devil himself.

As for the French, my attitude was ambivalent too. I had met pleasant and amusing French people before the war, but my overall impression had been of a decadent race, and their performance in 1940 had only served to reinforce this. I could not take the French very seriously.

There remained the British: having suffered in British schools for being different when I had gone to England for the first time at the age of 11, and disliking the climate and landscape quite strongly, I did not identify very much with my fellow-British at Nuremberg. Some were insufferably snobbish, others just unintelligent without accepting the fact and being suitably humble.

To summarise, I felt lost and isolated as a human being at Nuremberg, but this did not stop me working hard and successfully, and having a strenuous social and sexual life as well.

The judges

As I took part in a number of the early deliberations of the eight judges, as an interpreter for the badly prepared French, I was able to observe them closely.

Easily the outstanding one was the British alternate judge, Sir Norman Birkett (later Lord Birkett). He was tall, reddish-haired, with a beaked nose and an intensity that immediately caught one's attention. He had a brilliantly incisive brain, and could grasp a complicated series of arguments and get to their root with masterly skill. He gave an impression of impatience with the slowness and stupidity of those around him, and I was not surprised to learn that he was deeply hurt that he had not been chosen to be the top British judge at the Trial.

He was the only one of the judges to entertain me in his house, with other officers, and at that dinner he monopolised the conversation. Of course, he had had an extremely interesting and successful legal career in England before being appointed a judge at Nuremberg, but I felt that it was rude of him not to allow an occasional word to one of us lesser mortals. I, for one, reckoned I had some gripping tales to tell out of my own experience.

The next most forceful and impressive judge was the chief American one, Judge Francis Biddle. He had been Attorney-General in the USA, and it seemed strange to me that he should now be a judge at this trial, whereas the chief American prosecutor there, Justice Jackson, was a judge of the US Supreme Court. I soon heard rumours to the effect that Jackson, a personal friend of President Roosevelt, had chosen the job of prosecutor because he thought it would shed such glory on him that he would become President after Roosevelt.

Biddle was small, dark, and nearly as intense as Birkett. He had a good legal brain, and often jumped in with remarks that brought the tribunal back to the point when discussion began to stray outside the legal disciplines.

Then came the two heavyweights, as far as avoirdupois went, the British Lord Justice Lawrence, who was the president of the International Military Tribunal, and the alternate

US judge, Judge John D Parker.

I wondered why Lawrence had been chosen as our chief judge rather than Birkett, who was very much more incisive and quick-brained, but I soon came to the conclusion that the British authorities had probably thought that Lawrence had more patience, suffered fools more gladly, and was more willing to listen to views other than his own than Birkett, who was so brilliant that he was tempted to bulldoze others - for the best of possible reasons, of course, the main one being that he knew he was right and they were wrong.

During the trial, one could often see Lawrence striving earnestly to be impartial, and very conscious of the world's press listening critically to every decision he made. I didn't envy him his task. I felt he was basically a good, kind man in a position that was rather beyond him.

Parker was a homely man with a compassionate, Christian view of human beings - the sort of good American one sees in films. He knew little of the world outside the USA, but was determined that the trial should be conducted fairly and with human kindness. I warmed to him at once.

Although I translated for the French judges during some of the preliminary meetings before the trial proper, they remained an enigma to me. Professor Donnedieu de Vabres was a top scholar in the field of law, but seemed out of his depth in the political minefield of Nuremberg. During the trial itself, he hardly ever spoke, although once he

intervened in one case with a high level of competence which showed what he was capable of.

His French alternate, Robert Falco, was much more a practising lawyer than a remote scholar, but he too played little part in the trial.

The two Russian judges, Major-General Nikitchenko and Colonel Volchkov, always wore uniform, and were clearly entirely governed by what Stalin told them to say and do, so they were no more interesting than puppets on a string. I was amused to see Nikitchenko get drunk at parties, as did our prosecutor 'Khaki' Roberts.

The Prosecutors

The nominal leader of our delegation was Sir Hartley Shawcross, the Labour Attorney-General, but he was too busy in Parliament to spend much time at the trials, so I saw little of him. I got the impression that he was not a friendly man, unapproachable and vain.

The de facto head of our delegation, Sir David Maxwell-Fyfe, was exactly the opposite. Although he had a formidable legal brain and had virtually reached the top (he later became Lord Chancellor as Lord Kilmuir), he was polite to everyone, very approachable and human. He looked very Jewish, with intensely dark hair, a big nose and thick lips, but he was in fact of pure Scots

blood.

He was undoubtedly the most successful of the prosecutors of any nationality at Nuremberg, and reminded me very much of my CO in Greece and the Desert, Lieutenant-Colonel (later Brigadier) Rob Waller, DSO, MC, who also combined great competence in his job with equally great politeness and approachability.

Next came G D ('Khaki') Roberts, KC. He had been a famous rugger player, and was like a very large, overgrown schoolboy. He walked with a jolly swagger, talked loudly, laughed and joked a lot, and got drunk in public. I found it difficult to understand why he had been chosen as a representative of the British legal profession in so public and international a forum as the Nuremberg Trial.

Lesser legal assistants were Lieutenant-Colonel Mervyn Griffith-Jones of the Coldstream Guards, who later became Common Serjeant in the City of London; Major F Elwyn Jones, later a Labour Lord Chancellor as Lord Elwyn-Jones; Colonel H J Phillimore and Captain J Harcourt Barrington, who later became English judges; and Anthony Marecco.

Griffith-Jones was a social snob who seldom smiled. He obviously thought himself several cuts above the rest of the British delegation, not to say the foreigners. His face normally registered scorn.

Elwyn Jones was exactly the opposite. He always had a smile on his face, and was a kindly, generous soul, who wrote to various influential people to recommend me for jobs when I was to be demobbed.

Phillimore struck me as a dry old stick, conscious of his social eminence, although not in such an unpleasant way as Griffith-Jones. He approached every problem with judicial detachment, giving his judgment with tight lips that moved as little as possible.

Barrington and Marecco were both friendly people with whom I found I could talk freely and interestingly. Marecco, in particular, was a man of the world, with whom I could discuss places outside the UK.

As for the prosecutors from other delegations, I did not have much contact with them. I used to meet them socially at the numerous parties that accompanied life at Nuremberg, and sometimes also professionally, when they wanted a special piece of translation done, but that was about all.

It was, of course, impossible not to notice Justice Jackson, as I have mentioned in my introduction to this book.

Another interesting character was Lieutenant-Colonel Airey Neave, who was a Judicial Aide at the Trial. He struck me as combining extreme shyness with extreme ambition.

He tended to be pompous and to be very anxious about the impression he was creating on people. I was once in on a conversation in which he was asked whether he would be willing to take part in the later trials of the minor war criminals such as concentration camp guards. He answered, 'Yes, provided I am given the rank of brigadier.'

He was a trained lawyer, but did not strike me as having a very good brain. After the war, he became a British Member of Parliament, and was blown up in his car by an IRA bomb.

The Accused

Goering stood head and shoulders above the other accused for sheer personality, dynamism and oracy. One could not help admiring the way he conducted his case, as I have said in the introduction to this book.

Of the other defendants, I felt a particular and personal antipathy for Streicher, the Jew-baiter, because of the way the Nazis had managed to turn my Christian Greek friends against my Jewish Greek friends in Salonica in 1940; Sauckel, the General Plenipotentiary for the Employment Of Labour, and Joint Organiser of the Central Inspection for the Care (!) of Foreign Workers, because of the sufferings I had seen the slave workers undergo in Germany; and Kaltenbrunner, the head of the Central Security Service, which controlled the Gestapo, because of my experiences in the Gestapo gaol in Czechoslovakia.

I felt some sympathy with the generals and admirals. I thought the idea of prosecuting them for doing their job of making preparations for war was absurd: it is the job of all military staffs to draw up plans for all eventualities.

I also thought it absurd and dangerous to prosecute people for carrying out orders. Anyone who refused to do so under a dictatorship, whether a Fascist or a Communist one, could expect a fate worse than simple death, as Admiral Canaris found out when he was tortured and then strung up on piano wire.

Furthermore, I strongly disapproved of blanket prosecutions covering all the SS, or all the General Staff, etc. Some of the members of such organisations thoroughly deserved execution, others did not. Of course, it was the Russian delegation, judges as well as prosecutors, who, under orders from Stalin, wanted to wipe out all possible leaders, just as they had tried to do by massacring the Polish officer corps in 1939. Talk of the pot calling the kettle black!

Part 2

Wanderings

Memoirs Part 2: 1947 -

Leslie A Hill, MC, PhD, FInstD

La Prairie

St Mary

Jersey, CI

Postwar Wanderings

First British Serial Rights

Contents

Chapter	Page
Introduction	1
1 The international scene	6
2 The advantages of being multilingual	20
3 Our trip to Iran, 1947	29
4 On to Tehran	49
5 Asian loos	59
6 Iranian vignettes	64
7 An Isfahan picnic	77
8 Courteous rioters and others	84
9 Wallowing in your dirty bath water	101
10 <u>Real</u> Communism	104
11 Small children learning to swim naturally	110
12 Crab-eating macaques and other creatures	114
13 Indonesian vignettes	125
14 Asian women do it better	131
15 In India, eat vegetarian	138
16 'I am a pencil, I am a pen'	143
17 Indian vignettes	148
18 Getting an ear for Asian music	160
19 Other people's little monsters	164
20 Examining and teaching bodies - genuine and bogus	168
21 Pneumonia strikes!	171
22 Exotic eating	176

23	Getting acclimatised	181
24	Paolo the parrot and Limburger cheese	186
25	My smoking wives	190
26	A woman Rolls driver in France	194
27	Tom cats amid the daphne	198
28	Mud, mud, glorious mud!	202
29	An innocent abroad	206
30	Cruising on the SS 'Geriatrica' with our Yankee cousins	213
31	An island paradise lost	221
32	The celebrity cult	224
33	Taboo subjects	226
34	Mammy wagons and so on	233
35	The Gilbert Islands medical launch	239
36	To prison in Grenada	245
40	Our report on our first visit to the St Geran Hotel in Mauritius, 3 February to 3 March 1988	253
38	Our trip to Brazil, Dec 1988 - Jan 1989	265
39	Our report on our second visit to the St Geran Hotel in Mauritius, February 1989	280
40	'There is no god but God'	289
41	An anti-intellectual intellectual	296
42	Modern 'art'	299
43	Getting my way	302
44	What is a teacher?	306

45	Why I do not contribute to Oxfam etc	309
46	Making up my mind by opposites	312
47	<u>Tu-quoque!</u>	314
48	Puzzling nuns and monks	317
49	The Lord save us from the do-gooders!	321
Appendix Countries Leslie Hill has been to		

Introduction

I left the British army in September 1946, married my Welsh girlfriend, and spent my demobilisation leave in Wales and London, deciding which of three jobs to accept.

The British Control Commission for Germany had offered me an intelligence post in that country, but it meant leaving my new wife behind, as accommodation was in very short supply. Having recently spent nearly four years without female company, first in the Western Desert and then as a prisoner of war in Libya, Italy and Germany, I did not want to have a further few years of celibacy.

Then, Shell Oil had offered me the post of manager in Austria, but only after two or three years in London learning the ropes. After a few weeks of the strict rationing and austerity of London immediately after the war, both Margaret and I decided against that option.

So we chose the third offer, which was for me to return to the British Council as a lecturer in English at the Anglo-Persian Institute in Tehran.

We set out in a ship which took us down the Manchester Ship Canal and round to Haifa, and I began my duties in Tehran in February, teaching classes of adults in the Institute, and ones of teenage boys in the most prestigious local school.

Within a matter of months I was promoted to Director

of Studies, organising classes for 1,000 students with 24 teachers, most of the latter locally appointed, and at the same time lecturing in the Teacher Training Department of Tehran University and training teachers in our own Institute.

After two years of that, I was transferred to Isfahan as Officer in Charge of our Institute there, and two and a half years later moved to Indonesia as British Council Education Officer.

In Isfahan I had begun writing books for the teaching of English as a foreign language, and also studying as an External Student for the University of London BA Honours in English. I already had a BA Honours and MA of the University of London in French and German.

In Indonesia, I began living in Bandung, but commuting to Jakarta to lecture at the University of Indonesia, which meant several nights away from home each week.

After a year of this, the British Council sent me back to England to attend a year's course at the London University Institute of Education and simultaneously at the Department of Phonetics of University College. During this time I continued my private studies for the London BA through a tutorial college.

In June 1953 my efforts were crowned with success: I was given First Class Honours in my BA, and declared

Sketches by Leslie Hill of events from the time he left England to join the British War Crimes Executive until his departure from the Nuremberg Trials

After the anticlimax of VJ Day, life at the Intelligence Corps Depot become even more monotonous. The chance of being posted to the Far East as a captain for intelligence duties had gone, and the round of cricket matches, dances in the Sergeants' Mess and visits to Rotherham palled, so I was delighted to receive orders to proceed to the Marylebone Hotel in London for posting to Paris as a member of the newly formed British War Crimes Executive.

At the Marylebone Hotel, which had been taken over as a military transit centre, I met other officers and ORs who were to go out to Paris with me, and told to get captain's pips on my uniform. I felt excited and glad that my worth had at last been recognised.

I at once noticed one of my fellow officers, a darkly handsome lieutenant in the Northumberland Fusiliers (I was still wearing my Northumberland Hussars badges). He too had been told to put up captain's pips.

I discovered that he was a German Jew who had managed to escape to England from Hitler before the war. He had learnt perfect English, and told me that he had joined the Northumberland Fusiliers because they had a badge at the base of their epaulettes which looked like a pip, so that a second lieutenant looked like a lieutenant, and

a lieutenant like a captain. I must say, when he put on his third pip, his epaulettes looked seriously overloaded.

We travelled over to the Continent with our vehicles on a Landing Ship Tanks, the first time I had seen such a vessel, let alone been on one. I found it immensely interesting and exciting to be on, and luckily the sea was calm so I did not have to have one of my terrifying battles with seasickness.

We spent a couple of days in Ostend. The nearby seaside resort of Blankenberghe was out of bounds to British troops at the time, but Wolf wasn't one to be put off a pleasure by regulations, so he persuaded me to go there on Sunday, find the Town Major's HQ, and ask to see him.

One of his staff saw us, and I said to him in my best official voice, 'We're members of the British War Crimes Executive, and we've come here to look for documents in connection with the forthcoming trial of the major war criminals.'

The officer went in to see the Town Major, and when he came out to us again he was not exactly rude, but advised us to get out of Blankenberghe within ten minutes, or else! I felt put down, but Wolf said, 'One must learn to take the rough with the smooth. And nothing venture, nothing gain!' That was certainly part of his philosophy - charm and cheek, plus not taking it seriously when these

'easily the most distinguished' student of that year, Internal or External. I also obtained the Certificate of the International Phonetic Association, with a First Class and the highest marks anyone had ever got in it up to that time.

Then it was back to Indonesia, but this time to live in Jakarta as Professor of English and Head of the Department. At the same time I worked on an Indonesian government committee preparing detailed syllabuses for the teaching of English in schools, and lectured for a time on a teacher-trainers training course, as well as continuing my writing activities.

My professorship in Indonesia lasted for five years, during which time I obtained my MA of London University by sitting some written papers in London and presenting a thesis, for which I was awarded a Mark of Distinction.

In 1958 I was transferred to India as Chief Education Officer. There I advised the Central and State Governments on English teaching, inspected and ran teacher-training courses, and wrote more books and articles. I worked in every state in India for the next two and a half years except Kashmir, where we were not allowed to operate for political reasons - the dispute between India and Pakistan about ownership of that State - and, for some reason, Rajasthan, which was quite close to New Delhi, where I was based, but which I never got to somehow.

During this time, my marriage had been going seriously wrong, but I had been determined to stick it out as I was very ambitious, and did not want to risk my career by scandal and divorce, which was a serious matter in those days. Contraception was primitive at that time, and both Margaret and I seemed to be hyper-fertile, so by now (1960) we had had four children, an abortion and a miscarriage.

Then in 1960, while I was travelling back from leave on my own by ship, I met my present wife, who was going to Hong Kong to stay with friends to escape from a brutal husband who had reduced her to a state of hysterical paralysis.

In spite of all my resolutions, I fell in love with Jane, and she with me, and we decided to break with our respective spouses and get married as soon as possible.

We did not see each other again for some nine months, but during that time wrote to each other nearly every day. I resigned from the British Council, now confident that I could earn a good living as a writer and occasional lecturer, and when I got back to England in June 1961, we began living together. In January 1963 we finally managed to marry after protracted divorce proceedings.

After that, I was frequently employed by the British Council and Oxford University Press to train teachers and University lecturers on short courses abroad. At one

time I was spending five months of the year on such work, while at the same time writing away busily. I lectured in Saigon during the Vietnam war, in Nigeria just before their civil war, Ethiopia, Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, India, Pakistan, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), as well as closer home in Spain, Portugal and Italy.

In 1971 I accepted a post as English specialist with UNESCO for the South Pacific, lecturing at the University in Suva, Fiji, and touring the whole area from Papua New Guinea in the north to Australia in the south to lecture, advise and give demonstration lessons. But, alas, Jane could not stand the hot humid climate, and I had to return after a year.

All this time I had been working for a London Doctorate of Philosophy, changing my subject after a few years, and in due course I got it with a massive thesis.

I have now written a total of over 200 books in the field of English as a foreign/second language, and am not finished yet!

Leslie Hill has at last got his doctorate--a Ph.D. of London University for a thesis entitled 'A Detailed Analysis of the word-order of 102 letters dictated by Margaret Paston to members of her family, with notes on ways in which this word-order differs from that of MS CCCC A of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and present-day educated English'.

Margaret Paston was the wife of a big landowner in Norfolk towards the end of the 15th Century, and her husband was a Member of Parliament and a lawyer in London, so a lot of letters went back and forth between them. Margaret was illiterate, so she had to dictate her letters, and her style is supposed to be the earliest example we have of really colloquial English.

The reason why Leslie chose to compare the word-order of her letters with that of MS CCCC A is that he analysed the word-order of that for his London MA (for which he got a Mark of Distinction). That thesis was subsequently published by a journal in East Berlin, much to Leslie's surprise (he did not know this was happening until he received his author's copies).

Leslie's Ph.D. thesis is massive--729 pages of A4 paper. There was a bit of excitement when new London University regulations limited theses in the field of English to 100,000 words (Leslie's is about 157,000), but it was agreed that, as he had started work under the old regulations, he could be allowed to stick to them. However, this meant that, instead of taking a maximum of four months to consider the thesis, his examiners took over eight.

After his oral examination on 1 June of this year, Leslie's examiners asked him to make certain changes to the thesis before he could be officially listed as having passed. These corrections were mostly to spellings of Old and Middle English quotations, of which there were some 7,000 in the thesis.

The problems faced by a typist in transcribing such quotations can be seen from an example: the word right is spelt in at least 10 different ways in Margaret Paston's letters: right, rith, ritht, ryght, rygth, ryt, ryth, rythe, rytth and ryt3.

Leslie is now hoping to have this thesis published in the West as a change, but if this is not possible, he will offer it to a Communist publisher. They seem to have more spare cash for learned publications.

It may seem strange for a person still to be taking exams at the age of 60, but this PhDD. of Leslie's is the culmination of nearly 40 years of planning: after taking his BA at Cambridge in 1939 he planned to work for a doctorate at Heidelberg University and the Sorbonne (Paris), but Herr Adolf Hitler stopped this. Then after the war he started to plan again, but by then he had a wife and child to support, and could not afford to take two years off to take up residence in a university town, so he decided to take an External PhD of London University, the only British University which does this. But he then discovered that he would have to take his BA and MA again before being allowed to go on to the PhD (External). He therefore started work for the BA in English in 1949, and in 1953 passed it with First Class Honours. He took his MA in 1956, and then began work on his PhD, only to find that the edition of the Paston Letters which existed at that time was inaccurate. He had to wait until 1972 before an accurate one was produced by Professor Norman DAVIS of Oxford University, and it then took him five years to write his thesis.

Leslie has been working on another thesis since last October. This time it is for a doctorate of the University of Iceland. He is analysing the word-order of a saga written in Old Icelandic in about 1200 AD. Why is he still a student at his age? Because he finds his work of writing books for the teaching of English as a foreign or second language is too easy to engage his brain fully, so he tries to find more taxing activities which are at the same time productive--this time not of money, but of prestige.

Chapter 1: The international scene

The beginning of 1945 had found me a prisoner of war in Germany, starving, in danger of being bombed by our own side, or of being massacred by the SS.

We were released in May, and I was immediately employed temporarily by the British Military Government to help the slave workers and displaced persons who teemed in Germany. I found them ambulances, and helped to keep them out of trouble. I saw released death camp inmates, and because of the many languages I knew, was able to speak to many people who had been slave workers.

Then, after some leave in England, I joined the British War Crimes Executive and searched for documents with a team for a month, before being made head of the British prosecution's translating and interpreting department at the trial in Nuremberg of the major war criminals. There I had to translate terrible documents. One of my staff was a Polish officer, who had been captured by the Russians in 1939, taken to Russia as a prisoner, and sent to Iran when the Russians came over to our side.

I had myself escaped in 1944, and spent six weeks in a Gestapo gaol.

All these experiences could have had one of two effects on me: they could have turned me into a pacifist, determined never to have anything to do with war again, and keen to persuade

other people of the folly of war; or they could have made me the opposite - determined to fight to the death to preserve my freedom, and to persuade others to do the same for theirs.

Whether one reacts in the first of these ways or in the second depends, I believe, on one's own personality. One can divide people roughly into hawks and doves, or into the tough-minded and the tender-minded. Psychologists have worked out tests to determine which class one belongs to - or rather how much of one an individual has, and how much of the other, because most people are somewhere between the two extremes.

I am convinced that the individual's make-up - how far he or she is a hawk, and how far a dove - depends partly on what genes he or she has inherited, and partly on experiences in very early childhood, when the character is formed.

My Polish colleague at Nuremberg was a hawk. So was I.

Nuremberg was the last time that the Russians were more or less cooperative and relaxed with us of the free world. They came to our dances, there were mild flirtations between our men and some of their girls, and the lawyers and judges did not fight each other much.

But there were still contrary signs: all the Russians used to disappear suddenly and simultaneously from parties, presumably at some sign from a commissar; I never heard of any of our men actually managing to bed a Russian girl, although this happened extremely frequently with girls

of other nations; and the Russian judges disagreed with the final verdict of the court because they wanted every one of the defendants to be hanged.

At Nuremberg, I had high hopes of lasting peace, and I did everything I could to be pleasant to the Russians I met, and to help them with their translation problems, despite the fact that, from an early age, I had grown up with strong anti-Communist beliefs.

Soon after Nuremberg, things began to deteriorate. In 1948 came the Berlin blockade, in 1949 we had the first Russian atom bomb, the technology for which had been supplied by scientists whom our side had trusted, but who had handed them over to the Russians. Then came the Korean war in 1950, then the Sputnik, the frequent Russian vetoes in the United Nations, preventing the Security Council from taking action to keep the peace, and then the crushing of the Hungarian revolt against Communist dictatorship in 1956.

In 1949, When the Regular Army Reserve of Officers was formed, I at once volunteered to join it, and remained a member, ready to be recalled to active service at short notice, until I was compulsorily retired at the age of 50. And in 1950, when the Korean War began, I volunteered to go and fight there, but was told that my services were more useful in the civilian job I was doing in troubled Iran.

When the great wave of fear of a Third World War,

this time fought with atom and hydrogen bombs, swept the world, I felt frightened too, but determined that even an atomic holocaust was better than surrender and the sort of slavery I had seen in Germany.

Gradually, it became evident to me that, as long as America and Russia remained evenly balanced militarily, we were pretty safe, and the strain and fear went out of my life. The death of Stalin in 1953, and the access to power of Krushchev in 1958 helped to reduce the tension still more, and Kruschchev's sensible behaviour over the Cuba crisis went still further in doing this. Furthermore, the enmity that grew up between Russia and China helped to reduce the danger.

The winding up of the British and French Empires (but not, incidentally, the vast Russian Empire!) removed further potentially explosive issues. But then, when the 1960's came, with their lunatic flower power and anti-Vietnam manifesations, and then when the Americans elected the wet peanut king, Jimmy Carter, as their President, disaster loomed again. Were the Americans losing their will to defend themselves and us against slavery?

As for the British after the abolition of National Service and years of Labour government, I could see they had lost their will to resist, and although the Continental Europeans were still determined, they were militarily pitifully weak in face of the vast war machine of the Russians and their

satellites.

I have already mentioned the growth of dissent in America. It was accompanied - or even preceded - by determined attempts to overthrow traditional beliefs and attitudes in Britain and other parties of Western Europe. Holland switched from being one of the staidest and most solid countries in the world to being a hotbed of permissiveness, child pornography, drugs and anything else one could imagine. In 1968, Communist and anarchist students tried to stage a new French revolution, which was enthusiastically welcomed by, among others, the journalists of the prestigious 'The Times' of London. And the Beatles started another revolution in England, which spread to most of the free world, again a permissive revolution in which the young strove to throw off the 'shackles' imposed on them by their elders.

Of course, there has been dissent throughout the existence of Man. Socrates was made to take poison some 2500 years ago because he was a dissenter. Hundreds of Roman Catholic dissenters were executed by King Henry VIII and later Queen Elizabeth I, and many Protestant ones by Queen Mary I.

But the dissent of the 1960's differed from previous kinds in three main ways: Firstly, mass media of communication had been improved to such an extent that it was possible to spread new ideas almost instantly. A violent demonstration

by twenty people, in which they crippled a few police horses, could be blown up by television into something of immense significance.

Secondly, for the first time in history, vast numbers of young people could be financially independent from the age of 16 because of the Welfare State. This meant that they did not need to worry about the reactions of their parents and employers to their antics. If they were thrown out on to the street, the State (i.e the taxpayer) would provide.

Thirdly, older people, including those in authority, were deeply divided about standards, and in their attitudes to crime and punishment. The breakdown of religious beliefs, and the influence of bizarre intellectuals like Dr Spock, had confused many people. The 1944 Education Act in Britain had made education 'child-centred' and anti-authoritarian, in the quite mistaken belief that, if children are allowed to choose freely, with no constraints and pressures, they will always choose what is right, and grow up as responsible and caring people.

Better communications and easy money made it possible for the young to revolt against society with the maximum publicity and the minimum discomfort to themselves. And the confusion in the minds of older people meant that the young could get away with violent, destructive and anti-social behaviour, often with nothing but a small fine or a suspended sentence, if anything.

A lot of dissent was, in fact, just good old-fashioned hooliganism, often made more sinister by the use of hallucinatory drugs, and built up by the media into something much more important than it really was. When I was a student at Cambridge, November 5th was always accompanied by riots and attacks on the police for no better reason than 'fun'. I cannot remember the press and radio trying to make out that it was anything more than that.

Pacifism presented a wonderful excuse for dissent: the atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki aroused a storm of indignation among the tender-minded in the world, even though they saved the lives of vast numbers of soldiers - both allied and Japanese - by making an invasion of the Japanese mainland unnecessary. These tender-minded people had, of course, not themselves seen anything of the German death camps or the Japanese POW camps, so they believed in the doctrine that slavery was always preferable to armed resistance.

Of course, there were some older people among the dissenters too: I call them senile delinquents. They happily went around with smelly flowing beards, long unkempt hair, dirty feet in sandals, CND slogans, etc, reminding one of the tramps one used to see everywhere in Britain before the war.

Most of the pacifists were non-violent, but CND had

its violent offshoot, the Committee of 100. Every community has a percentage of mentally unstable people whose main pleasure is destroying property and hurting people. They are useful as soldiers in wartime, provided one can control and channel their aggression. In peacetime, some of them find it enjoyable or wise to join dissenting groups, so that they can claim respectability for their brutal and usually indiscriminate actions.

Passive resistance works well against a gentlemanly governing power, but it is useless against tough, ruthless men. Gandhi discovered and admitted this when he tried passive resistance in South Africa, where the Boers were not willing to behave like gentlemen. He therefore moved to India, where he had the good luck to be up against British authorities who played the game. His success there gave pacifists all over the world the illusion that passive resistance can always work. It cannot.

A ruthless government, which is quite happy to starve, whip, torture and slaughter people in their thousands or even millions (Stalin in Russia, and Pol Pot in Cambodia, hold the 20th Century records), cannot be touched by passive resistance. Even a mass uprising cannot succeed against a well-organised dictator, who uses well-paid spies and informers to spot those who are trying to coordinate resistance, and eliminates them before they can form cells.

The Germans and Japanese in World War II would have

broken any passive resistance in no time. The public torture of a few women and children in each town and village, and the use of brainwashing techniques on leaders, would have been enough. But unfortunately, the tender-minded either do not realize, or refuse to imagine, what tough-minded people are quite ready to do. We all tend to think anthropocentrically, i.e. to imagine that everybody else reacts in the same ways as we do ourselves; but the fact is that they don't. There is an infinite spectrum of possible human behaviour patterns.

Gandhi was once asked, during World War II, whether he did not think it right for us to fight to save the Jews from Hitler. 'No,' he answered. He thought the Jews should simply allow themselves to be slaughtered, and he believed the Germans would soon get fed up or disgusted with the task. Unfortunately, he was one of those numerous idealists who simply know nothing about human nature.

Mao Tse Tung said, 'Power grows out of the barrel of a gun.' He was quite right. As far as I am concerned, the choice is between slavery and fighting. If I fight and am killed, that is better than living as a slave. Of course, I risk being wounded or crippled, but I do so even more as a slave.

Two of the major causes of violent dissent are the subjugation of a country by a dictatorship that has seized power and maintains it by violence or the threat of it, and the subjugation of one racial or cultural group by

another.

Examples of the first are the USSR, Poland, Afghanistan and Cuba. And of the second, Armenia, Kurdistan, Palestine, South Africa, Esthonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

In all such cases, the ideal would be to have referenda, supervised by an independent body acceptable to both sides, so that the inhabitants can decide freely what kind of government they want, or whether they want self-rule. After a referendum, anyone still continuing to dissent violently from the wishes of the majority, using terrorism, would be clearly in the wrong. It would probably be necessary to repeat the referendum every ten years or so to see whether the majority of the population had changed their minds meanwhile.

Another good idea, which was tried successfully in 1922 between Turkey and Greece, is an exchange of populations. Where two countries contain minorities from each other, they agree that these will be repatriated to the one that they belong to racially or culturally etc.

Incidentally, I believe that terrorists who murder people against the wishes of the majority should receive the death penalty - not by hanging, which is a crude and primitive method, but by injection.

Some of the 1960's dissenters believed that they could opt out of the society they despised and hated,

and set up their own independent, wholly self-supporting communes. They did not realise - or did not want to admit - that they could never be independent of society as a whole. If one of them had a serious accident or fell ill, the ambulance was, of course, called from the nearest hospital. And what would have happened if I and a bunch of my friends had fancied some of the prettier girls in a commune, and decided to rape them, despite the probably unsavoury state of their bodies? Wouldn't the commune have called upon the despised police to help them?

Anarchy is, in fact, a possible way of arranging a society, provided it is a very small one, in which everyone knows everyone else, and provided there are no predators about. It exists in small tribes in the Amazon area and in Papua New Guinea, and it existed in my day in certain village areas in Indonesia where, because of the pressure of public opinion, the individual tended to do her or his share without being forced to by anyone. But as soon as a society becomes so big that people are anonymous, anti-social individuals begin to emerge, selfish instincts are released, and the thing breaks down.

It would be nice to be able to get back to a tribal organization of society, but we have become too sophisticated, too soft and too densely populated for that. One can imagine the average tender-minded teenager of today, brought up on a diet of instant satisfaction of demands, instant

TV when bored, instant junk food when hungry, instant medical assistance when ill etc, coping with life in a small entirely self-supporting tribe! The people who could cope with such conditions are the tough-minded old wrinklies the tender-minded young despise!

One of the main problems in our enormously overpopulated countries today is how to produce the food, clothing, housing, medicines etc that people need. We are asked to provide a good life for the weak, poor, lazy and handicapped. But we can do this only if someone produces the necessary food, clothing etc, and if someone also arranges for its transport and distribution from the places of production to the places of consumption. The more overpopulated a community becomes, the harder the task of providing and distributing what it needs.

Why should anyone do these tasks? Why shouldn't each of us provide for herself or himself - or at most for the people he or she loves as well? are instinctively public-spirited, each individual sacrificing itself instantly and unthinkingly for the public good. A few human beings behave like this too - the ones we call saintly. But all of us know that the mass of the people in any big community need to have incentives to do more than the minimum amount of work they need to do to satisfy their own needs.

If A sees that B is doing much less work but receiving the same rewards, he or she tends to think, 'Why should I

sweat my guts out and get the same as that lazy (or incompetent) creature?'

Then there is the question of relative values of different kinds of work. Why should a bank manager get more than a bank clerk for the same number of hours of work a week? Why should a hospital nurse get less per hour than the consultant she works with every day? We thus come to the problem of evaluating skills and trying, by giving them better incentives, to get people to do more difficult work, when they could be doing something much easier.

In a community where market forces are allowed free rein, people are paid as much as is needed to get them to do the most useful work they are capable of. If the pay for a particular kind of work is too low to attract enough people capable of doing it, one finds either that the people who are willing to do it are not really competent, or that one is unable to find enough people to fill the posts available. Nurses, policemen and prison officers are often in this category.

Of course, money is not the only possible incentive: there is respect, honour, perks such as a more comfortable place to have lunch, with a bigger choice of dishes at subsidised prices, special shops where the general public are excluded and one can buy luxuries not available elsewhere, etc.

To produce people capable of doing the tasks needed in a community - including, in a democracy, being voters - education and training are needed, and these have to be based on some kind of philosophy. One has to decide whether to have an elitist system, in which children are encouraged to compete, and to do their best, or an egalitarian one, in which differences in ability are deliberately played down, the weak and unintelligent are encouraged and helped at the expense of the strong and intelligent.

Both these approaches have their advantages and disadvantages. It is alarmingly obvious in schools how the bright children deliberately slack to gain acceptance from their fellows unless there are strong incentives to the contrary; and these bright pupils also tend to get bored by the slow progress to which their teachers hold them in order not to overdo things for the others, so that they become delinquents to get some excitement.

The terrifying thing is that many who leave school at 16 are functionally illiterate and appallingly ill-informed about important matters, but yet at 18 they become voters, and therefore easy meat for unscrupulous demagogues.

Fortunately, the public in Britain is slowly becoming more aware of some highly important matters, such as the advisability of eating healthy food, not smoking, and cutting down on the use of aerosols which damage the ozone layer protecting our earth from being frizzled up by the sun.

Chapter 2: The advantages of being multilingual

Having an English father, and a Greek mother who had been born and brought up in Germany, and therefore spoke German with her brothers and sisters, and then having had a Russian tutor of French origin who taught me French, I reached the age of 10 able to communicate in all four of those languages without having had any really formal instruction in any of them.

Later, at school, I learnt Latin and Spanish up to the equivalent of GCE A levels, then learnt very good Italian, passable Russian and a smattering of many other languages as a POW in Italy, and went on after the war to learn reasonable Persian (I could even type the language, in which one writes from right to left!) and then Indonesian.

I have always found that, if one learns even a modest amount of a foreign language, when one goes to a country where it is spoken, people treat one in a more friendly way, partly, I think, because they are happy that one has taken the trouble to learn some of their language.

As I trained as a phonetician at the University of London in 1952-3, I am able to mimic foreign pronunciations pretty well, and this is sometimes a disadvantage, since a foreigner, hearing me speak a few words with apparently native perfection of sounds, stresses and intonation, thinks

I must be highly fluent, and launches into a stream of language which he would never inflict on someone he thought was a beginner.

It is not only the ability to say a few words in a foreign language that can break down barriers: it occurs between dialects of the same language. Professor Gimson, who taught me phonetics at London University, used to tell the story of his attempts to buy cigarettes during the war, when they were severely rationed, and therefore often under the counter. If he went into a tobacconist's and asked for cigarettes in his ordinary English, the person behind the counter nearly always said, 'Sorry, sir. We ain't 'ad none in today.' But if he said, 'Go' 'ny fags, choom?' he would often be successful.

Of course, unless one has some linguistic training, one always thinks that it is other people who have an accent, not oneself. I knew one New Zealand gentleman who had come to England with his brothers in the 1920's and had lived with them in Surrey for thirty years, during which time their broad New Zealand accent had naturally become somewhat modified. When he went back to New Zealand on a visit, he was appalled at the broadness of the accent there. 'Do you know,' he said to me on his return, 'it's deteriorated terribly since we left. In fact, to tell you the truth, there are only three people I know who speak English without any accent at

all - me and my two brothers.'

Many words are similar to each other in different European languages - for example, 'information' in English, French and German. But there are some dangerous similarities - what the French call 'false friends'. Shortly before World War II, Hitler said he would 'eventuell' occupy a certain country (I forget which). The British press translated this as 'eventually', which of course meant that Hitler definitely planned to invade it sooner or later. But in fact 'eventuell' in German means 'possibly'. Hitler only meant that he might, under certain circumstances, feel obliged to invade the country in question.

My own clearest memory of an embarrassing mistranslation of this kind comes from an international conference in Ceylon, as it was then called, at which I was one of the British delegates. We had official French interpreters, who did a good job, but were not familiar with technical linguistic jargon.

There was a long and acrimonious wrangle one morning between the French, on one side, and the British and Americans on the other, as to whether language is logical or not. The French said it was, we said it wasn't. Then, out of my dim and distant university days came a flash of memory: 'logique' in French covers both 'logical' and 'systematic' in English. Everybody agreed happily that language is 'systematic', but not 'logical' in the English sense of the word, so harmony

was restored.

Then, did you know that when a Spaniard says he is 'constipado' he just means he has a cold?

I have a brother Dick, who always used to arouse hilarity as a child in Germany, because there 'dick' means 'fat', and he was in fact quite thin.

'Ann(e)' is a particularly unfortunate name to be saddled with if one is going to Iran. In Persian it means 'excrement' or 'faeces'.

My father, who did not speak any German, was always amused when he saw the sign 'Wurstwaren' over a shop, as it conjured up to him pictures of teeming families in indescribable slum conditions. At first I used to explain impatiently that it only meant a perfectly clean and respectable sausage shop, but I gave up when I realised that he knew this perfectly well, but still enjoyed the joke.

Then, when I was teaching English in Greece just after having graduated from Cambridge, I reduced a class of schoolgirls to hysterical mirth by calling a character in one of my stories Mr Butcher. It took me some time to discover that the name sounded almost exactly the same as a definitely coarse word for the male sexual organ in Greek.

Straightforward mistranslation can also be dangerous:

After I had run a course for teachers of English in Japan, a charming lady trainee came up to me, bowed ceremoniously and thanked me, with a sweet smile, for my three weeks of 'suggestive' lectures.

Idioms can be equally treacherous: there was an au pair girl working in England who was so hot in the kitchen one summer's evening that she decided to go out into the garden and 'blow off' for a few minutes.

There are also pitfalls when one tries to use a foreign word and finds that it has odd idiomatic quirks to its uses. Did you know that, if you are a lady, you should never say to the French waiter that you are not going to have any of his delicious desserts because you are 'pleine'? 'Pleine' does not mean 'full' in such a case: it means 'pregnant' - and it is only used for animals anyway! Incidentally, if you are a man, and you say you are 'plein', that means 'full' all right, but of alcohol, not food!

While we are on the subject, perhaps you remember from your 'schooldays' that 'baiser' means 'to kiss'. Well, forget it! It no longer does. It now refers to a much more intimate activity that happens between a man and a woman in bed. Look in Cassell's French Dictionary if you want confirmation.

This, of course, has also happened to some English words. 'Gay' no longer has the connotations it used to have in my young days. Another which I had not noticed until a

lady student of mine in Tehran used it in a composition is 'intercourse.' She wrote, in complete innocence, 'We have intercourse with our teachers at the Institute on Saturday afternoons.'

Misunderstandings arising from mispronunciations are, of course, legion. Perhaps you know the story of the Australian nurse in a hospital in England who asked a nervous patient, 'Did you come in to die (today)?', expecting some such answer as 'No, I came in yesterday' rather than a sudden flood of tears.

Once when I was staying in a colleague's house in Bombay, the cook came to see what I would like for lunch. 'Boiled piss is nice,' he suggested. It took me a few seconds to remember that the local people could not pronounce 'f' or 'sh'.

Most people have no doubt heard of the problems Chinese and Japanese speakers have with 'l' and 'r': if a Chinese lady offers you 'lice' for dinner, you should accept graciously.

The first time I flew to Tokyo, I was much impressed by the beautifully clear intercom on the Japanese Airlines plane. Instead of the usual mumbles and squeaks that come out when the air hostess has an announcement to make, every word uttered by the charming little Japanese air hostess came out clear and bell-like. As we approached Tokyo, she announced: 'Radies and gentremen, the pirate hopes you have enjoyed your fright, and that you wi^{ll} soon fry with

us again.'

Then there was the Laotian doctor who was giving me advice about headaches. 'Swallow two of these pins every four hours with water,' he said. It wasn't till I opened the little box he had given me and saw that it contained pills and not pins that I was sure he was not trying to murder me. I later discovered that, whereas Laotians have no difficulty at all in distinguishing between 'l' and 'n' at the beginning and in the middle of a word, as in 'lily' and 'ninny', for example, it does not matter to them whether one pronounces the sound at the end of a word as 'l' or 'n'.

When one is speaking Italian, it is important to make a distinction between single and doubled consonants. We can compare the way we distinguish between 'car-pool' and 'carp-pool' in English: at normal speed, we do not pause between 'carp' and 'pool'; we simply hold the 'p' sound twice as long as in 'car-pool'. In Italian, this contrast between single and doubled consonants occurs even within words. For example, the word 'anno', meaning 'year', has an 'n' sound which is held twice as long as a single 'n'. If you make a mistake, people think you are saying 'ano', which means 'anus'!

Stress and intonation are important too: a 'rubber plant' is one that produces rubber, whereas a 'rubber plant' would be one that is made of rubber. In Greek 'kalós' means

'good', but 'kálos' means a corn on one's foot.

In English we show that we are asking a question (if we are not using a question word such as 'who' or 'where') by raising the tone at the end of the sentence; e.g. 'You were late last night?', as against the statement

'You were late last night.' In Greek, however, raising the tone in this way simply means that one has not finished the sentence yet, so one's listener will not answer, but simply wait for us to continue. If we want to show a Greek that we are asking a question, we have to raise and then drop the tone on the last syllable; e.g. 'You were late last night?'

Professor Gimson, who taught me phonetics at London University, had a good story about the importance of intonation for understanding: he used to tell the story of the kind English lady just after the war who invited two of his Swedish students to Christmas lunch. In those days, rationing was severe, and it was extremely difficult to find a turkey, so this lady was very pleased that she had managed to get one. As she carried it into the dining-room, she said proudly, 'I hope you like turkey,' and was vastly disappointed to be greeted with a chorus of 'Yes.'

It turned out that, whereas this high-low-high pattern

shows doubt and lack of interest in English, it shows great pleasure and excitement in Swedish.

Chapter 3: Our trip to Iran, 1947

London, 1 Jan 1947 (Wednesday)

Went downstairs for the mail as usual, to find a telegram from the British Council, asking whether we would accept passages on the third, and requesting us to phone the Communications Department the same morning.

I phoned at 9.15, but Mr Hemans was not in. Another man told me that he thought we would leave on the 4th, and told me Mr Hemans would ring me when he arrived.

Mr Hemans rang later during the morning, confirmed that it was the third, said we were sailing from Manchester and asked me to come round at 2.

While Margaret went on an abortive expedition to the bank, which was closed, I went to the Council at 2. I filled in a Board of Trade form, collected baggage insurance forms and was asked to return at 2 the next day for the ticket, passports etc.

Last minute shopping and packing made this a hectic day. During the afternoon we collected our three trunks from Paddington and took them to Euston by taxi. Mr Hemans had suggested the 8 o'clock train to Manchester on Friday, but we decided on the earlier (midnight) train, as we had to be at Salford by 3 p.m, and fog might delay us.

Phoned Swansea to find out about our two cases of

household things. Nest said George had sent them off on Monday or Tuesday.

2 Jan (Thursday)

Went to the bank. As the Council had not yet paid my installation grant, Mr Thomson kindly allowed me to draw an equivalent sum in advance. Margaret also drew some money, as we thought we would be allowed to take out £75 each in sterling.

Collected my topee, camp beds, mosquito nets, black shoes and pants from Alkit's. A message from the Council put off our collection of tickets till 4.30.

Went to Granny's and took her our spare rations. Phoned Paddington Goods, and found that our two cases had arrived. Went there and took them to Euston, while Margaret did some shopping and collected some Aertex shirts and pants I had ordered the day before.

I collected our ticket and visas at 4.30, gave in our insurance forms (just over £2,000 worth of baggage) and had a long discussion about money. I saw from the shipping line's instructions that we were only allowed to take £10 each in sterling. By rights, Mr Hemans said, we should have been provided with traveller's cheques and foreign currency, but time had been too short. However, the Council managed to get me £50 worth of traveller's cheques at the last moment, and I gave them my surplus pounds for transfer

to my bank account next day. I was told that the Council would meet us at Haifa and arrange for our further journey, and for money for Persia, which is outside the sterling area.

Our boat, we were told, was the 'Arabian Prince', sailing from No. 7 dock, No. 5 shed, Salford, which is some miles from the station at Manchester.

Took our luggage from Horbury Cescent to Euston in a heavily loaded taxi and then went to dinner at the Acropolis, after which we sat at Aunt Enid's chatting with Aunt Enid, Uncle Bill and Lance till 10.30 p.m. Aunt Enid suggested taking a sleeper.

Went to Euston, collected our 23 pieces of luggage, had them weighed (10 cwt, on which we paid over £6 excess), got two third class sleeper berths, got everything on the train, and so to bed, sharing our sleeper compartment with two other travellers for the same boat. Discovered that my pyjamas had been left in my bed in London.

Manchester, 3 Jan

Our train reached Manchester at about 4.30 a.m, but we were allowed to stay in it till 7.30. I managed to arrange for the railway to deliver our heavier luggage to the dock (the saloon taxis of Manchester could never have dealt with it). We then went to the Grand Hotel, where we washed, I shaved and we had breakfast with our travelling companions. He was a paint manufacturer, and they were bound

for Haifa, where he was to run a factory for a year. She was his wife.

After breakfast we bought some pyjamas and then sat in the hotel till 12. We went to the station, collected our light luggage and went to the dock by taxi. Our heavy luggage had already arrived and we went on board, but had to leave all our luggage on shore for the Customs. Went ashore again to post our excess money to the bank.

The Immigration and Customs officers visited us, and then we got our light luggage to our cabins and the heavy stuff aboard. First we were given one double-decker cabin, but later two singles, as two people apparently cried off. Besides our previously met travelling companions, we had an aged couple on a visit to a Colonial Office daughter in Palestine, another couple - he, I think an Arab, and two ladies, a Foreign Office spinster and a German-Jewess(?) on a visit to her parents in Haifa.

Our last meal of the day is high tea at 5 - fried sole and chips, cold mutton and potato salad, bread, butter, jam and tea.

Sandwiches (cheese) at 7.30 are a pleasant surprise. Margaret has a 'bath' in a couple of bucketsful of hot water, while I chat till 9 in the Social Room, mainly with the German-Jewess and the paint manufacturer's wife.

4 Jan (Saturday)

Called at 7.45 with tea. Ship leaves Salford at 8.20.

Breakfast at 8.30 - all-bran (or porridge, cornflakes, shredded wheat), liver and smoked bacon, bread, butter, marmalade and coffee (or tea).

Down the ship canal, passing through locks and dull, flat country, to Liverpool, which we reach about midday. From then till 5 we coal, and again from 8 p.m onwards. All doors and portholes are kept closed to keep out coal dust, so we have no exercise.

Lunch at 12.30 is soup, pork, rice pudding, biscuits, cheese, bread, butter and coffee. Tea at 5.30 - bread, butter, jam and tea. Dinner - cod, lamb chops, pressed beef, bread, butter, jam and tea. Sandwiches at 8. Cigarettes at 2/6 for 50 (as against 6/3 ashore) on sale, but bar not open yet. The food is an average Englishman's dream - no fruit or vegetables except a little watery cabbage at lunch, boiled beetroot and raw onion salad at night, and tomato quarters (very few) with the sandwiches.

I am reading an interesting biography of Mohammed by Essad bey.

Our two cabins are directly below the coal chute. Each time a truck is tipped down it, there is a thundering roar of coal above our heads and down into the bunkers.

Liverpool, 5 Jan (Sunday)

Coaling apparently stopped at 3 a.m., and when we went up for breakfast we could get on deck. The bunkers are full, and part of the deck covered with coal dust. It is a gloomy, overcast morning with a frosty wind blowing. We are moored alongside a coal chute, one of a series scattered along both sides of the canal along this stretch. The banks are high, grass-covered and terribly desolate-looking.

11 a.m Left the coaling wharf under tow by a tug and continued down the canal.

12 to 2.15 (about) Waited just below a lock till a large Norwegian oil tanker passed, going inland.

Reached the last lock before the sea at about 6, after waiting about for a couple of hours, went back up the canal a short distance again, owing to a warning of southerly and south-easterly gales in the Shannon area.

The bar opened at 8.30 for the first time. Gin and sherry are about the only hard drinks at present - no beer. Margaret and I had gin and ginger ale.

Liverpool, 6 Jan (Monday)

My 29th birthday.

On calling us at 7.15, the steward tells us it is snowing.

At about 8 we start moving, and a few minutes later reach the lock again. It is snowing and lying on the ground.

9 a.m Looked out, to find that we are at last out of the canal, on a calm sea.

Foggy, bad visibility, strong wind and roughish sea as we got further out.

7 Jan (Tuesday)

Rough. Retired to bed before breakfast and stayed there till Friday 10th, eating next to nothing. Was not sick, but felt bad. The Bay of Biscay was very rough. Margaret felt well throughout.

10 Jan (Friday)

Up for an hour in the morning, then to bed again.

11 Jan (Saturday)

Got up at last. Passed Cape St Vincent in the afternoon. Sea became much better, with a long swell.

12 Jan (Sunday)

Smooth sea, lovely sunshine. Passed Gib at 8.30 a.m. Saw dolphins and smelt the pines on the Spanish coast. The African coast has the water-colour quality of the Greek landscape.

In the afternoon see the Sierra Nevada, with snow on

one high mountain. Small dolphins play about the ship. We spend most of the day sunbathing in deck chairs on the fore-hatch cover. Throughout the day there are small whitecaps on the sea, which is Prussian blue. I study Persian most of the day.

At about 9.30 fog comes down and lasts half an hour or so. First of all the ship uses a naval siren instead of the foghorn, an ear-splitter which makes us all jump in the lounge. Then the foghorn, a milder affair, comes into use.

Excellent dinner - chicken soup, sole, chicken, plum pudding, biscuits and cheese and an apple.

13 Jan (Monday)

The sea is even calmer than yesterday and there are no whitecaps. The deck is still wet from the fog. Then sun is shining brilliantly. The African coast can be seen, lowish and not very clear.

As the day goes on, the coast unfolds before us, rugged, hilly and much like Greece. Again we sunbathe all day, and there is a lovely sunset as we are having our baths at about 5.30. We have a bath in sea-water with special soap, and then rinse in sweet water.

Just after dinner, at about 6.30, we are opposite Algiers, a long string of lights. The evening air is balmy and the stars very clear.

A pingpong table is put up in the evening, and Margaret distinguishes herself.

14 Jan (Tuesday)

Wake up to find the sky overcast, a slight swell, and the coast dimly visible. The wind has turned to north.

As the day went on, the swell grew worse. I lay down about 4, but got up for dinner and then back to bed.

We passed another part of the coast during the morning, that around Philippeville, but the rest of the day we were out of sight of land.

15 Jan (Wednesday)

The ship rocked still more, but we continued to sunbathe. Just after breakfast we could see Pantellaria dimly astern, a sugar-loaf mountain of some height.

Retired to bed after lunch till my bath at 5. Then up till 9. Clocks go on an hour tonight. Sea rougher.

16 Jan (Thursday)

Sea rougher than Biscay. Went to bed after breakfast.

17 Jan (Friday)

Rough all day. Gale at midday. Ship hove to, then crawled at 4 knots for rest of day.

18 Jan (Saturday)

Woke up to find calm sea, in lee of Crete. The island was close by us, and we did not clear it till midday. A beautiful snow-capped mountain was visible quite close.

19 Jan (Sunday)

Fine, with slight southerly swell. Wrote to Granny.

Haifa, 20 Jan (Monday)

Arrived Haifa in pouring rain. Landed by Arab motor launch. Charged £1 for use of launch! Had argument with porters who brought luggage off ship. Gave them 6/3 for 14 pieces. Left most of the luggage at Customs and went by taxi to Windsor Hotel. Margaret fell down Customs House steps and hurt ankles.

Booked in at hotel and phoned Council. Mr Hunter, the head of the British Institute in Haifa, came to hotel. Pleasant and helpful. Took me to Cook's across the way, where I booked for Baghdad bus (via Damascus), probably for 6 a.m tomorrow. Cashed £4 traveller's cheques, arranged for luggage to be sent through Palestine on manifest (avoiding Customs in Palestine).

Had lunch (poached egg on spinach, fried fish and chips, cauliflower au gratin, tomato salad, oranges and tangerines. Lovely!).

After lunch we waited till 2 for a phone call from Hunter to confirm a dinner date at his flat, and then went out. We went to Cook's and arranged to come again at 5.30 to inspect the heavy luggage. We were told that we would leave at 6 a.m tomorrow and spend the night in Damascus, so I got some Syrian and Iraqi money.

We then set out for a walk, but were recalled to the hotel by a shoeblack, as Hunter had phoned. We rang him, and he asked us to come round to the Institute that evening, and then to dinner.

We resumed our walk, going along the main shopping street, the lowest one parallel to the sea. There were lots of things in the shops which one couldn't get in England, or only with difficulty - many brands of cigarettes (English and Eastern), chocolate without points, well-stocked bookshops (Trevelyan's 'History of England'), toilet preparations such as Pond's cold cream, which Margaret had been unable to find in England. We bought some of that, and clip-on dark glasses for myself.

The market and bazaar were very like Greece. Lots of hammals (porters), narrow streets with little shops, pitifully thin horses pulling carts, a little donkey carrying a man. Palestinian police are plentiful, and barbed wire entanglements and armed guards around several buildings. The army, especially the airborne beret, is very much in evidence, and all ranks go armed, with revolvers, rifles or sten guns.

We returned to the hotel about 4, and then I set off alone to find the post office. After being misdirected twice, I reached the makeshift quarters it is using since the bomb outside the police HQ damaged it. I posted our letters and then went to the bazaar, where I bought bananas and Smyrna dried figs. It rained off and on most of the day, and blew too.

On my return to the hotel, we ate bananas and figs and then waited till 5.30. Alas, the heavy luggage had not yet been unloaded! We went off to the British Institute to see Hunter and suggest waiting for the next bus on Friday, as one cannot send unaccompanied luggage from Baghdad to Tehran anyhow, so we would have to wait for it either in Haifa or in Baghdad.

The Institute is a handsome building on the way up the hill on which Haifa is built. It is made of the usual warm beige local stone, and is obviously designed for coolness. We were taken to the library, a large one with a quiet and studious atmosphere, run by a pleasant young Arab, and stayed there till 7, when we went to hear a gramophone concert in a detached hall with very modern wood and canvas chairs.

Hunter agreed with us about postponing our departure, and we informed Cook's accordingly.

At about 8.15 Hunter drove us up to his flat in the

Council Austin. He lives in a charming modern flat high on the hill, with his wife and two sons (the eldest ten). She is crippled on one side apparently, and a charming and attractive woman in an unflashy way.

We had sherry, an uninteresting dinner (bully pie?) and then chatted till 11.30. Against my usual habit, I did most of the talking. Mrs Hunter was torpedoed during the war, and one and a half days in an open boat with a six-year-old son, and another on the way, born three weeks after arrival in England. They find it impossible to make ends meet here. She teaches at an English girls' school and kindergarten.

After a gin and lime, Hunter drove us back to the hotel, and we retired at midnight after a long day, with aching legs, though I felt very alert and unsleepy, possibly owing to the amount I slept at sea.

21 Jan (Tuesday)

Up at 8.15. Breakfast at 9 (poached egg on toast, coffee, toast, butter and marmalade). I was charged 10d for an extra egg.

Went to Cook's, changed more money and arranged to be fetched tomorrow morning to inspect heavy luggage before it is wired.

Went to Spinney's department store (wool 2/- per ounce!). On to Council, where I read Sykes' 'History of Persia' and Margaret knitted. Chatted to the Arab librarian who wants

to go to the USA, where his uncle has made a fortune.

Lunch at the hotel (kedgereeee, tournedos, fruit). Went to buy oranges. Caught in heavy rain. Bought oranges and tangerines. Had an Arab haircut and then washed hair. Went to the Institute at 5 and took out Sykes (both volumes). Ate some of our fruit and read Sykes.

Dinner (lentil soup, beef and creme), followed by araq.

22 Jan (Wednesday)

Went down to docks with Cook's man about our heavy luggage. Not in Custom's shed, so went by launch to 'Arabian Prince', which we found moored to jetty and unloading potatoes. Told that our luggage had been unloaded that morning. Went on foot to Customs shed and found it had arrived. Opened three pieces, and found it looking as if it had been disturbed, but could not find anything missing. Took out Margaret's raincoat and returned to hotel.

The weather was fine, so we walked up the hill towards the right, and then back again, taking about two hours, walking along steep tracks part of the way. There is plenty of vivid green grass about after the rain, and lots of thorny scrubby plants like Greece. The view from above over the strip of plain beside the sea is attractive. The sea was rolling in against the southern part, with lines of breakers.

Bought dried figs, bananas, oranges and tangerines.

Read Sykes after lunch and went for a stroll after dinner. The bars are doing a brisk trade with the army.

The food in the hotel is dull, English stuff.

23 Jan (Thursday)

Went to Cook's, and then visited the bazaar, which is very much like Turkey and Greece. The amount to be seen there in a small area and the crowds of picturesque people in a narrow space make one's head spin. One really needs to go through it in a leisurely manner.

In the afternoon we walked to the Casino in a southern suburb of Haifa. The sea was coming in in huge breakers, and there was a strong wind. This suburb looks entirely Jewish. The houses are very attractive, mostly one-storeyed in the ubiquitous yellow stone or cement, with flat roofs, shutters and often Gothic arches framing a porch.

In the evening we went to the Institute to return Sykes and say goodbye. I have nearly finished volume 1, having reached the final defeat of the White Huns.

24 Jan (Friday)

Called at 5, breakfast at 5.45 and to Cook's at 6, where the twelve-seater Nairn bus (a 'small' one) awaits us. We are the only two passengers, and the driver a pleasant Arab (we think he is an Arab, at least). With our luggage crammed in and on top, we leave shortly after 6.

Dawn sees us beyond Acre in a rocky landscape much like Greece. There are olive groves in plenty and bits of tilled soil. We wind up between hills west and then north of the Sea of Galilee, which looks misty owing to threatening rain, and then descend to a frontier post.

Across flat country, which much resembles northern Germany, to the Jordan and then Palestinian and Syrian frontiers. At the latter we have to fill in currency declarations, but are not troubled otherwise.

On across flat country, slightly flooded in parts. It rains intermittently and a lovely, bright rainbow is visible against a fantastically dark rain cloud, through which a snow-capped mountain later appears.

We reach Damascus at 11.15, have our luggage weighed (11 cwt and £29 excess to pay!) and then go to a hotel for lunch, provided by Nairn inclusive of the cost of the ticket. The lunch is reasonable, but coffee and a fill-up of the same for our thermos cost over 6/-!

After lunch we return in our bus to the Nairn depot, where the huge desert bus is loaded up. Our heavy baggage goes in a lorry. We get into the bus, which seats 19 and is full. It is a trailer attached to a driver's cab, and is silver in colour. The seats are canvas slung on tubular steel, and there are padded headrests.

Of our fellow-passengers, two are Belgians (a diplomat and his wife), two possibly English (Mr & Mrs Weech, he speaking good, she broken English), a little boy with a crippled leg, wearing an English school cap, a very bright tie and loose check trousers, accompanied by his pretty mother (they are probably Persians and are going to Iran), and a gang of Arabs, including an enormously fat dame with lipstick and plucked eyebrows.

The bus has a lavatory in the rear. An Englishman we met next day in Baghdad had a grudge against this lavatory: he was once following the bus on an Iraqi clay road on a motor bike when someone pulled the plug, and he skidded on the wet clay and came a cropper.

A man called 'George' is the bus steward, our convoy leader is Ahmad, and the second driver M. Ali.

We pass through Damascus and out on to a road which leads us east. The bus runs fast (it keeps up 50 mph, our Baghdad acquaintance told us), but bumps about a certain amount. We get on to desert with a sand ridge on our left, and run along till 3.45, when George hands out enamel mugs, sugar and milk. At 4.00 the bus stops and we get tea from a vast thermos, and petit beurre biscuits. Then on again. Darkness falls, the large Arab woman in mixed Western and Eastern dress makes loud hawking noises, but doesn't spit. A procession drifts along to the lavatory, where the bumping over the desert makes things difficult.

At about 6 George goes round with drinks - whisky, gin, brandy and squash, but the coffee in Damascus taught us a lesson, and we decline. We have some lemonade of our own and our coffee.

At 6.45 we hear that we are stopping at 10, and imagine that that will be for dinner, so we eat some figs, nuts, raisins and chocolate. Then at 7 we are given neat cardboard boxes labelled 'Lunch. If you like our service, tell your friends. If you don't, tell us.' Inside are six sandwiches, a banana, two tangerines, a hard-boiled egg and a few dates stuffed with almonds. George comes round with salt for the egg, and then tips our seats back so that we can sleep.

I sleep off and on till 10, being in a semi-doped state part of the time. At 10 we stop at a 'desert hotel' for tea - a cold, starry, invigorating night. The bus is air-conditioned, so warm and not stuffy. We stop now and then, and sinister-looking Arabs peer in.

25 Jan (Saturday)

Sleep again till 4 a.m, when we stop at Ramadi, where we wash and breakfast in another desert hotel - native unleavened bread, two fried eggs and the fruit left over from last night.

On at 5 to Baghdad, crossing the Euphrates soon after dawn. Reach Baghdad at 7 (8 by Iraqi time) and are put down some way outside, at the airport Customs place.

A hotel tout cottons on to us, but I do nothing till I phone the Council. There is only a girl secretary there, but she suggests that we should go to the Semiramis Hotel (the tout's) for the time being, so we clear our light luggage from the Customs and are taken to the hotel. I change some money at Cook's, almost next door to the hotel, have an argument with the taximan, who asks for £11, and get settled in the hotel. Then go to Cook's, who arrange everything (very good and efficient). Go to British Council man, who has never heard of us, but is helpful and instructs Cook's to get us transport to Tehran at Council's expense. Council will also pay excess luggage, but we pay hotel.

Meet our Baghdad acquaintance, ex-RASC, now in an Indian firm. He is flying to Tehran today. Bring our light luggage down at 12 and take it to the Levant Express, who are to take us to Tehran at 4.45 a.m tomorrow. Go with Levant man to Customs again to take delivery of heavy luggage. Lorry has only just arrived, and our last piece of luggage is not clear till 1.30, by which time I am starving.

Back to hotel and lunch (excellent: soup, macaroni with minced meat and grated cheese, rice and spinach cooked with meat (they wanted us to have boiled salted ham, boiled spuds and veg!), bananas and cream, fruit and coffee). Pay hotel bill (£3.6.0, not bad) and we go for a walk along main street to bazaar, then across bridge to British Institute, where we chat with two members of the staff, and back to the hotel

for tea and dryish biscuits.

Bath at 6.30, then excellent dinner (soup, savoury omelette (instead of fish), tender, underdone tournedos, Swiss roll soaked in something like sherry and covered with whipped cream, fruit and nuts). Early to bed.

Chapter 4: On to Tehran

26 Jan (Sunday)

Up at 4 and off at 5 in a comfortable Chevrolet saloon with an Arab driver. Most of our luggage goes in a Levant Express lorry.

We reach Khanikin soon after sunrise and have breakfast there - unleavened bread, fried eggs and tea. At one point we cross a river on a narrow bridge shared by the railway.

At Khanikin we go through the Iraqi Customs. Our driver, who speaks some French, says that we will have to wait 4 or 5 hours for the lorry unless we pay the Customs people some bakhshish, so he pays them 3/-. I sign a paper and we go on.

The Persian frontier building is attractive compared with Iraqi architecture. The Customs man agrees to seal the luggage in the lorry and send it through to Tehran, and tries to work a little racket re our wireless. He says that he should really keep the wireless back and put it in the lorry. We play dumb, and after hanging around a bit he lets us through, wireless and all. As far as I can see, the only people who stand to gain by bribery are the Levant Express, as it is in their interest to get through as quickly as possible.

On through an English-looking countryside - grassy downland - and then two ranges of mountains to cross, with

a bit of snow on them.

Kermanshah and lunch at 2, and then onwards to the Paytakht pass, where the snow is deep and the road slippery. By this time I am feeling carsick. We reach Hamadan at about 6 p.m and stay at a hotel which looks like an old khan. I go straight to bed, while Margaret has dinner. Then to sleep, with a buzzing in my ears, probably caused by the height.

27 Jan (Monday)

Up at 4 and breakfast at 4.30 (two boiled eggs, unleavened bread, butter, honey and white cheese). Off at 5, with an extra passenger, a Persian. Still feel ill.

After passing through Qazvin, we follow the Elburz mountains, beautifully snowy range. On the other side is a plain, with another parallel range in the distance, which we cross soon after leaving Hamadan.

Reach Tehran at 12 (surprisingly early). A message awaits us at the Levant Express office, telling us to go to the Ritz Hotel. There the British Council admin officer comes to see us. We have lunch (they serve no vegetables at lunch time, only meat of various kinds, hors d'oeuvre and potatoes!), then the admin officer collects us and takes us in a Council #5 cwt to the Council offices, where we meet the representative and assistant representative - both very pleasant.

The assistant rep takes us to see a flat he and his wife lived in before they had a child. It is in a Persian house, and we are seeing the owner tomorrow to arrange to take it.

Picked up by Blomfield, the rep, and taken to the Institute, where we meet the director and assistant director, McLelland and Sandrey, who show us round.

Then we have drinks at the bar, followed by drinks at their house, where we meet Mrs McLelland. Then dinner at the Institute restaurant (chicken, potatoes, carrots, apple pie), more drinks and back to the Ritz, to find that we have still only one single bed in our room. However, a camp bed is rigged up.

The Institute used to belong to the Prime Minister, and then became a Russian officers' club. It is a large, imposing building with attractive gardens and separate buildings for the theatre and classrooms. A Persian lectured on the development of music this evening in the theatre building.

28 Jan (Tuesday)

Went to Consulate for registration. The consul we saw was pleasant and amusing. We were then taken to the police station by a Greek employed by the Council. There we applied for our permis de sejour and after-midnight passes.

We then saw Knowles, the assistant rep, and discussed the flat with our prospective landlord. We agreed to wait

a week so as to look around.

We then had lunch with the Blonmfields in their comfortable flat. He is very interested in linguistics, studied French and German, and was dropped in France by parachute during the war. The lunch was pleasant, though the peas tasted of paraffin (obviously stored in a teneke).

After lunch we returned to the hotel, where Margaret lay down, as her tummy was bad. I went to see the accountant and then to the Institute, where I met Owen, who was tired, but explained that I would probably teach three mornings a week at the best Persian public school, and would teach English and some literature at the Institute in the evenings. I am to start work on Saturday.

Back to the Ritz for dinner (Chateaubriand steak) with dance music by an excellent band. Margaret did not have any dinner.

I have taken Sykes out of the Institute library here.

29 Jan (Wednesday)

Bussed to the Institute, but took a wrong turning, and while searching for it, were stopped by a house agent who spoke only Persian. He had a house to let, but we told him to come to the Institute in the afternoon.

McLelland and Sandrey rang Levant Express and discovered that our luggage is at the Customs, so negotiations are

starting to get it out. We then go to the Council office to sign the bag declaration and then back to the Institute for lunch with Owen (shishlik and lovely meringues). After lunch we drive to the hotel and read and have a bath. Then back to the Institute at 5. We read in the library and then have dinner. No sign of the broker.

During the day we see Elwell-Sutton, the First Secretary at the Legation, who has written books about Persia. His wife teaches at the Institute. We also see Ellison, the functional officer.

30 Jan (Thursday)

Go to the Institute in the morning and browse in the library.

11.30. Staff meeting. Hear that McLelland is leaving as soon as possible.

Lunch, then a walk up to a jube north of the Institute and bordering the town - an artificial stream six feet wide and about two feet deep with trees along the banks. It is part of the water system.

Back to the Institute at 2.30 to ring Mackay about collecting our trunks.

Go down to the Council office and am taken by truck to Levant Express, which is, however, shut, so we go back to the Council.

4 o'clock. Should have a conference with Owen, but he does not turn up, so go down to Levant Express again at 4.30, collect luggage and take it to Institute, where we put it in the theatre projection room, take out our evening clothes and go to the hotel.

8.15. Leave with McLellands for a dance at the Tehran club. An excellent dinner (asparagus soup, vol-au-vent, pheasant and ice-cream) was followed by dancing till 1, when we had bacon and eggs and then danced on till 3, when we were exhausted and went home.

31 Jan (Friday)

Got up late, went to Institute, got out a suit and some shirts and took the china out to look at it. A few pieces of delicate glass and china were broken.

A mammoth lunch at the Institute - chelo kebab (grilled meat and minced meat with rice and raw eggs), preceded by fish and followed by stewed apples and doogh - yoghurt and soda water (excellent).

Slept in the afternoon, then had dinner at the Ritz and went for coffee to Frances Gladman, who lives in a charming little house in a courtyard enclosed by high walls. She gave us coffee with whipped cream, lovely nougat and marzipan, and brandy. Jan Ellison came later and we talked till ten, and then Jan took us to show us where two flats were which

he knew. We knocked up the owner of the first, who appeared in a white night shirt and a rage at being woken up at that hour.

1 Feb (Saturday)

Started work. Went to Institute by mistake to meet Owen, while he came to the hotel to pick me up. Met finally at Elburz College, where I was to take over two of his classes. It is a very modern place, started by the Americans. Between classes one is served with tea by the janitor in the masters' room. I teach two of the Sixth Form classes, one at 8.30 and 10.30, the other at 9.30. One form is much too large (nearly 60 pupils), and it is difficult to keep it quiet. The other is small (15) and intelligent.

Off to Knowles' office at 12.15 and to his house out at the summer resort of Shemran at the foot of the Elburz in his Studebaker with him and his wife. The mountains look lovely, and the houses in the resort are beautifully set in trees. The summer embassy compounds are there. The Knowles' have a little daughter with a Persian nanny. As a result, she speaks only Persian.

At 5.30 we set off back to town for tea at the Ziyars' (the owners of the first flat we were offered). Mr & Mrs and three daughters are there. The food is lovely (baklava and other cakes made by the eldest daughter).

At 4.40 I leave for a class, which consists of 14

middle-aged men and a young girl, all very keen - an enjoyable class.

Then back to the Ziyars for a bit, and then to the Institute to see Tabib, the cashier, who knows of some houses to let.

First we go to the house of a very smooth and voluble Parsee. It is a house he has just finished building and is decorating. It is modern and roomy. He offers us three upstairs rooms and the use of the kitchen and bathroom downstairs where he lives, unfurnished at 2,500 (my suggestion) a month. We leave a decision till Monday, and go on to the next place, two rooms, a large kitchen, a private garden, the use of the bathroom etc, furnished. I suggest 2,500, which is accepted.

Tabib then takes us to his home, two simply furnished rooms, with a child already asleep on the floor, partly under the low table, under which there is a mangal. Carpets and wall hangings are prominent.

Tabib is a Jew who has embraced Christianity. He has a photo of a painting of Christ on the wall, and asks me whether I think it is an original photo pf Christ.

Wherever we go we are offered tea and sticky cakes. Tabib also offers us fish and bread. I taste the fish out of politeness and both of us eat some bread (unleavened). Then back to the hotel with Tabib.

2 Feb (Sunday)

To the house at 10.15 with Tabib. Mrs Seifi gives us a kitchen outhouse in the garden as well, so I sign a contract for 6 months.

Have lunch at the Institute, while Margaret, who is not feeling well, has hers at the hotel. Back to the hotel and read.

5.15. Go to the flat Ellison showed us and meet a charming Frenchman from the Franco-Persian Institute, with whom I drink vodka till 8, chatting meanwhile. He is very well-informed and charming.

Dinner at the hotel and early to bed.

3 Feb (Monday)

To Elburz College from 8.30-11.30, then back to the hotel to collect Margaret. Lunch at the Institute with the Elwell-Suttons and Janet Tomlin, then to the hotel to pay, collect our stuff and go to the house. Then to the Council office to arrange to have the truck again at 4 to collect our heavy luggage. Ellison is badly shaken when he hears about our house. Owen, who had an option on it in January, had promised to give him first refusal, but now it is too late.

Collect our heavy luggage and take it to the house, then to a lesson at 5, back to collect Margaret at 6,

travelling with one of my pupils, a meteorological captain who says he will teach me Persian. Then to the Institute for dinner, home to unpack a bit, and bed.

4 Feb (Tuesday)

Mrs Seifi gives us breakfast and takes me shopping to buy wood, coal and food for breakfasts until we get a servant. One shop is best for butter, another for bread, a third for cheese and honey. We get back to the house late, hurry to the Institute for lunch, then discuss the classes with Dr Yates till my class at 5, a pleasant intermediate class.

After dinner at the Institute, back to the house for some hours of unpacking. We have no paraffin yet (we were supposed to get it this afternoon), so have no fire and are frozen.

5-7 Feb (Wednesday - Friday)

Still waiting for a servant, battling with fires and feeling very uncomfortable. We buy a large cupboard for Margaret's clothes after two visits to a shop with Tabib, and unpack most of our stuff.

Chapter 5: Asian loos

The Asian loo forces one to squat right down, as against sitting on a seat. I am sure the Asian position is more natural and efficient - just as it is for childbirth. Primitive women squat to deliver their babies, letting gravity help them. It is only for the convenience of doctors and nurses that women in our countries are made to give birth lying down.

The Asian loo is also more hygienic, since no part of one's body comes into contact with anything - apart from one's feet if one is wearing no shoes. Even though I am not easily put off, the thought of sitting on a strange loo seat, even if it looks clean, which it often does not, fills me with distaste. I always cover it first with sheets of paper. Some public lavatories I have used actually provide suitably shaped oval paper patterns for this purpose.

A kind of arrangement that combined the worst of both worlds was the one we resorted to as POWs when we were bombed by the Americans and our water system was knocked out temporarily. We dug a long deep ditch, rigged up a treetrunk lengthwise above it, and perched our bottoms over this to perform.

Much better was the system we used in the Western Desert of Egypt and Libya. There one simply went off with a spade and a roll of loo paper when one felt the need, dug a hole, squatted over it, and filled it in when one had finished.

I came across this system again in India. Waking up soon after dawn in the luxurious Air-Conditioned class sleeping compartment of the train, taking me in leisurely fashion from Delhi to Madras, Lucknow or Bombay, I would see brown bottoms, male and female, squatting over the fields beside the track, each person with a brass pot of water. I already knew that, in such countries, one used one's left hand for that kind of job, and the right for eating etc. As I am left-handed, I often had to make a quick juggling decision as to which was the correct (the right!) hand to use to accept, for example, small chop at an Indian cocktail party.

Where civilisation dictates the use of indoor facilities in India - from the early thunderbox, which was still to be found in some of the remoter dak bungalows in my day, to modern water-borne sanitation - only members of the Untouchable caste will do the cleaning, so if one owns or rents a house, one had inevitably to have a so-called sweeper on one's staff.

Of course, I realise that the old wives' tales that one can pick up VD from lavatory seats are nonsense: it used to be the excuse when someone did not want to admit that he or she had done something much less innocent and much more likely to give one a dose.

I had a couple of Greek cousins who actually claimed that one could catch VD from a gents' urinal. Their father

had shown them a way of avoiding this, which entailed some highly complicated and improbable antics. I was naturally sceptical, and refused to conform, much to my cousins' alarm.

As long as Asian loos are kept clean and disinfected, and as long as they have an S-bend, I am all in favour of them. But they do tend to go hand in hand with a philosophy that says, 'Urination and defecation are dirty functions, therefore the places where they are performed are also inevitably dirty, and there is nothing one can or should do about this.'

In an otherwise spotlessly clean Japanese-style hotel in Kyushu where I once spent several weeks, the loos were definitely messy. One was thoughtfully provided with wooden clogs to change into before entering the so-called 'cloakroom.' The loos there were in cubicles, most of which contained one of the Asian type. But there was one that was prominently labelled 'WESTERN STYLE'. I doubt whether those who put the sign up were aware of its comic side: for the 'Western style' loo had the sort of swing stable doors that one sees in bars in cowboy films, so that one's legs and - if one was taller than the average Japanese - one's head too, were visible to others in the 'cloakroom' as one sat enthroned.

But my favourite Asian loo story comes not from Asia but from Italy, and is told by my wife. She was travelling from France to Italy in a chauffeur-driven car with her first

husband when she felt the urgent need to spend a penny. It was late summer, the land was parched, and there wasn't a blade of grass left to take cover behind.

At last there was a turning off to the right towards the sea, and at the end of the little road was a simple cafe. Jane and her husband got out of the car and sat down at a table under a beach umbrella. The proprietor came, and Jane used the few words of Italian she knew: 'Due Cinzano (although, Heaven knows, the last thing she wanted at the time was a drink!) e Signore.'

The proprietor was obviously used to this situation, for he at once answered, 'Si, si!' and beckoned Jane to follow him. They went through the main building, crossed a small courtyard, and then the man pointed to a wooden shack. Jane thanked him and hurried gratefully to its door.

She pressed the latch, opened the door - and then stood rooted to the spot. It was the first time she had seen such a thing - a hole in the ground, with a left footprint on one side, and a right footprint on the other, in cement.

However, she was in a hurry, so she made up her mind quickly: turn round, panties down, left foot on left footprint, right foot on right footprint, and squat.

But alas, the shack was not made for people of her generous proportions. Her bottom hit the back wall, and

she was precipitated forward on to the door headfirst.

Shaken but undaunted, she sized up the situation again: panties right off, then get down almost into the hole with both feet. It worked. Relief! It went on and on.

At last she was able to pull her panties up again, and then she looked around for the loo chain. As a well brought up girl, there was no question of leaving the place in any other state than the one she had found it in.

She saw a string hanging down near her right hand, so she took hold of it and gave it a good pull. At once a bucket of water near the ceiling of the shack emptied its contents directly over her.

When she finally got back to her husband, soaked and bedraggled, he stared at her in disbelief and finally managed to splutter, 'Christ, didn't you make it?'

But the opposite problem can present itself too. What do you do if you have been brought up with Asian loos, and are faced with a 'Western style' one for the first time? Easy. You climb up onto the seat and squat there in your accustomed way. Many is the time I have seen wet footprints on a loo seat. The last time was in a plane from Goroka to Port Moresby in Papua New Guinea during a particularly turbulent flight over the mountains. One's mind boggles at the thought of that poor individual trying to balance there as the plane fell into air pocket after air pocket.

Chapter 6: Iranian vignettes

I began in Tehran as a lecturer in the Anglo-Persian Institute in Tehran, but was quickly appointed Director of Studies. Soon after this, London decreed that we were no longer to run elementary classes, as these were costing too much. Since other sources producing students of intermediate and advanced standard were rare and inefficient, I asked whether I could be allowed to run self-supporting elementary classes, which would draw on the British Council only for accommodation on the premises of our Institute and two other buildings which the government allowed us to use.

When the answer came back, 'Yes', I organised classes for nearly 1,000 students, with 24 teachers, all recruited from among British residents in Tehran and good Iranian English-speakers. Students had to pay a small fee, and out of this I paid the teachers. By carefully balancing income against costs, I in fact managed to make a considerable profit in the first year.

However, London learnt about this, made me hand the money over, and then graciously allowed me to go back to the practice of having official elementary classes.

I also made my mark in London by questioning their edict that every British Council officer was competent to lecture on any subject. For instance, one of us who had no knowledge of medicine beyond that of a simple

layman was supposed to be able to lecture on the latest advances in medical science in the UK to an audience of Iranian consultants.

When I claimed that this was sheer nationalistic arrogance, London was furious, but I persisted and won the day when the top people overruled our direct rulers in London.

Tehran had two water supplies: one came by underground pipe from the Elburz Mountains, and was chiefly for the Shah's palaces, for which reason it was called 'ab-e-shah' (Shah's water). The other ran down open ditches at the sides of the streets, which were called 'jubes' ('ju-ye-ab', meaning water channel).

Our drinking water came from the 'ab-e-shah', delivered in small horse-drawn tankers; and for the rest of our supply, we all had huge underground cisterns which were replenished periodically when it was our turn to have our 'jube' connected up with the general supply, which came via canal from the Karaj river.

If one saw a 'jube' as it was beginning to fill with water, it reminded one of an irrigation channel in the Egyptian delta. It always collected plenty of rubbish when it was dry, and this was swept downstream as the water arrived. Inevitably, some of the rubbish would finish up in one's cistern, so every few years one had

to have this cleaned out.

There was also a service for cleaning carpets. A man would collect them in a horse-drawn cart, usually in the spring, and take them to a special place south of the city, on the way to Qum, where there was a spring of clean water that was supposed to be particularly good for bringing back the sparkle to valuable Persian carpets.

Driving was wild and anarchic in Tehran, so there was a current joke which went: 'How can you recognise a Tehran driver?' Answer: 'He is a person who believes that God gave us two hands and two legs so that with one hand we can keep the horn pressed down, while with the other gesticulating at rival drivers; and so that with one foot we can keep the accelerator pressed hard down, while one keeps the other always in the grave.'

Tehran was served by private enterprise buses, which raced each other to get to bus stops to pick up passengers, often overtaking dangerously at high speeds to do so.

Strangely enough, although one often saw Iranians in heated argument in the street, they never did more than push each other. I never saw one actually strike his opponent, like the Arabs.

There was also an enormous difference between the way an Iranian treated acquaintances and others. If he did not know you, he would push you uncereemoniously out of his way

to get onto a bus, but if he recognised you, he would bow twice, beg you to go in front of him, and insist on paying your fare in the bus.

Another charming characteristic of most Iranians, namely those who were Moslems, was that they believed that mad people had been touched by God, and should therefore be treated with respect.

Once I was myself the recipient of such treatment. I was taking a VIP lady from Britain for a walk in the foothills of the Elburz mountains when she spotted a flower she had never seen before. Being a keen amateur botanist, she asked me what it was called, but I did not know. I therefore summoned a peasant who was working in a neighbouring field and asked him.

As a linguist and phonetician, I had quickly learnt to speak Persian with a passable accent, so this man clearly did not see me as a benighted foreigner. He looked at me with compassion in his eyes and answered, 'Jānam, ān - gól é' (My dear, that is - a flower!')

Isfahan was a far more picturesque and charming place than Tehran. While Tehran combined ugly modern architecture with a filthy slum area, thrusting car drivers and rude men always in a hurry, Isfahan, which had been the capital in the great days of Persia, was much more sedate, the people were politer, and the architecture was mostly very worth looking at.

That is not to say that there were no beautiful buildings in Tehran, because there were; but they tended to get lost in the modern tat.

In Isfahan, one often heard the beautiful sound of camel bells. We lived on one of the main routes taken by camel caravans into the caravanserai, so I developed a great liking for these patient, serious-looking animals as they strode past our gate with their bells tolling.

Another striking feature of Isfahan was the smell. There was no drainage system, so each house had a big hole under the ground near the road into which all the sewage ran. From there it was collected periodically by a little man with an equally small donkey. The man opened a door in a mud wall, scooped the sewage out with a spade and dumped it into sacking panniers on the donkey's back. One can imagine the constant smell - both from the holes at the side of every house, and from the little man and his donkey whenever he passed.

The Institute of English Studies in Isfahan occupied a building which had previously been an opium factory. It was still redolent of that drug. There was a huge hall rising three storeys high, which had previously been the storage area, and a warren of smaller rooms at each end of this. One lot were used as classrooms and offices, the other as accommodation for the Officer in Charge

(myself) and his family. The kitchen, lavatory and washroom were outside the main building, across a little courtyard, and a small stream flowed through the grounds.

The garden had a high mud wall round it, with a huge wooden gate at each end, and there were flowerbeds, in which we struggled to keep some sort of show going in spite of the intense heat of summer.

The water had to be pumped up by hand from a well, and there was a fearsome arrangement for heating water for washing in in the washhouse: Under a big tank of water there was a paraffin burner, which roared fiercely when it was lit.

Our heating in winter was also by paraffin stoves. However, they did not roar as loudly as the heater for the bath water, although sometimes they worked so well that the stoves got red hot.

Security was no problem when we first went to Isfahan. Punishments for theft were severe. But when things hotted up politically in Iran because of the agitation to get rid of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, we invested in a guard dog. He was a fearsome creature who had previously guarded sheep against wolves in the mountains. He was supplied to us by a descendant of the previous dynasty of Shahs, who had been deposed by the current Shah's father.

Only one person on our staff - one of the servants - was able to handle this dog, which was fed exclusively on lights (lung) and dry bread. He was kept locked up during the day, and let out to patrol within our walls at night. If we had to be out after dark, the servant had to tie the animal up when we returned, and release it again only when we were safely indoors.

When we first went to Isfahan, a tiny kitten was pushed into our garden one night (that was before we got the dog). It was a beautiful, long-haired Persian, and grew into a very handsome animal. But then one summer's night it vanished. It was not until months later that we found its mummified body in an outhouse in which surplus furniture was kept. The servants surmised that it had attacked a snake in the garden, and had been fatally bitten, after which it had crawled away into the storehouse to die.

Inventorying the British Council's scanty furniture was an annual task in which the storehouse played an important part. When I first took over, there were some items on the inventory that I could not find. However, being an inventive sort of person, I simply called any unidentifiable object I found in the storehouse by the name of an item missing from the inventory, and no one seemed to worry.

In such a hot climate, pests thrive, so we often

found ourselves having to write off chairs and tables that had been neatly hollowed out by termites or something similar. We had one particularly fat student in our classes, whom I christened 'the chair tester', as I had arranged with our servants to make sure he sat on any doubtful chair. If it collapsed under him, we could write it off.

I have mentioned that our Institute had previously been an opium factory: opium was, in fact, widely grown and used in my day. I sometimes used to go for walks through the vast fields of great big, beautiful opium poppies, and watch the peasants milking the seedpods of their sticky, white liquid, rather like rubber, after which it was roasted over a flame to produce the little black balls that the smokers used.

Often after a nice lunch or dinner, my hosts would bring out their opium pipes and offer me one, but I always refused, being scared of becoming hooked.

The technique was to put a ball of opium on a hole in the pipe, then pick up a red-hot piece of charcoal with tongs, and apply it to the opium so that it melted. Meanwhile, the smoker puffed away vigorously at the other end of the pipe.

I was much more interested in the mulberry trees in our garden. Ever since my Greek and Turkish childhood, I had loved these fruits, especially the sweet, bland

white ones. I used to pick them off our trees and eat them at once - delicious! The Persians also dried them, selling them in special shops called 'ājīl-forushi', where one could get all kinds of lovely dried nuts and fruits.

Our house was only a short distance from the main street of Isfahan, where one of the most interesting little shops was that of the great miniature painter, Ali Sajjadi. He took a liking to me, and at Christmas presented me with a beautiful miniature painting, inscribed personally to me and Margaret, my first wife. Also, quite often when I dropped in to see him, he would dash off a beautiful pen-and-ink drawing while we were drinking our tea, and present that to me.

The Great Bazaar was fascinating. Each kind of artisan and salesman had his own particular area of the covered bazaar, so that one could know where to go for the thing one was trying to find.

The most awesome place there was the huge, cathedral-like domed hall, several storeys high, where a camel went round and round in circles grinding linseed in a huge circular stone trough, after which it was crushed till the oil ran out by a huge Heath Robinson contraption consisting of a long arm made out of a tree trunk, on which a man swung to give it the leverage to squeeze the ground linseed. It all looked like something out of the

Arabian Nights - and might well have dated back to those times and before.

There were several magnificent mosques in Isfahan, including one on the main street a few yards from the back of the Institute. The first time I was invited to a ceremony there, I inadvertently took Margaret along. It was like a Bateman cartoon: everybody stopped chanting and looked at the female intruder unbelievably. Then one of my students hurried over and bundled us out. I apologised to the authorities the next day, pleading ignorance. Women were allowed into mosques as sightseers when there was no service on, provided they were suitably dressed, and it had never occurred to me that it might be a disastrous gaffe to bring one in during a largely social ceremony.

Another disaster came with a film show. We regularly lent educational films with Persian sub-titles to a local cinema for showing to schoolchildren in the mornings. One day I had an agitated call from the cinema. Apparently one of the films had been on scabies, a common children's ailment in hot countries, and showed male sexual organs in close-up! It was intended for doctors and teachers, but had just been shown to a mixed audience of boys and girls!

One never knew what one was going to get when one was invited to someone's house in the evening. First one would be offered tea and sweet, sticky cakes. That

might be the end of the entertainment, or it might not. If it was not, drinks and snacks arrived at about 8 p.m. That, again, might be it, or it might not. If it was not, a full dinner was brought in at about ten, with masses of rice, meat, vegetables, puddings, wine etc. As soon as one had finished this, it was polite to take one's leave, even if the rest of the guests and one's hosts had not yet finished.

In some houses - especially in villages - the meal was spread on clean white cloths on the floor, and one sat cross-legged to eat it. Always the host did his best to provide a lavish meal.

We were quite often invited to the house of a rich local tycoon, where the *pièces de résistance* were tender little chickens grilled deliciously over charcoal; but the social highlights were invitations to the regional Governor's palace, where we rubbed shoulders with the *élite*.

As soon as one had shaken hands with the Governor, the ladies would go off to one end of the great hall, and the men to the other. My then wife had learnt to speak fluent kitchen Persian, and after she had downed a couple of vodkas, she would hold forth, with her native Welsh ebullience, to the assembled Iranian ladies, much to the amusement of the latter. It was as if, a hundred years ago, one had been invited to Buckingham Palace,

and had proceeded to chatter away brightly to the crème de la crème in broad Cockney or Liverpudlian.

As in most countries, football reigned supreme in the sports world of Iran, but the summer after I got to Isfahan, a rugby club was formed by a group of locals, and I was asked to referee the first match.

I had played rugger at school and therefore knew the rules pretty well, but I had always played in winter. 'Don't you think it's too hot to play rugger in June?' I asked the organiser of the rugby club. The temperature was over 100 in the shade, and the field was completely grassless and baked hard by the sun.

'Oh, no,' the man answered. 'It would be nasty and cold in winter!'

So I donned my cherry red Corpus rowing blazer - which made me even hotter, as it was flannel - got a whistle and set out to referee the inaugural match in front of a crowd which included all the local bigwigs.

Unfortunately, although the organiser of the club knew the rules pretty well, the remaining 29 players only had a hazy idea of them, so that I was constantly having to blow my whistle for scrums, particularly as a result of forward passes.

I could see that the players were getting fed up

with these constant stoppages, and soon the organiser came to me and asked whether I couldn't ignore some of the rule-breaking so as to have a faster game.

I answered that I couldn't do this and at the same time be fair to both sides, so the match was not much of a success, alas. As far as I know, it was not only the first in Isfahan, but also the last.

My favourite memory of Isfahan, however, was that of the young student with the beautiful black Cadillac. In my day, there were a small number of very wealthy families in Iran, vast numbers of very poor peasants and manual workers, and a tiny middle class existing uneasily between. This young man had been born with a silver spoon in his mouth, and was now about 18.

One day he asked to see me privately and began, 'Sir, I am planning to drive to England, to continue my studies there, but I am worried. Could I ask for your help?'

'Certainly,' I answered, expecting the usual questions about entry requirements etc.

'Well, sir,' the boy said, 'I have a very serious problem. You see, my car is only a last year's model. Would the other students in England look down on me if I was not driving this year's model?'

Chapter 7: An Isfahan picnic

There were two pleasant places one could go to for a picnic if one had not got a car - up the river and down the river. As most people went down the river on a Friday, I firmly told my schoolboy student Mr Seid-Ansari that we must go up the river. He seemed to accept the suggestion quite happily, judging by his broad smile, but we discovered that his understanding of English was not as good as we had thought it was: he arrived the next morning to collect us, and cheerfully told us that we would meet his elder brothers at a point on the way to the picnic place down the river (this, incidentally, was the first time we had heard that he had any brothers).

I realized that I had to be quietly firm now, so I explained to Mr Ansari that I had particularly told him the day before that we would be picnicking up the river. With the help of signs I managed to make him understand.

His face took on a pained expression. I knew what his trouble was: he was the youngest member of the family and, in a country where age was very important, he was not looking forward to having to explain to his brothers.

However, politeness won, and in a moment his broad smile was back as he helped my wife and me to carry our things to the taxi.

As we approached the river, we saw the two brothers,

dressed in the dark business suits that all Persians seemed to feel it necessary to wear for a picnic. I was wearing an old green coat and brown trousers.

My wife (not my present one, but my first) and I had prepared sandwiches and fruit cake for the picnic. We had discussed whether to take some for Mr Ansari as well, and were glad now that we had decided we would, because neither our Mr Ansari nor his brothers seemed to have brought any food with them, although they had a samovar and some charcoal, carried by two servants.

After some rapid explanations the brothers crowded somehow into our small taxi, which now held five passengers and the driver, while the servants were left to make their way to the picnic place as best they could.

We rushed through the town once more and out at the other end, where the taxi left us in a mass of small, winding paths near the upper part of the river. One of the brothers disappeared mysteriously after getting out of the taxi there.

We found the woods on our side of the river full of the same noisy people whom we had hoped to escape by going there. The two remaining Ansari brothers looked unhappy, but I noticed an ideal little group of trees on the opposite side of the river about 100 metres from us.

I pointed it out happily, but our Mr Ansari's face

fell, and he protested, 'We can't get there! It's on the opposite side of the river.'

I pointed out that the river was only slightly over ankles deep at that point and began taking my shoes off.

Mr Ansari was shocked. 'Are you going to walk in the water?' he asked.

It was my turn to be surprised. 'Of course!' I answered. 'It's quite shallow.'

'But what about your wife?' Mr Ansari objected.

'Oh, that's all right,' answered Margaret. 'I can do it easily.'

Mr Ansari looked around carefully to see whether anyone of social importance was there to witness such low-class behaviour, but there was not, so he took off his shoes and socks and followed us across. His elder brother, however, suddenly found that he had some urgent business back in town and left with many apologies.

We had really been lucky. The place I had chosen was grassy, and had sand sloping down to the river water. I took off my coat, left my trousers rolled up, and dug about in the sand with my feet. After a moment's hesitation Mr Ansari did the same. I was glad to see him without his thick grey school coat, buttoned up to the neck. It must have been terribly hot.

To make conversation, Margaret told him about the effect of the English weather on picnics. We all laughed at the poor fools back home whose picnics were ruined by sudden rain, and congratulated ourselves on being in a country where one could be sure of the weather.

The next big event was the arrival of the servants carrying the samovar and charcoal. At once they began preparing tea, which Mr Ansari told me he hoped his brothers would arrive in time for.

'Oh, your brothers are coming back, are they?' I said in surprise.

'Yes, they just went off to bring my eldest brother. He came back from one of our villages this morning.'

'Oh, really? How many brothers have you got then?'

'Three.'

So we were going to have the whole lot of them!

The morning passed with little walks up and down the river, and numerous glasses of sweet tea from the samovar. At one point a group of small boys arrived and had a bathe in the river, after which I made a mud slide for them further down the river bank. My attempts to show them a few ski turns on the mud were not successful in the absence of skis.

By now Mr Ansari was entering into the spirit of an

English picnic, and he was even kind enough to tell the little boys how to keep the slide slippery. The whole time, however, he had an eye on the other bank, watching for his brothers.

But I had my eyes on the mountains to the north for, surprisingly, dark clouds were gathering there and advancing threateningly towards us.

Just when we had given up hope of the brothers' return and were beginning to think of taking out our sandwiches and cake, there was a shout from the other bank, and there they were - all three of them. Our Mr Ansari at once crossed over and solemnly carried each of them across the water, so that they would not have to take their shoes off. There was service for you!

The eldest brother came straight to me and greeted me with the greatest politeness in excellent French. He hoped that his presence was not a nuisance to me. I must have looked very surprised at this, as a younger brother laughingly explained that it was not usual among Iranians to allow another man to share the company of one's wife, which was why the eldest Mr Ansari was apologizing. I quickly declared that I had no objections at all - that, in fact, it was a great pleasure both to my wife and to me to meet him. He bowed gracefully and we all sat down on the grass.

By now the clouds had spread so widely over the sky that it was impossible not to notice them any longer. The

youngest Mr Ansari told his brothers what we had said about the behaviour of the English weather at picnics, and they all laughed apologetically, explaining that this weather was really most unusual. A roll of thunder seemed to agree with them.

Margaret and I had never grown accustomed to sitting on the ground with our legs crossed, so our poor efforts now drew forth signs of pity from the brothers. The eldest apologized formally for not having brought a table and chairs for us. We suggested that that would have been quite impossible, surely, but this was met with repeated statements that it would have been easy to arrange if they had known. 'Some servants could have brought the furniture from our house with no trouble at all,' one of the brothers said.

Margaret and I were very hungry by now, and we were both wondering how far our few sandwiches and our cake would go among six people, when a small procession of men began to make their way towards us from the distant road. None of the Ansari brothers took any notice of them, so I was very surprised when the procession began to cross the river directly opposite us. The men came straight towards us, carrying large boxes and pots.

I stood up to meet them, but the youngest Mr Ansari said immediately, 'Please take your seat, sir. They will put the food and drink out.'

It was some of the Ansaris' servants, with carpets, a tablecloth, a huge pile of rice, meat, fish, cucumbers, fruit and bottles of beer and red Shiraz wine. I now understood why one of the brothers had disappeared so suddenly shortly after we had arrived. He had gone to warn the servants of our change of place for the picnic.

Everything had been laid out and we were ready to begin our meal when the rain came. It was exactly like an English picnic after that. We tried to shelter under the trees, but it was useless. We all got very wet.

Luckily the eldest Ansari brother's beautiful Cadillac was waiting on the road, and we all hurried across the river ('Before it floods,' Margaret whispered to me), and climbed into the car. Margaret and I were taken back to our house to dry ourselves and change our clothes, and then we were picked up again by the same car and taken to the Ansaris' house for a late but very welcome lunch.

We did not take our sandwiches and cake with us this time. We did not need to, as the meal was even bigger and better than the one we had left behind with the servants by the river.

Chapter 8: Courteous rioters and others

'My God, it's a demonstration! We're trapped!' As usual when she got excited, Margaret's voice returned to her native Welsh sing-song.

The crowd indeed filled the great square outside the Lutfullah and Blue Mosques. There was the menacing hum of thousands of angry voices. Banners waved above bearded faces and close-shaven heads. Margaret pushed the pram protectively behind her slight figure. Julian - one year old - lay in it in serene sleep. Instinctively, I gripped the hand of four-year-old Rosemary more firmly.

It was 1951, and we were in Isfahan. The campaign against the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company was getting vicious. There had been threatening articles in the local press, with personal references to me and the English-teaching institute I directed: 'Lackeys of the British oppressors! Down with the British! Death to the British!'

I had ignored it all, and gone on teaching every evening, though to diminishing numbers of students.

That afternoon, Margaret and I had taken the children for a walk to the covered bazaar. All had been quiet as we had crossed the great square. But now, half an hour later, it was full. And, to get home, we had to cross it. I looked at Margaret, so small and slender and defence-looking. I at least had fought in the war. She looked pale but determined.

Later she told me that I looked pretty white around the gills too. In battle, I had had only myself and my men to worry about, not women and children.

'Okay?' I asked Margaret. 'Okay,' she answered, and put her hand out to touch mine.

Then off we went, me leading with Rosemary, Margaret following with the pram. As we approached the edge of the mob, I could read their banners. It was business as usual: 'Down with the British!' 'Death to the British!' Margaret could not read Persian, but she could hear the chants - and she understood the spoken language all right!

On we went grimly. I thought of the Charge of the Light Brigade. As we reached the edge of the mob, heads turned. The expressions on the faces would have been hilarious in other circumstances. First curiosity. Then the penny dropped! Disbelief followed. Then a sheepish look. 'Here we are,' the faces said, 'shouting "Death to the British!" and here are your actual live British! What do we do now?'

But quickly the deeply ingrained politeness of the Iranian of those days, before fanatical demagogues succeeded in perverting them, triumphed. With the formal double bows that were correct behaviour, they parted to let us through. Then they nudged those in front of them to do likewise.

This scene was repeated again and again as we made our slow, majestic progress to the centre of the mob - turn round,

do a double-take of disbelief, look sheepish, double bow, make way.

We came to the centre of the square, where one of the leaders of the demonstration was haranguing the mob. When he caught sight of us, he faltered in mid-sentence. 'He nearly swallowed his tonsils!' Margaret giggled afterwards.

Getting out of the mob on the other side was much easier, as everyone was now facing us.

A few days later, Margaret brought me 'The Times'. With a wry smile, she tapped one of the headlines: 'British lecturer murdered by Egyptian mob.'

It was one of my colleagues in Cairo. He had not been on the street. He was minding his own business over a beer in the Gezira Club when the mob burst in. But then he had not had a plucky little wife and two small tranquil children with the eyes and ash blonde hair of houris from the Muslim paradise to protect him.

A few months later, I was transferred to Indonesia. More trouble. Anti-Dutch until the Suez crisis of 1956, then anti-British too. I was professor of English and head of my department in the University of Indonesia at the time.

'Do you know,' I had told Margaret after my first day there, 'that my boss is a Javanese prince?'

'Your boss?' she asked.

'Yes, the Dean of the Faculty of Letters.'

'A prince? Well, well, we are moving up in the world!'

'Cheeky!'

But only a few days later I had even more startling news. 'He's not only a prince. He's a Communist too.'

'Wow, a Communist prince! Now that's quite something!'

'Yes, and we're invited to the presentation of the Stalin Peace Prize to him on Saturday!'

Actually, Dean Prijono - Pri to his friends - and his wife proved to be charming. They couldn't have been more helpful. Even during and after the Suez troubles.

We were taken completely by surprise by the Anglo-French landings in Egypt. There was a phone call early that morning. 'For you,' Margaret said. 'The Embassy.'

'Leslie?' I recognised the Second Secretary's voice. 'Our troops have landed in Suez. We're expecting demonstrations here. Be careful.'

'Will do,' I answered, the adrenalin racing. I was due to give my first lecture of the day at the university at 10.

At 9, the phone rang again. 'They're attacking the Embassy,' said the Second Secretary. 'Your dean's leading

them. Look out.'

'Okay, I will.'

I told Margaret the news.

'Our dean?' she gasped. 'But he's so nice!' Then, after a pause, 'Are you going to the university?'

She knew the answer already. 'Of course,' I said mildly.

'But some of your students are probably in the riot! And you've had to fail some of them in their preliminary exams. They'll be gunning for you.'

'Remember Isfahan?' I asked, taking her hand.

'Yes,' she answered simply, her eyes far away. Neither of us would ever forget that mob walk.

Then I had a brainwave. 'I'll leave our car at home and go in a university one.' As a professor, I had the right to use the car pool - and both of us treasured our car, so that the idea of its being turned over and set on fire did not appeal to us.

I rang the Faculty office. At first our charming, efficient secretary was surprised. I had never asked for a university car before. Then the penny dropped.

I was driven to work in state, wondering whether I would have any students that morning. I imagined boycotts,

hostile demonstrations, even physical violence.

But in fact, there were more students in all my classes that day than ever before. And they were all extra charming and considerate. Not a word of politics was spoken.

On my return home, Margaret met me anxiously on our doorstep. She expected to find me dejected - even battered, and was surprised to see I was on top of the world.

'The British Information Services have been burned down,' she said. 'The police just stood by and watched.' The BIS building was actually inside the Embassy compound.

'Anybody hurt?' I asked.

'No. They all withdrew into the main building, and in the end the police came. But how did you get on?'

I told her.

'Tara, tara!' she whooped. 'One British victory after all.'

A few weeks later, we moved house. We now had three children, and the old building just wasn't big enough for us all. But after we had moved, we discovered that we had a squatter in one of the servants' quarters - a wild man from one of the more distant and rebellious parts of Indonesia. The Dutch 'gentleman' who had sold us the house had 'forgotten' to tell us about him.

I rang the Embassy for help.

'For Heavens' sake don't do anything rash!' came the agonised answer. 'Keep a low profile. We don't want an incident - particularly at this juncture!'

'Windy b--,' I said to Margaret scornfully.

Then I tried the police.

'Has he attacked or threatened you?' they asked.

'No, actually he hasn't.'

'Then I'm sorry - it's a civil matter. We can't do anything.'

'Are you game to bait him?' I said to Margaret. 'It might be dangerous.'

'Remember Isfahan!' she chanted in sepulchral tones, and we both laughed bitterly.

I began by putting a strong padlock on the well from which we all of us drew our water. The squatter was furious when he came back from work. 'I'll bring a gang of my cronies,' he raved at our fat Sundanese cook, 'and murder you all!'

She scurried in to report to us.

'That's the threats,' I told Margaret grimly. 'Now for the attack.'

Next morning, when the squatter went off to work, I put another strong padlock on the door of the room he occupied in our back courtyard.

When he got home, there were roars and screams from the kitchen quarters, and the cook burst into our dining-room. 'He's taken one of my carving knives, and he says he'll kill me!' she cried, shaking like a jelly.

At once I rang the Faculty of Letters. 'Can I speak to the dean, please?' I said.

He could not have been more helpful. He leaned politely on the chief of police, and within half an hour that dignitary was at our house in person, with two minions.

The squatter was summoned, and we all sat politely round our dining-room table for a quiet discussion - no shouting - no rudeness: these formed no part of the Indonesian way of dealing with such situations. At the end of it all, the squatter was escorted off the premises by the police, with me carrying his bag to show there were no hard feelings.

The Embassy were furious. I was in line for an OBE at that time for my success in creating pro-British feeling at the university, but I didn't get it. The head of the British Council, secure in his office in Bandung, a hundred miles away from all the trouble, got it instead.

'Never mind,' said Margaret wisely, 'you can't eat the blooming thing. And we've shown them that the British

aren't quite finished yet, in spite of their Embassies.'

My next clash was in India. We had a nice house there, and five servants. And by now we had another daughter. One of the servants was an ayah who looked after the children. One morning Margaret came to me and said in a worried voice, 'Teresa (she was the ayah - a Christian from the South of India, whose husband worked at the British Club) spent the night in Abdullah's room (he was our wonderful cook, and came from a tribe famous for this work - the Mughls of East Pakistan, later Bangladesh).

'I don't think it's at all suitable for us to have a nanny who's promiscuous,' Margaret went on. 'Rosemary's ten now, and at an impressionable age.'

I sighed and sent the bearer to bring me first Teresa and then Abdullah. Both flatly denied spending the night together, but both Margaret and Rosemary testified that they had indeed done so.

I told the two servants that I was dismissing them forthwith, but with a month's pay, and told them to be out of their rooms in two hours' time.

Teresa was very bitter and reproachful, but went quietly. But Abdullah, who was a wild man who had often threatened the children with a large carving knife when they invaded his kitchen, padlocked his room and refused to go.

The answer was simple: those Pakistanis who were still working in India were doing so under suffrance, with police permits, and closely supervised. All I had to do was to go to the nearest police station and tell them that Abdullah was no longer persona grata with us, and a policeman accompanied me back to the house to take him into custody.

The last incident came in Nigeria just before the Eastern Region revolted against the central government of the country. By this time, I had resigned from the British Council, divorced and remarried, and acquired a stepson and stepdaughter. I was writing books for the teaching of English as a foreign or secnd language for Oxford University Press, and also spending a lot of time abroad promoting these books and running teacher-training courses for the British Council.

I had gone out to Nigeria on my own and toured several of the provinces in the north, south and west of the country, and had just arrived in Enugu, the capital of the eastern part, when I had a telegram from my new wife saying that her fourteen-year-old daughter Sarah was run down and needed a change, and that she was flying out to join me with her.

When their plane reached Lagos, the first sign of trouble came when it landed between serried ranks of sten-gun-toting soldiers, who proceeded to board it as

soon as it had come to a halt. They marched up and down between the seats, pointing their sten-guns at each passenger one after the other, and kept them there for a considerable time before allowing them to disembark, again between menacing ranks of soldiers.

When Jane and Sarah reached Customs, a thorough search of their luggage began.

'If you tell me what you are looking for,' Jane said to the Customs man, 'I can tell you whether we have any.'

The man gave a crafty smile and answered, 'I am not allowed to tell you. But what is the purpose of your journey to Nigeria?'

'I am joining my husband here,' she answered.

'Have you anything to declare?' the man went on.

'No, nothing.'

'What? Nothing? Haven't you brought your husband anything?'

Jane decided to take a chance: 'Only all my love,' she answered, whereupon the official grinned broadly, put chalk marks on the luggage and waved her through.

She gave a sigh of relief, because all around her, suitcases were being emptied out and their contents slowly searched again and again in the oppressive

tropical heat.

At Lagos one had to change planes for Enugu, and again there was the charade of lines of armed soldiers accompanying the passengers onto the plane, and only disembarking just before take-off. The plane made one stop before Enugu, where the whole thing was repeated.

Then came Enugu, and an even bigger welcoming party of soldiery. By now Jane was beginning to feel harassed, and she could see that Sarah was near breaking-point.

As they entered the terminal building at Enugu, still under escort, an officer was dividing the passengers into lines to go through different doors. When he motioned to Sarah to go through a different door from herself, Jane said, 'She's my daughter. She stays with me.' It was useless. The officer pushed Sarah away to the other queue.

'For God's sake, darling,' Jane whispered to her urgently, 'put on a non-seeing face. Pretend that you're perfectly used to having a sten-gun pushed into your stomach every few minutes. They're just waiting for an excuse to fire.'

Inside the terminal building, everyone was thoroughly searched, and then taken through to a road at the back. There were cars and taxis at a distance of about 200 yards down the road, but no porters. The passengers who had

already got through the check were walking towards the vehicles, carrying their luggage.

'Could you call us a taxi, please?' Jane asked one of the few airline officials she could see.

'They are not allowed nearer the terminal building,' said the official.

'But we can't carry all this luggage there ourselves!' Jane protested. 'Aren't there any porters?'

'They are not allowed in the terminal building,' the official answered.

In the end, Jane and Sarah had to make two trips to the taxis, carrying their bags, and at last they were on their way to the hotel where I was staying. I had tried to go out to the airport to meet them, but had been told that this was not allowed.

It was Saturday morning, and we spent a pleasant enough weekend at the hotel, mostly by the swimming-pool, not venturing out into the heavily patrolled streets.

But early on Monday I was supposed to continue my lecture tour, guided by a black OUP official from the head office in Lagos, so we set off south after breakfast in a big car.

We had only got a few miles, when we were stopped

GOVERNMENT OF EASTERN NIGERIA

Telegrams : SEMILGOV

Telephone :

Your ref.....

Our ref..... APO/193/115.....
(All replies to be addressed to the Secretary to the
Military Government.)



OFFICE OF THE MILITARY GOVERNOR
(POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATION DIVISION)

P.M.B. 1060

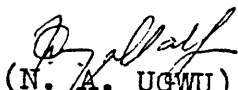
ENUGU

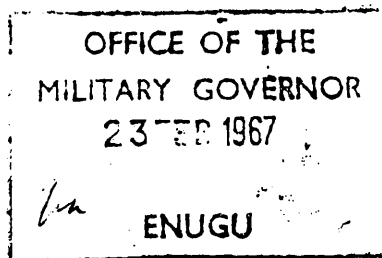
23 February....., 1967.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I am directed to inform you that Messrs L. A. Hill and A. I. Ozoemena of the Oxford University Press have, with the permission of this Government, been visiting the Ministry of Education and educational institutions in the Region for nearly a week now. Mr Hill is accompanied by his wife Mrs. J. E. Hill and his step daughter Miss S. J. M. Lowndes.

You will please allow them pass through the check points after the necessary formalities have been completed.


(N. A. UGWU)
for Secretary to the Military Government.



by what one can only describe as a gang of police and soldiers. There were several other cars at the road block they had set up, and the men were searching everything, emptying things out onto the road and going over them again and again, while at the same time poking sten-guns at the occupants of the cars.

One of the policemen demanded to see our passports and our authority for being where we were. My guide showed them the letter from the Government of Nigeria in Lagos welcoming my tour and authorising me to visit the various towns on my itinerary.

'Where is your authorisation from the East Nigerian Government?' the policeman asked rudely.

'The East Nigerian Government?' my guide said. I could see he was scared. He obviously knew his own people better than we did. 'We didn't know there was an East Nigerian Government.'

The policeman called a sergeant over. He seemed to be the most senior of the gang. They talked together in lowered voices while the rank and file continued to ransack our belongings. We sat there in intense heat for an hour, and were finally told, 'You can't go any further. You must return to Enugu and get a permit from the East Nigerian Government.'

Thankfully, we turned round and went back to the

hotel swimming-pool, after I had phoned the British Deputy High Commission to report.

'Provided you have a British passport,' said the official who answered my call, 'you can go anywhere in Nigeria without anyone stopping you.'

I pointed out to him that that was exactly what we had not been able to do, but he brushed my protests aside. I realised that he just did not want to know.

'When there's real trouble,' I thought bitterly, 'civis Britannicus sum isn't worth a fig any more. As in Jakarta after Suez, the people who are supposed to be there to protect us just opt out.'

I discovered the next day that another British family, trying to do the same trip as the one we had been stopped from doing, had all been murdered in their car by soldiers at a similar road block. I did not bother to ring the Deputy High Commission and ask whether they were ignoring that one too! We flew back to Lagos that day, and I continued my lecture tour in Ibadan, which was perfectly peaceful.

I have been mugged twice. The first time was when I had gone to Jakarta Airport late one evening to meet a gentleman who was coming to do a lecture tour for us. Unfortunately, at the same time a large crowd of young men were seeing off a pop star, and in the crush I felt a hand go into my back pocket and extract my wallet. I

was jammed in tightly on both sides, so there was nothing I could do.

The next day I reported the theft to the police, and was immediately handed back my wallet, minus the small amount of money I had had in it.

The next time was in Istanbul many years later - but this time I had learnt my lesson. Three young men pretended to be having a joking fight in the street, during which they banged up against me, as if accidentally. I pushed them off, and they went on their way, still keeping up the pretence of bantering horseplay - but without my wallet, which I had left behind in my hotel.

As for thefts, the first was shortly after my arrival in Tehran. A pathetically thin and poor-looking boy of about 10 had applied for a job with us, and Margaret had taken pity on him and taken him on to clean the house, run errands and so on. But one morning when we came home from a shopping trip, he was nowhere to be seen - and all of Margaret's jewellery was missing. We applied to the local branch of the Royal Insurance Company, but got nothing, because they pointed out that in the small print of our policy was a clause excluding theft by servants.

The second theft was in Jakarta in broad daylight. A servant left the front door open for a minute while she was cleaning, and somebody darted in, stole a kelim (goat's hair Persian carpet) and darted out again.

Then a typewriter was stolen at night, despite the jaga (nightwatchman). But it was a phonetic typewriter, with a keyboard that I had had specially modified for my work. Instead of capital letters, numerals etc there were weird symbols such as

I have always wondered what the burglar's fence said to him when he saw this useless piece of equipment!

Chapter 9: Wallowing in your dirty bath water

'Wallowing in your own dirty bath water? How disgusting!'

That is what a lot of Americans say about our washing habits. They take showers instead, so that all the dirt and sweat and soap are washed away the whole time.

But a lot of people like a good soak in hot water, and anyway, doctors say that it is excellent for one.

The Asians have the answers.

In Indonesia, one never got into a bath. There was a big square tank, and one used a dipper to get water out of it to pour over oneself as one stood on the tiled or cement floor. In a hot country like that, most people did not trouble to heat the water, but we usually had a bucket of really hot water prepared in the kitchen, and poured some of it into the dipper of water from the tank each time. This meant that the dirt and sweat on one's body dissolved better, and that one could have a pleasantly warm final wash down.

Incidentally, the Indonesians are a scrupulously clean race. Driving through the towns and countryside, one sees men and women stripped naked, washing themselves thoroughly in canals and rivers, some of which seem indescribably dirty to us, but are presumably better than nothing.

In such a densely populated place as Java, it is impossible to have much privacy, so there is the convention of the 'non-seeing face' when one comes across someone bathing in public. One just does not look, so that the naked person can feel perfectly private.

Later, I once spent several weeks at Beppu Spa in the south island of Japan, training teachers. There, all the men had a communal bath in a hot mineral spring gushing out of the ground in a big conservatory-like room. The women had the same facilities separately.

I soon discovered that it was considered highly unhygienic and unpublic-spirited to get into the big pool of hot water without first washing. What one did was to take a small bucket, fill it from a tap at the side of the room (the water was pleasantly warm), wet oneself all over, soap oneself, and then sluice oneself down well with the water in the bucket. One repeated this performance as often as was necessary to get oneself properly clean, and then got into the pool with the other men.

The trick there was to enter as far away as possible from the point where the hot water came in, and to sit submerged up to one's neck on a ledge, enjoying the relaxing heat of the water. As one got used to the temperature, one could gradually edge nearer the source of the hot water, until one reached a point where one could only just bear it.

Incidentally, I was surprised to see that the Japanese

men all carried small cloths, which they held over their private parts whenever they were out of the pool. I was too polite to find out whether this was their normal habit, or whether it was in deference to myself - a foreigner and their teacher. I was not so bashful. I walked about quite naked, as in a rugger shower-room back home.

But it was in India that I managed to get ideal bathing conditions. In our house in New Delhi, we had four bedrooms, each with a beautiful bathroom, complete with bath, shower and marbled floors and walls. I could therefore fill the bath with hot water, use a small bucket to dip from it, soap and rinse outside the bath, and then get into it, perfectly clean, to luxuriate in private in the hot water.

I suppose one could do the same by getting into an empty bath in the average English bathroom, turning on the shower, soaping oneself, showering off, and then putting the plug in and filling the bath to soak in it. But that would mean standing about wet - or having to dry oneself - while the bath was filling. And one would miss the luxury of splashing about among all that marble.

Chapter 10: Real Communism

They poured into Turkey in their thousands when I was a small boy in Constantinople - those who had been lucky enough to escape the Bolshevik terror in Russia during the early 1920s. One of them became my tutor.

Every night I used to pray for the victims left behind in Russia. That one good thing I had learnt from my acid English governess.

Then, when I became old enough, I studied Communism, using books published in English by the Soviet Union itself. I was quite openminded about it, ready to be persuaded if I thought it made sense.

'From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs. The withering away of the organs of State - police, prisons, armed forces.' It all sounded like the Sermon on the Mount - too good to be true in post-revolutionary Russia. And of course it was not true.

Far from withering away, the organs of State were flourishing as they had never succeeded in flourishing under the Czars. There was now a vast and efficient network of secret police, who tortured the Russians and sent them to slave-labour camps; a huge army, navy and air force; a population kept on the brink of starvation - or even beyond - so that the money could be spent on arms to protect the Nomenklatura, the oligarchy of political bosses who ruled

the country dictatorially. Nothing could be further from the withering away of the organs of the state.

As for 'to each according to his needs', that was being flouted in the same way. The differential between the take-home pay (after tax) of a field-marshal and a private was astronomically greater in Russia than it was in any Western country. And the difference in standard of living between the Party bosses and their henchmen on one side, and the ordinary man in the street on the other, was also colossal. The former even had special shops where they could buy luxuries not available to the masses; country dachas surrounded by high wire fences and secret police to keep out the hoi polloi; enormous black cars with curtained windows to whisk them from place to place using special lanes of the road forbidden to others, so that they did not have to rub shoulders with the lower classes, special entry to the best - highly elitist - educational establishments for their children, etc, etc.

As for education, which was my special field, children gifted in special ways were selected from a very early age and given the best tuition and training in, for example, languages, or mathematics, or gymnastics. None of the egalitarian nonsense the Communist parties in the West claimed to be advocating!

I wrote Communism off as the biggest and most successful confidence trick of the 20th Century - until I went to Indonesia.

During my six years there, I was able to observe a village society in the Sundanese area of Java in operation. To my surprise, it worked exactly on the principles of 'from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs', although the villagers had only heard vaguely of Communism, if at all.

Everything, in fact, followed the age-old doctrine of 'gotong-royong' - mutual aid. If someone's house (which was made of palm) blew down, all the able-bodied men automatically came to help rebuild it. If a man was too mentally retarded, physically handicapped or - I often suspected - lazy to do his share of the hard work in the fields, he was goodnaturedly, but with some chaffing, allowed to stay behind in the well-shaded village and keep the small children amused while all the others - including the women - were toiling in the blazing sun.

Everybody in that village was happy and relaxed. There was no crime, and disputes were settled by discussing the matter until a consensus emerged.

It took me a little time to realise that all this was possible only because everybody in the community knew everybody else personally. Public opinion exerted pressure on everyone to play the game, because it was impossible to remain anonymous.

As soon as a community becomes so big that it is impossible for everyone to know everyone else, the whole thing inevitably

breaks down. Clever and unscrupulous individuals- wide boys - are then able to get more than their fair share of things without being found out. Then they manage to persuade other people to conspire with them to create oligarchies or Mafias of power and privilege. And finally it is a free-for-all, with everybody saying, 'If you can't beat them, join them.'

After many centuries of this, attempts are usually made to protect everyone from the dangers of such anarchy, and a social contract emerges. In due course, this leads to universal suffrage, elected leaders and - capitalism. Capitalism is the only way in which individual greed can be harnessed realistically for the good of all, because it provides incentives for the enterprising, inventive, creative and hard-working to use their abilities to the full.

But then come the idealists and do-gooders and egalitarians and intellectuals to claim that capitalism is unjust. A Professor Karl Marx sits in his study far from the hurl-burly of real life, and claims to reinvent 'gotong-royong' and the Sermon on the Mount. But he claims that his ideas are scientific, and that they do apply to large societies where the individual is anonymous. At least, he does not claim this specifically, because he has never been out of his study to see the operation of 'gotong royong' in real life, and to speculate on why it works in a village but not in large communities.

But the clever and unscrupulous types who invented

capitalism are not defeated. Oh, no! Remembering the good old adage, 'If you can't beat them, join them,' they jump on Karl Marx's bandwagon. 'We will give you bread!' they cry. 'We will free you from your chains! When we gain power, there will be no differences in standard of living between individuals! Everyone will be free, everyone will be happy, and everyone will do her or his utmost for the community, because free, happy people are fundamentally good!'

But when they have succeeded in persuading enough ordinary people - preferably with guns - to carry out the revolution, what do you know? Surprise, surprise! The clever and unscrupulous Lenins and Trotskies and Stalins are suddenly living like Czars, while the masses starve. Far more Russians died of famine during the first 25 years after 1917 than in centuries of Czarist rule.

The new bosses learnt from their own successful revolution what the dangers to a ruling class are. They quickly made sure that they were not going to be toppled in their turn. They instituted a network of well-paid secret police, with plenty of irresistible perks, so that potential resistance could be quickly nipped in the bud. Beside the terrorist bosses of the Soviet Union, the old Czars looked like harmless babes in arms.

The countries that call themselves Communist today are a long way from my Sundanese village, alas!

A postscript: when the Americans tried to stop the Communists enslaving Vietnam, there was an outcry from the do-gooders and idealists and intellectuals in the West which forced the Americans to desist. As a result, not only Vietnam but also Laos and particularly Cambodia were subjected to a Communist bloodbath that Lenin and Stalin would have envied. In Cambodia a million people were slaughtered in the most bestial way - a third of the population, in fact! Bravo, Karl Marx!

Incidentally, the main instigator of this massacre, Pol Pot, is still flourishing, and treated respectfully by Western governments!

And what about Burma? Before it had its Socialist dictatorship, it was one of the richest and economically *most* successful countries in Asia. Now, after many years of Marxism, it is one of the poorest, with starvation driving the inhabitants to revolution.

Chapter 11: Small children learning to swim the natural way

How does one help a small child to learn to swim? My father tied a rope round my waist when I was six, and threw me off our yacht when it was right out at sea. As a result, I was afraid of the water for years, especially of getting my head under. I was over thirty when I was shamed into learning to dive in the Embassy pool in Tehran by a young girl.

Nowadays, I see small children in local swimming-pools or the sea with inflated armbands, being taught strokes by their mums - or sometimes by an instructor employed by the pool. I also see these mums desperately trying to get their children to swim ten yards without the armbands so as to win a badge, and in that way keep up with the Jones's children.

'Come on, Sid,' mum cries encouragingly, 'you can do it. Remember to kick your feet all the time. Go on! Go on! (Now irritation has taken over from encouragement). Don't let your feet go down! You silly boy, you've done it again! How many times have I told you to keep kicking with your feet? Just you wait till I get you home! Now come back and try it again. I do believe you're doing it just to annoy me.'

Instead of telling his mum to go and get lost, the poor cowed mite goes through the same performance again

and again without more than the occasional splutter and whimper. After an hour, he is no nearer his badge than he was when he started.

My own four children were brought up for a number of years in Indonesia, where they had the great advantage of being able to swim out of doors all the year round, in naturally warm water. We had an oblong tank near us, about twenty feet long and ten wide, which we were allowed to swim in. The water was about seven feet deep all over, and there was a ladder at each end for getting in and out.

My wife and I used to swim in it as often as we could - as much to get cool as anything - but we never said a word to persuade - or even encourage - any of our children to get into the water, or to do anything particular once they were in.

What happened was that, one after the other, in their own time and in order of age, the children joined us of their own volition in the pool. They climbed down one of the ladders, dog-paddled under water at a depth where the natural buoyancy of their bodies made floating as easy as possible, and then clung to the ladder at the other end, or to the side of the pool, which was quite low, wherever they came up for air.

Since they started off with their heads under water, the children never developed a fear of having their faces

below the surface, so they quickly began jumping in instead of going down the steps.

Soon they developed what they called the 'dead pig' method of jumping in, which entailed putting one's arms tightly round one's bent legs as soon as one was in the air, so that one landed on the water with a great splash in a curled up position. This was accompanied by much hilarity.

Luckily my wife was a strong swimmer and neat diver. One after the other the children watched her diving, and then tried to copy her. At first, the results were only noisy belly-floppers, but the children were determined to do as well as their mum, and soon began asking her for lessons, entirely off their own bat. All of them learnt to do neat headers in a short time, leaving me way behind.

Our third child was very small for her age, and when she was three, and we were visiting a big public pool, she quickly invented the trick of going to the edge of the pool, letting herself fall in, as if by accident, and then cheekily swimming to the other side under water, while anxious adults dived in to save her.

The only time I intervened in the children's learning to swim was when I got rather tired of them constantly bumping into me while they were swimming under water. When I tried to get them to swim on the surface, they replied with the chant, 'We can't!'

I then thought I would try cunning. 'Do you know,' I said, 'if you wear one of these masks (I showed them the skin-diving one I used when snorkelling in the sea), you can swim on the surface?'

One after the other tried this, and swam on the surface with no problem. But it took some time for each to go on to swimming on the surface without the mask. This happened when they became impatient with waiting their turn for it.

At first they continued to dog-paddle, even when swimming on the surface. Graduating to faster and more efficient means of getting from A to B in the water was very similar to learning to do neat dives: one after another, the children applied to my wife for instruction, spurning my jerky, ungainly and old-fashioned overarm efforts.

Years later, when I was working for the United Nations in the South Pacific, I discovered that babies there learn to swim before they can walk - which is not surprising, if you think about it, because water is much more buoyant than air. They also learn entirely without instruction. And what is more, very young babies instinctively hold their breath when their nostrils and mouth are under water.

Chapter 12: Crab-eating macaques and other creatures

My love of monkeys stemmed from a present my grandmother gave my brother Dick when we were living in Turkey and I was about seven years old. This present was a toy monkey with real soft fur on its head. Henry, as we called him, at once became the central figure of our fantasy world, and the hero of the numerous stories with which I used to fill exercise books in strip cartoon form.

Then soon after that, Great-Uncle Reggie's marmosets came on the scene. Great-Uncle Reggie lived just across the drive that led down into our family enclave in Turkey, finishing at the gates to my great-grandmother's section.

Whenever we were invited to tea at Great-Uncle Reggie's, the marmosets were there, roaming freely in the drawing-room, and coming to sit on our shoulders and watch us drinking our tea and eating our cakes.

So when I arrived in Jakarta, and discovered that there were crab-eating macaques for sale in the market, I decided to get a pair.

First, however, I had to provide them with a secure place to live. There were not only roving dogs and cats in Jakarta, but also wild creatures that one could hear and occasionally see after dark, such as martens which stalked through the trees at night, and perhaps snakes too.

I therefore set about making a cage, about a metre in every direction, the frame being made of very strong wire, and the sides, top and bottom of wire netting. There was a good-sized door at the front, and a place where the wire was cut out to allow a little covered feeding dish and water container to be attached. There was also a branch across the inside of the cage, near the dish and water container, for the monkeys to sit on.

The whole thing would be put on the verandah at the back of the house, beside the kitchen door, where it could be under the eye of the cook most of the time that I was busy teaching at the University; but it could also easily be moved about, being very light in weight.

The next thing was to go to the main market to buy the monkeys. The market was far less impressive than that of Isfahan. There were narrow little lanes between poor stalls, and underfoot was stinking mud and centuries of rubbish.

The woman selling the monkeys was a toothless old crone with henna-dyed hair and grasping talons of hands. She had a pair of very young crab-eating macaques among her stock, cowering together with thin chains tied round their waists to prevent them escaping. They looked forlorn and doleful, and every now and then put their heads back, rounded their lips and emitted a hauntingly mournful little call which sounded like 'oooo'.

I at once fell for them, but it was bad bargaining policy to show interest in what one really wanted to buy, so I started inspecting a fully-grown female who sat looking absentmindedly into the distance, just as if she was a captive philosopher trying to distance herself from her enforced sordid surroundings.

I asked the price of this aloof lady, and raised my eyebrows when I was quoted one.

'What about these?' the old crone asked, pointing to the two babies. 'They're pretty. Look!'

'Mm,' I answered, putting on my most doubtful face, 'they'd probably die very soon. They're very young, and need their mother's milk.'

'No,' the old woman answered scornfully, 'look!' She put a slice of papaya down in front of the pair, and they quickly put their faces down and began to eat it voraciously.

'Poor things,' I thought. 'They're starving.'

'Well,' I said, still feigning doubt, 'how much for those?'

The price per head was even higher than for the adult, but years of bargaining in Greece and Turkey and Iran had taught me all I needed to know, and I got them at

half the price.

I picked them up and they clung tightly to my hairy arms and chattered up anxiously into my face. 'Please be kind to us, sir,' they seemed to be saying. 'Please feed us - we're starving!'

'It's all right, pets,' I said reassuringly, 'we'll soon be home, 'and have I laid in a good stock of fruit for you!'

But it was not to be. When I got back to the car, lo and behold, I discovered that for the first time in my life I had locked the keys in it! It was one of those cars which one could lock from the outside by depressing a button, and that is what I had carelessly done with the keys still in the ignition.

There was nothing for it but to take the monkeys back to the old crone temporarily - she cackled uproariously at my misfortune - and take a betjak (trishaw) back home to pick up Margaret's keys.

In the end I got the monkeys home, removed their chains and gave them as much papaya as they could eat, a banana each and water. They ate the papaya by squatting in front of it, bending their heads down and scraping bits off with their teeth. When they had nearly finished a piece, they picked it up and scraped away with their teeth until nothing but the skin was left.

Although they were so young, they knew all about bananas, peeling them neatly before eating them much as we do.

I was interested to see that they always smelt a piece of fruit carefully before starting to eat it. 'How wise!' I thought. 'To avoid eating anything rotten or dangerous.' I have always followed their example since then.

The monkeys did not much like being in their cage, and were always eager to be with humans, but they preferred me to anyone else, perhaps because of my hairy arms, which reminded them of their mother, and perhaps because it was I who had rescued them from the market. They soon began to groom my arms and head, doing the job with intense concentration, and putting any little bit of scurf etc that they found between their teeth and eating it.

They quickly learnt that they could use the arms of my glasses as a handrail as they sat on my shoulders, and they were fascinated by Margaret's lipstick, rubbing it with a finger and then looking at the result.

I knew that it was impossible to housetrain them, but in that hot climate, with tiled floors everywhere, it was easy to clean up after them - and as they ate an exclusively vegetarian diet, their droppings did not smell.

They made various sounds. When I came back home from the University and they heard me, they would begin to squeak and give the long, mournful hoot I had heard them use in the market, and their normal way of showing that they were happy and friendly was to bare their teeth and chatter them. I quickly learnt to do that back at them to show I was equally pleased to see them.

When they were angry, usually because they were not let out of their cage quickly enough after my return home, they would have terrible hysterical tantrums, throwing themselves down like naughty children and screaming loudly.

The children loved having them around too, and quickly decided to call the girl Squeaker and the boy Booboo. They soon learned to come when their names were called. When the children came home from school, they would make a beeline for the monkeys and excitedly exchange all their news since they had last seen each other.

When I was at home, I usually carried the monkeys about, often taking them out into the garden, and soon they began to be adventurous and curious, leaving my shoulders to run about on the grass, or to climb a tree. But they were always on the alert, and as soon as danger threatened, in the form of a dog, a horse, people passing in the street, or even a sudden noise, they would race back and climb up onto my shoulders again. Their greatest fear was of horses. I wondered whether it was some

primitive instinct to avoid big animals in case they were predators.

We had quite a big aquarium of tropical fish. It stood on metal legs so as to be at face height, and that was a constant source of interest to the monkeys. They would shin up the legs and try to catch the fish through the glass. They were constantly surprised that they could not touch the brightly coloured creatures gliding lazily about a few inches from their fingers.

They also got a lot of fun out of mirrors. They would approach one, give a start of surprise at seeing what they thought was another monkey facing them, chatter at it, approach warily and try to touch, then run their hands over the mirror, trying to find a way to the other monkey, and finally go round the back of the mirror to see if it was there.

Very early in our relationship I discovered that the boy monkey behaed very differently from the girl. Whereas she was always ready to do what she was told, and came back to apologise if I stopped her doing something dangerous or destructive, the little boy would object strongly, raising and lowering his eyebrows in the way that monkeys do when they are threatening someone, and often refusing to do what he was told until I forcibly stopped him.

I have always said that I learnt more about human

nature from those monkeys than I did from any human beings, including my four children, because they always behaved openly, without any subterfuges or pretences. And one of the things I learnt was that males and females are fundamentally different in nature, despite what the FemLibbers say about behaviours being acquired and not instinctive.

After a couple of months in the steamy heat of Jakarta, we managed to rent a house in the mountains about 40 miles away for weekends. 'It'll be nice to get away from the heat for a couple of days at a time,' Margaret said to the children.

'But what are we going to do about Squeaker and Booboo?' the children protested.

'We can take them in the car,' Margaret said.

'But where will they live when they're up in the mountains?' the children went on. 'They need a safe place, especially at night.'

'I know,' I said, 'we'll tie the cage on the roof rack of the car and take it with us.'

'Why can't Squeaker and Booboo travel in it on the roof?' the children asked.

'Wouldn't it be draughty for them?' Margaret said.

'We could put the suitcases in front of the cage to keep the wind off,' I said. And that is just what we did. The monkeys travelled very well, and were quite happy and

lively when we took them out of the cage at the other end of the journey. They explored the lawn and trees round the house cautiously, keeping close to the children, and then saw the small swimming-pool. We all wondered what they would make of it. We had heard that crab-eating macaques were quite at home in the water. That was how they had developed their habit of eating shellfish.

The two approached the water carefully and bent over the side of the pool to examine it. When they saw their reflections in the water they were startled and drew back, but then they approached again and began to chatter at the faces in the water and to try to touch them.

When they realised that it was in fact water, they began to dip their fingers in and then suck them. After a few minutes they started to splash the water, at first carefully and seriously, and then energetically and happily, till they were both soaking wet.

The children quickly changed into their bathing costumes and got into the water. Then they called Squeaker and Booboo. When the monkeys saw the heads bobbing in the water, they became very alarmed. They bounced up and down, shrieking, and then first Booboo and then Squeaker jumped into the water and began to swim to the children.

'How sweet!' the children laughed. 'They're trying to save us!'

The monkeys swam to them and clung to their arms, chattering excitedly. They were obviously delighted to find that their friends were safe. After that, they often went for a swim in the pool, even when the children were not in it.

So it went on for a couple of years, until the time came for us to go back to England on three months' leave.

'What are we going to do with Squeaker and Booboo?' the children asked anxiously. They knew we could not take them back to England, and that we could not leave them with our servants, because they might have left by the time we got back. We were also determined not to sell them or give them away to someone who might not treat them as well as we did.

I made enquiries at the Zoo, but they had as many crab-eating macaques as they could manage. But then we had a piece of luck. The director of the Zoo rang one day.

'Professor Hill?' he said. 'A German team is in Indonesia collecting rare wild animals with the permission of our Government for an open zoo there. I have persuaded the leader of the expedition to take your two monkeys too. They will have a good life there. There are no cages in the zoo, only water to separate the animals from the public.'

'Like Whipsnade,' I thought. I thanked the director, and a few days later we all took the monkeys to the Zoo on top of the car, and handed them over to a nice young German. I must say, we all shed a tear at parting, but we all agreed that, if we had to leave Squeaker and Booboo, we could not have them in better hands.

Chapter 13: Indonesian vignettes

Although while I was a professor at the University of Indonesia, I was supposed to be seconded from the British Council, I was constantly being saddled with work for that organisation as well. Since I was the only British Council officer in the capital city, with the rest of the staff 100 miles away in the backwater of Bandung, this was natural. Every time I was called upon to perform yet one more onerous duty, I was assured that this was 'an exception', but of course the exceptions were in fact the rule.

It was in Jakarta that I paraphrased a quotation from the Bible to describe the work of us British Council officers: instead of 'a-whoring after strange gods', I said our job was 'a-whoring after strange bods'.

In one case, I had to make the arrangements for accommodating a gentleman who was coming to Indonesia to do a lecture tour for the British Council. I managed to get him a room at the best hotel, but only sharing a room, as there were very few hotel beds available in the city at that time for the number of visitors.

I duly went to the airport to meet this gentleman, and when he arrived, told him about the arrangements I had made for him.

'That is quite out of the question!' he answered.

'I have an artificial leg, which I have to remove at night, and I cannot possibly do that in front of a stranger!'

I was living in a small house with my wife and three children, and we did not have a spare room. However, I rigged up a camp bed and mosquito net in my office, which was next door to the bedroom Margaret and I occupied, and our visitor settled down for the night.

But an hour or so later, there were cries for help from next door. I rushed in, and found the poor man being violently sick on the floor. Apparently he had attended a scout dinner in Bangkok the night before (he was a keen scoutmaster), and the curry had disagreed with him.

I called our maid, she cleared up the mess, and we settled down to sleep again. But the next morning, there were more fun and games: while being sick, our guest had spewed out his full set of false teeth, and the maid had removed them with the rest of the mess and dumped them down the loo!

'I must have new teeth at once!' the man said. 'If I wait, my gums will recede, and then I'll be in real trouble.'

So I took him along to my own dentist, who was also Professor of Orthodontics at the University, and he had a new set made for the man within 24 hours. I heard later that it was the best set our visitor had ever had.

My first boss in Indonesia was a colourful character called John Lucas, who had won an MC in Burma fighting behind the Japanese lines, where he had been dropped by parachute. He was very shortsighted, and the story went that when he had landed in the jungle with his Gurkha troops, his glasses had fallen off, so that nothing could be done until a thorough search in the thick vegetation had found them.

John had his own private aeroplane, which he had brought in from Singapore to provide a link between Bandung in the mountains where British Council headquarters was, and Jakarta, which was 100 miles away.

As soon as I got to Bandung in 1951, John offered to ferry me back and forth to my University work in Jakarta, so I said, 'Are you insured for passengers?'

When he answered, 'No,' I said, 'In that case, I'm taking the train. I have a wife and two children, and can't leave them with nothing.' I must say, I was relieved, because I didn't fancy flying over the high rim of mountains between Bandung and Jakarta in a small plane with a pilot who was blind as a bat without his glasses.

I often met President Sukarno formally during shows at his palace, and once was lucky enough to be invited for a trip on the Presidential yacht, a converted Dutch gunboat, with Margaret and members of the Information

Services of Embassies accredited to Indonesia. The President did not accompany us, but we were looked after by high-ranking officials of the Ministry of Information.

The highlight of our trip was a visit to the island of Krakatau, the volcano between Java and Sumatra which had exploded some years before with the biggest bang since history began to be recorded. One was not allowed to land on it without a government permit, and by the time we visited it, it had again become covered with vegetation and repopulated with birds and some animals, which had been blown by the wind, or drifted on flotsam from the Javanese coast a few miles away.

During this trip I had teamed up with the Germans as usual, and as we were standing on the small beach on Krakatau, one of them picked up a coconut with its thick husk still on and said, to me, 'Do you know, these things are marvellously protected. There have been many cases of people dying of thirst and starvation on a desert island in spite of having lots of coconuts available, because it is impossible to break into them without sophisticated tools.'

That sounded a tall story to me, so I began work with stones I picked up on the beach. It took me less than ten minutes to break into the first nut.

After lunch, we were taken in the launch that went with the Presidential yacht to the nearest beach on Java

to bathe and see if we could spot a Javanese rhino - a very rare type of animal. We were left on the beach, with the promise that the launch would be back in two hours' time to take us to the yacht again.

We quickly discovered that there were almost invisible jellyfish in the sea with an unpleasant sting, so we did not bathe for long, and then suddenly I was struck down by the most blinding headache I have ever had in my life. It was obviously some kind of migraine. I had had headaches and minor attacks of migraine before, but this one was a real humdinger. I could hardly see, and all I could do was to sit huddled up on the sand with my arms round my head to keep out the light. It seemed like days before the launch finally rescued me and took me back to the yacht, where I had medicines which helped.

A postscript about Indonesia: I became friendly while there with a high-powered young British journalist who represented some international news syndicate and often travelled around with President Sukarno in the latter's plane when he was touring the other parts of Indonesia. My friend was a keen womaniser, and he soon discovered that his appetite for sex was matched by the President's, so they used to have sessions together every night.

'Do you know,' my friend said, 'Sukarno can't go a single night without a woman. If he has to, he becomes a nervous wreck. Often we each have several women one after

the other. They're so small - especially the Balinese ones
- that it's like fucking mice.'

Chapter 14: Asian women do it better

'Women in Asia are downtrodden!' the Fem Libbers cried. Were they? 'It's a male-dominated society, a male chauvinist piggery!' they went on. Was it?

'What about India?' I thought. They had a woman prime minister long before any European country. And Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) had Mrs Bandaranaike long before that. In 1961, in fact.

I then came across an interesting article in a newspaper: 'Most top business companies in Burma are directed by women,' it said. I consulted the 'Encyclopedia Britannica.' It confirmed that in Burma 'the women are generally more industrious and businesslike than the men.' The reasons were obvious: the men were lazy and over-confident, so the hard-working, strongly competitive women ran rings round them.

'Exceptions!' the Fem Libbers countered. But were they? Some of us who have lived and worked in Asia for many years would not agree.

There was Indonesia, for instance. I spent seven years there, most of the time as a professor at the University of Indonesia when the country was apparently being ruled single-handed by President Sukarno. He listened to records of Hitler's speeches to learn the techniques of rabble-rousing. If he liked you, he would promise you anything, but none

of it ever happened. He was a boastful, self-centred incompetent.

If you were artful and in the know, you did not go to that windbag. No, you visited Mrs Maria Ulfa Santoso, the head of his Cabinet Office. Your first interview was a surprise. She was less than five feet tall, and so slim that you could hardly see her sideways on. She talked in a quiet, modest voice, and gave an impression of softness and diffidence. But not a bit of it! She was tough. Her brain was razor-sharp. If she decided something should be done, it was done, or else! Everybody jumped to it when she gave one of her quiet orders.

Then there was Miss Kurnianigrat of the Ministry of Education. She was very tall for an Indonesian, beautiful and elegant. As soon as she came into the room, you were aware of a presence. She became professor of English at the university and head of department after I left. She too ran rings round the men in a quiet, apparently completely unpushful way that had me puzzled at first.

Then I understood. Both Mrs Santoso and Miss Kurnianigrat were absolutely confident of themselves. All their faculties were in harmony. They sailed serenely through their work, with no doubts and no tensions. They got their way by sheer personality, which was composed of effortless determination, competence and sheer niceness.

This interested me, so I studied the subject. I found

that men in Asian countries tended, as I have already said, to be lazy and complacent. Their mothers brought them up to believe that they were the top sex, and spoilt them rotten, as the picturesque term is. They did not reckon to have to struggle to get on.

But the women who had it in them to get to the top were quite a different breed. They were heavily sat on as children by their mothers, and learned early that to get on they had to hide their ambitions. They had learnt to get what they wanted in a roundabout way. They had also learned that selflessness and generosity did not pay, because men took them simply as signs of weakness. Such women therefore became ruthless. But their ruthlessness was completely hidden under a gentle, unobtrusive exterior. In competition with men, they won, partly because they were really much more efficient and hard-working, and partly because men did not realise, until too late, that they were being competed against.

After Indonesia, I went to work in India, as Chief Education Officer of the British Council. There too, a lot of my contacts were with charming young women who looked as if clarified butter would not melt in their mouths, but who, as it turned out, were running university departments or vast teacher-training schemes, with quiet but tenacious determination.

On courses I ran for one of these ladies, Dr B C Dutt, it was funny to see crusty old headmasters quailing under

quiet rebukes from that small, smiling, intensively feminine lady with the melting dark brown eyes and the inexhaustible store of adrenalin.

As I got to know more Indians, I realised that most young women were, in fact, very much dominated and restricted at home by the extended family system, which was a kind of substitute for Social Security. But I soon also realised that the top dog in each of these family groups was not a man, but the old grandmother. She was often illiterate, but she knew all the family's ramifications completely, and was the ultimate source of decisions and power in it.

A man would come home from his important job as a government minister or company chairman, and on crossing the threshold, would come under the domination of the old matriarch. Anybody who stepped out of line was outlawed by the family, which meant that he or she was at the mercy of all other extended families in the struggle for survival.

When I returned to England from India, Fem Lib was busy. I believed firmly in the equality (and often superiority) of women, just as I believed in the same for all races, having worked under brown and yellow bosses very happily. But I was appalled at the strident tones, the butch appearance, the slovenly and often downright dirty clothes, the mean, unhappy faces and the apparent lack of psychological insight of the leaders of Fem Lib.

I remembered Mrs Santoso, so quiet and composed and feminine, but at the same time so competent and successful. I remembered Miss Kurnianingrat. And Dr Dutt. And all the others. Their calm, dignified faces floated before my eyes, and I compared them with the aggressive, hate-distorted faces of the Fem Libbers on TV. 'My poor dear girls,' I thought, 'you don't begin to understand how to go about getting what you want. All you're doing is letting those great big chips rule your heads.'

Then I suddenly remembered two men I had admired as much as I had admired Mrs Santoso and the others. They were the CO of my regiment during the war, Lieutenant-Colonel Rob Waller, DSO, MC, and Sir David Maxwell-Fyfe, my boss at the Nuremberg Trials in 1945-6, who later became Lord Kilmuir, the Lord Chancellor. Both of them were highly competent in their jobs; but both of them, too, were unfailingly polite, quiet and unassuming towards everybody. Just like those Asian women.

'Wait a moment!' I said to myself. 'There must be some moral in this. But what is it?' Then it came to me: I personally would go to the ends of the earth for anyone - woman or man - who combined competence with charm. I would also use all my powers to wreck anyone - man or woman - who was shrill and strident. And what about the charming incompetents of which the world is full? Well, being a man, I would be prejudiced there. I would do a lot for

such a woman. But I would steer well clear of a charming but incompetent man.

I decided that women in the West would do far better if they turned their backs on the Greers and Hytes of this world and studied the methods of the Santosos and Kurnianigrats and Dutts instead. And if they were to train their daughters to get their way by the roundabout methods that have worked so successfully for centuries, they would give them a wonderful preparation for life in the real world.

But then another thought struck me: was it possible that the leaders of Fem Lib were not really interested in fairness and equality at all? Every community has a small percentage of psychopaths etc who get their pleasure from confrontation and hatred and violence. If they can hitch this to some respectable sounding cause such as CND or IRA, so much the better. Could Fem Lib be another such cause? Would the leaders in fact be deeply disappointed if an era of real equality of opportunity for women and men came in, and confrontation ceased?

That rang another bell: it was exactly how President Sukarno behaved. He loved confrontation, and did everything he could to persuade his countrymen that they were being persecuted and done down by foreigners. When his highly efficient Deputy President, Dr Hatta, who had been a professor of economics, began to get the country on an even keel economically and financially, Sukarno quickly

sabotaged his efforts and dismissed him. He didn't want an even keel, because it would mean that he would no longer have an excuse to rant and rave and rabble-rouse.

And my final thought was: what about money? Aren't the great gurus of Fem Lib making millions out of writing their inflammatory works? And would they be so affluent if they had to work like ordinary people, even given equal opportunities with men? Ah, yes, think of that!

Chapter 15: In India, eat vegetarian

During my first month in India, I broke two teeth on old goat. After that, whenever I was on tour, which was six months in the year, I stuck to vegetarian food, except on the rare occasions when I could stay at a first-class hotel, as in Calcutta or Bombay, and eat excellent water-buffalo steaks (beef, of course, was out because of the sacredness of the cow).

There was often a third alternative to Indian meat and Indian vegetarian : that was 'English'. But the Indian cooks who prepared it never ate it themselves, and it was so long since they had cooked it for censorious British memsahibs that what they produced bore little resemblance to the original, and was remarkable chiefly for its appalling blandness and unsuitability to the Indian climate.

In my view, it was impossible to get really good Indian vegetarian food in the northern part of the country, except in special restaurants in the biggest cities. Elsewhere in the north, food was liberally spiced with chilis, but not much else.

In the south, nearly everyone is vegetarian, and if you want a meat meal, you have to look for a restaurant that calls itself a 'military hotel'. , i.e one where soldiers from other, carnivorous, parts of India are catered for. I soon decided that, even in very unpretentious vegetarian establishments in the south, the cooking was up to gourmet

standards, because everything was so fresh, and the dishes were so varied and so subtly flavoured.

I would go into a small place, patronised mostly by students, minor clerks and truck-drivers, choose a seat, and wait for an oblong piece of banana leaf to be placed before me as a plate. When this arrived, I took it to a cold tap in the wall and washed both it and my right hand carefully (the left hand is used for other purposes in India!).

Then I went back to my seat, ordered rassam (pepper-water) and lassi (a refreshing mixture of yoghurt, salt and water) to drink, and then waited for the men with the food. The first of them put a pile of plain-boiled rice on my banana leaf, and then the next one came along with a collection of brass pots, draped around a central hanging device, rather like a chandelier, and dealt out the various curries and dhals and pickles with a big ladle, asking one first whether there was anything one did not fancy among them.

I then rolled up my right sleeve and began to mix the first mouthful with my right hand. The eating technique was to pick the food up on the first two joints of the fingers, shaped into a kind of scoop, and then to get it into one's mouth by pushing it along the scoop with one's thumb. If you read Chaucer's 'Prologue to the Canterbury Tales', you will see that he highly commends his Prioress for the daintiness with which she does just this, never getting

any food about the second joints of her fingers. In the days before forks were invented, everyone in England ate in this way, but most of them more messily than the Prioress.

Actually, I was surprised to find that a lot of Indians were in fact messy eaters, getting the food right up to their elbows, like the people Chaucer scorns.

The men with the rice, curry etc circulated continually, and you could have as many second helpings as you could manage. Then you went on to your pud, which was more plain-boiled rice, but this time with rather runny yoghurt. This was where skill really came in. To make sloppy scoopfuls of this mixture and convey them to one's mouth without making an awful mess took quite a lot of practice.

Incidentally, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the meal cost the equivalent of six old pence - about 2 p.

When you finished, you went and washed your hand and face under the tap again, and rinsed your teeth, while the servers removed your piece of banana leaf and threw it in the rubbish. Then you could have some of the delicious Mysore coffee which they served in metal cups, with lots of milk and sugar. To cool this liquid, they poured it from one cup into another, back and forth across amazing distances, without ever spilling a drop.

The really fastidious drank it without letting the cup touch their lips, also sometimes pouring it from

arm's length into their mouths without splashing their faces. I never discovered whether this was to avoid picking up an infection from the cup. If that was the reason, why weren't they also afraid of the infection being transferred to them via the coffee that had been in contact with the cup?

After coffee, I would often take a pan - betel nut wrapped in a neem leaf, with some slaked lime, and perhaps cardamoms, in it. It was pleasantly digestive, and it was amusing to find the inside of one's mouth bright red after chewing one. Incidentally, each region of India added different ingredients to its pan. In Orissa, there was tobacco, which I avoided like the plague, and in Uttar Pradesh, the mixture in the leaf was liquid and sweet.

South Indian food is very hot, the hottest being in Andhra Pradesh. I found that, in a very hot climate, unless I had something that stimulated my gastric juices, the food would sit on my stomach for hours without being digested. Presumably my gastric juices had not noticed it coming down. So I found that hot curries were ideal for me - although the ones in Andhra Pradesh were sometimes too much even for me.

In conservative bastions of Britishness, it was difficult, or sometimes actually impossible, to get Indian vegetarian food. There was the Poona Club, for instance, still with portraits of the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh, and

no sign of any picture of the Indian President or Prime Minister, even though nearly all the members of the club were of pure Indian blood.

I had to stay there for several days once, putting up - with ill grace - with the brown Windsor soup, the roast mutton, roast potatoes, boiled cabbage and caramel custard (my pet abomination!), until in the end I departed under a large cloud after asking the head bearer - in his gorgeous red, white and gold uniform - for a pan. Bateman would have made a lovely cartoon out of the incident.

Actually, the Poona Club did have a 'curry lunch' (or was it 'tiffin'?) on Sundays. I looked forward to it for a couple of days, but when it arrived, it was no more like the real Indian curry I knew than the stuff you get in a boarding-house in Worthing. There was a faint whiff of that nasty English type of curry powder, which I suppose the Poona Club imported specially from Birmingham or some such place; and there were bits of plain tomato and cucumber and banana to add to it, which real Indians never serve with curry.

In London, I am glad to say, there are restaurants where one can get a very good approximation to South Indian vegetarian food. But, alas, the price is more than sixpence, there are no banana leaves to eat off, and the customers are too superior to roll up their right sleeve and tuck in with their fingers like that elegant Prioress of Chaucer's.

Chapter 16: 'I am a pencil, I am a pen'

Teaching English as a foreign or second language abroad had its funny moments. I had discovered early in my career that I enjoyed it and also had a gift for it - especially for making lessons amusing and enjoyable as well as useful for the students. As a teacher-trainer taking over classes in schools which had never seen me before, I was always able to put them quickly at their ease and infect them with enthusiasm. I think it was basically the ability to see things with the unspoilt eye of a child, and the confidence to be mischievous instead of pompous. Anyway, it worked.

In the State of Madras, a colleague of mine had managed to introduce direct methods of teaching on a large scale, but the teachers did not always know exactly how to use them. The direct method meant that, instead of teaching small children about the language, using grammar, translation etc, one taught them to use the language right from the beginning in meaningful situations. For example, one pointed to a pen, and the students chorussed, 'That's a pen' (chorus work is not as good as individual work, but in the huge classes which were all that a poor country could afford, they were better than nothing).

I was wryly amused when, in one class I was taken to see, I found the children chanting, 'I am a pen; I am a pencil; I am a book' etc. I called it the General

Confession of Incompetence (on the part of the teacher of course).

Pronunciation was, of course, also a big problem: The English sound 'e' at the beginning of a word, as in 'egg', became 'ye'; and 'o', as in 'open', became 'wo'. In both cases, this was because of Tamil pronunciation. I once heard a teacher giving the spelling of the word 'floss' to a class. Of course, it came out as 'YEFF, YELL, WOE, YES, YES.'

Syntax was also a problem, producing such questions from a teacher as 'Do you have seen donkey?' instead of 'Have you ever seen a donkey?'

But there were sometimes lovely expressions, presumably translated directly from the local languages. At the end of one examination paper that I inspected for the Directorate of Education in Kerala, a student had written, 'Now I stop the dancing of the pen on my paper,' meaning, presumably, 'I must stop writing now.' How could an examiner with a soul mark that as wrong!

I took over as Chief Education Officer, India, from an old-fashioned man who believed in teaching literature, not language, as had been the tradition in India for centuries. He and his Indian adherents claimed that we who wanted children to learn some of the language before they launched into literature, and to do it step by step, starting from simple, everyday things, were

debasing education in the country.

I once mischievously told this colleague, 'You know, what we are doing here is teaching foreign English as a language.' He was delighted with this expression, and often quoted it later to discredit us.

Another amusing incident I remember from the 'Madras Snowball', as it came to be called, was a visit to a convent school. My colleague in South India was very keen on teaching the children simple English songs to help their pronunciation and fluency and to amuse them. Actually, after a song had been through the mouths and ears of several teacher-trainers, teachers and pupils, it was often difficult to recognise it as English at all, either in pronunciation, or in rhythm, or in tune. It would sound like a typical Tamil song.

However, the nuns in the convent schools were outstandingly good at carrying things out efficiently and successfully, and in this class, I heard a group of angelic-looking little girls in immaculate uniforms singing, 'What shall we do with the drunken sailor?' with bloodthirsty relish. They knew all about 'putting him in the scuppers with the hosepipe on him,' 'putting him in the longboat till he was sober', and all the rest of it, and the kindly nun teaching them seemed to see no conflict between the task of educating little young ladies - particularly in an area of India where prohibition had been imposed - and teaching them what

to do with drunks!

I several times had to give interviews or talks on television in the countries I worked in, but never got around to giving a demonstration lesson in this way. A colleague of mine did one in Tehran, with the help of a local teacher who had been in my teachers' class.

The subject of the lesson was British people having tea, but not only did Jim spill the milk during the live TV presentation, but also the camera caught Ali guiltily emptying his tea-cup into the teapot.

What had happened was that Ali's next line was, 'This cup is empty too.' To show that it was, he had to turn it upside down. But unfortunately the cup was not empty. The only way he could think of emptying it before turning it upside down was to pour the tea back into the pot. Unfortunately, one of the cameras was trained on him, and the mixer cut in on it at the crucial moment, so the Iranian viewers were no doubt left with the impression that this was a normal part of a British tea-party.

Another amusing experience came from my University classes in Jakarta. One of the activities I found very useful for developing oral fluency was discussion, so I would select a topic which was of local interest and ask a class to think about it, and come ready to discuss it at the next session.

One of these was films, of which there were plenty in Indonesian cinemas in those days before TV. Most of the students in the Faculty of Arts were girls, whereas the Faculties, of Medicine, Economics and Engineering attracted mostly men students. I was told that the girls came to us to learn good English so as to be able to marry boys from the other faculties, and help them in their jobs.

Well, during the discussion on films, one of the girls, who knew that I had been in the war, asked me whether I liked war films.

'No,' I answered very decisively, 'I never go to war films. I saw enough of that sort of thing myself.'

'Then, sir,' piped up another girl, a pert little thing with a twinkle always in her eye, 'I suppose you never go to love films either!'

Chapter 17: Indian vignettes

Driving - or rather being driven by an official chauffeur - around Kerala was always interesting. Many of the women one saw in the countryside went about topless - but I noticed that these were only the ones with unattractive breasts - either because of youth or because of old age.

As for the small village children, many of them went about wearing nothing but a tiny triangle of cloth tied in place to cover their distinguishing marks.

Many of the little girls in the South of India were unbelievably beautiful. They had bright little black eyes, mischievous faces, shining black hair oiled with coconut oil, brightly coloured clothes and flowers in their hair.

Occasionally there was an Anglo-Indian child. In one class I was amazed to see a perfect replica of Sophia Loren, complete with huge eyes and sultry mouth.

One quite often came across people with enormously thick legs in the South - victims of elephantiasis, a disease carried by certain biting insects.

In all parts of the country, holy cows would saunter along on the crown on the road, and could not be treated with anything but respect. And if one's driver was a vegetarian, as many Indians were, he would get into a state of panic if he ran over any creature. Once one of our drivers ran

over a cobra; and often driving early in the morning the driver was constantly jamming on the brakes to avoid running over the birds that were feeding on the dead creatures left after a night's traffic.

Old men could also often be met walking along the crown of the road like holy cows, and behaving as if they had never seen a car before when they became aware of one's approach.

Water buffaloes could be even more of a hazard. One would suddenly charge up the bank at the side of the road, out of a fallow paddy field, and cross in front of one at a lolloping gallop.

Cyclists were also a constant danger. I used to amuse people by telling them the story of the one I knocked down in New Delhi. When the person I was telling the story to expressed her or his alarm, I would add, 'Yes, he was riding on the pavement, and his shoulder came into forcible contact with mine as I was walking along minding my own business. As he was not as muscular as I was, he fell off his bike.'

In most respects I found the Indians scrupulously clean, but occasionally there were cases where their ideas were not the same as ours. For example, the wife of one of my colleagues had stressed to her servants the importance of keeping the first pieces of toast warm and crisp while the rest were being done. One day she happened to go into

the kitchen just before breakfast, and found the sweeper, who never wore shoes or socks, sitting on the floor before the fire toasting the bread, with the pieces he had already done stuck between his toes so that they could be near the fire while his hands were busy with the later bits. He was quite unconcerned at being caught in this posture. In fact, he was glad that he had been found doing what the servants had been told to do - keeping the toast warm!

Indian servants also tended to have other very set habits which it was almost impossible to break. In all hotels and dak bungalows, it was *de rigueur* to have bed tea. This was brought by a bearer at a very early hour of the morning, and consisted of a pot of very strong tea, a small quantity of milk, sugar and an extremely astringent unripe banana. I did not like this kind of bed tea at all, so wherever I stayed, I used to get hold of the bearer the night before and try to drum into him what I thought was the simple message, 'NO BED TEA!'

I was rarely successful. Nearly always, that knock on the door came at 6 in the morning, and I had to send the man away and try to get a bit more sleep.

A more bizarre incident occurred on the first night of my first ever tour after taking over my post in India. I had settled down in my bed in a hotel in Bhopal, ready to go to sleep, so I switched off the light. At least, I tried to switch it off. It was a neon light, and began

to flash. I again tried pushing the switch up and down - with the same result.

What to do? It was late, there was no telephone in the room, and the hotel was silent, so I went out into the corridor and bellowed, 'Bearer!'

After some considerable time, the night porter came shuffling along, and I told him what my problem was.

He too tried the switch, and got the same result - flash, flash, flash. So he simply took hold of the neon light in its fitting and ripped the whole thing out of the wall.

During the remaining days of my visit to Bhopal, I had to go to bed by candlelight.

My second trip was by car with the British Council Representative, India, his wife and my predecessor as Chief Education Officer, who was a literature man, and among other places we visited the palace of the Maharajah of Patiala. He was abroad at the time, but we were royally entertained by his wife and family.

The Maharajah had an incredible collection of medals and orders in frames on the walls of the palace, and also an indoor swimming pool - a rare luxury in the India of those days, but not as surprising as one would have thought, as it was the place where earlier maharajahs used to sit

and watch their wives and concubines disporting themselves naked in the water.

In the extensive grounds of the palace was the railway carriage in which the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VIII) had travelled when he had paid a state visit to India.

But the thing that impressed me most was my bathroom. I had a huge bedroom, but it was dwarfed into insignificance by the en suite bathroom, which had obviously been converted out of a big hall. It had an enormously lofty ceiling, and right in the middle of the marble floor an old-fashioned bath, standing starkly there with no surrounds, and with all the plumbing visible. However, it worked excellently, with hot and cold water always on tap.

The only maharajah I actually came into contact with was the Maharajah of Mysore. He was a very imposing man, both in height and in girth. Once when I was flying from Madras to Delhi, and the plane stopped at Bangalore, he got on, whereupon I hastily moved over to the other side of the plane in the hope of counterbalancing him slightly.

My third visit after I got to India was to our regional office in Calcutta, and there I found myself, much to my surprise, guest of honour at a cocktail party given by the Minister of Education of Bengal State. I was even more surprised when he took me to task quite fiercely for the way the British had improved the medical facilities in his State during the Raj.

In Indonesia, as in Japan and China, face was of the utmost importance, so one just did not attack people at public functions. I had not realised that, as a result of the British influence, the Indian intellectuals had decided earlier this century to abolish long-standing face-saving habits in their country, and give as good as they got.

But even then, I thought the last thing an Indian would have accused us of was improving the health of his country. But when the Minister explained, I saw his point. In a country with a vast population and a very high birthrate, any increase in medical care was bound to make the problem worse, because fewer babies would die, and people would live longer.

'What you British should have done,' the Minister insisted, 'was to improve agriculture, not health. Then there would have been more food for hungry mouths, instead of more hungry mouths for the food.'

Thinking about it after getting back to my hotel bed that evening I realised he was right, however, brutal it sounded, and nothing that has happened since then has led me to change my mind. The recent famines in Ethiopia, Sudan and Bangladesh only underline the fact, often stressed by the Duke of Edinburgh, that the greatest menace to the continuation of life on our planet is human overpopulation, so that birth control, carried out either by man, or left to nature, is our only hope.

The Indian newspapers were very good in my day, but occasionally there was an amusing misprint, as when 'The Hindustan Times Sunday Magazine' announced that 'President Soekarno's Merdeka (Freedom) Palace in downtown Jakarta ... was staffed last year by a disgruntled air force pilot.'

The numerous matrimonial advertisements in the Sunday papers, of which I enclose a few, were also frequent sources of pleasant mirth.

I never found out whether prospective wives were supposed to have the skills laid down in the Kama Sutra, which included - among many other accomplishments - vocal music, instrumental music, dancing, colouring the teeth, making of different kinds of beds for different occasions and purposes, swimming, bewitching and spell-binding, sewing, darning and needlework, carpentry, training of birds for mock fights and for serving as messengers, gardening, massage and shampooing, decoration of elephants with flowers, the art of wearing clothes in the most appropriate way so that the sexual parts remain adequately covered in spite of violent movements, and the making of artificial flowers.

Among the stages of love-play before actual sexual intercourse, the Kama Sutra also expected the accomplished wife to know how to press a finger of her hand between her husband's toes when she happened to be washing his feet; and to be aware that 'when he tries to kiss her, she should offer resistance so as to compel him to use force to gain

his purpose.'

She should also know that 'a man of weak passion cries at the scratching or biting of his partner and cannot bear the warm embraces of his wife.' Presumably, by then it is too late for her to do anything about it anyway!

Actually, the Kama Sutra lists eight types of scratching with finger nails and eight types of biting, and lays down that 'all parts of the body with the exception of the upper lip, the tongue and the eyes can be bitten.' Bites include the Hidden Bite, the Swollen Bite, the Jewel Bite and the Boar's Bite. Ow!

Everything seems to go in eights except for the types of kiss: These include the Limited Kiss, the Throbbing Kiss, the Probing Kiss, the Straight Kiss, the Revolving Kiss, the Bent Kiss, the Pressed Kiss, the Cupping Kiss, the Battle-of-the-Tongue Kiss, the Balanced Kiss, the Forcible Kiss and the Passion-Arousing Kiss.

But there are eight types of embrace. One of them, the Press embrace, is described as follows: 'During this embrace one of the parties pushes the other forcibly against a wall or pillar and clasps his or her body tightly and makes a rubbing movement on it with his or her own body.' In the Twining of a Creeper Embrace, 'the wife clings to her husband, who is standing, with her arms twined around him as a creeper twines round a tree. She bends his head

down to her, raises her lips, looks lovingly at him and draws him in a kiss. Claspings his body she makes slow sounds and looks at the pointers of her own breasts in order to arouse passion in the husband.'

Positions for actual intercourse include the Split-Bamboo Attitude, the Semi-Super-Pressive Attitude, the Bovine Attitude, and Union in Water (lying, sitting or standing in a lake or river). In the latter, it is said, 'The head of the woman should be above the water-level'!

'When a man takes to bed two women simultaneously and performs sexual union with them in succession, it is called the Cowherd Attitude', the dutiful wife is told. There is also a description of how five men can club together to satisfy a nymphomaniac. One holds her in his arms, another plays with her breasts, a third kisses her, a fourth scratches her, and the lucky fifth does the real work.

Descriptions are given of stroking, striking, rumbling, cooing, moaning, forceful breathing, tongue-clicking and other accompaniments of passion. 'When the man makes the sound "Phat" and strikes the woman on her face and head with the finger of his hand a little contracted, it is called parasritaka. This stroke is accompanied by the sound of cooing and "Phat" and "phut", the latter in the interior of the mouth.'

The various methods of actual intromission, when all

the preliminaries have been got over, include the Stinging Method, the Ramming Method, the Direct Method, the Bovine Method, the Sparrow Method, the Pincer Method and the Swinging Method, all described in great detail.

Once, when I was flying back from India to England on my own, a couple of nice unaccompanied young Iranian wives got on in Tehran. Although their seats were nowhere near mine, they quickly adopted me. They spoke no English, but the gambit was, '(in Persian) Do you know Persian? (in execrable French) Do you know French? (again in Persian) What did they just say over the loudspeaker?'

I quickly brushed up my rusty Persian (my French did not need brushing up) and flabbergasted them by reading one of their Persian magazines aloud with an 'igh-class Persian pronunciation (the result of my training as a phonetician).

As a consequence, I was plied with nuts, dried fruits, seeds (melon, etc), crystallised sugar, etc for the rest of the flight, like a lap-dog.

In return I had to be their faithful attendant: 'Oh, please, could you ask the stewardess for some water for us?' 'Oh, please, how do we fill in these disembarkation forms?' 'Oh, please this', and 'Oh, please that.' They were perfect examples of helpless female Orientals, with all the wiles that make such people so successful.

I controlled my mirth when the younger of the two wrote as her date of birth '1386'. But she was quite right - by the Moslem calendar used in Iran. She told me she was 22, so we tried to work backwards. Then she put down '1948', which would have made her 12! Finally she had a guess: '1939'. I couldn't persuade her to put a month or day, and so it went on with the rest of the questions she had to answer.

Then one of them wanted to buy a 'small English dog with long white hair and long ears' and asked me where she could get one, whether she would be allowed to take it out of England, and how much it would cost. I told her that the price would depend on the length of its pedigree, and that tickled them no end! They had never heard of a dog having a family tree!

One of them remembered once having met an Englishman in Tehran, and thought it would be nice to look him up, so she said to me, 'Do you know Mr Smith of London?' In Iran, everybody of any importance knew everybody else of importance, so I had some difficulty in persuading her that it was not remarkable that I should not happen to know her 'Mr Smith of London.'

They also pumped me about where they could get 'real Italian' shoes. I told them that Italian-style shoes were also made in Britain, but they were doubtful until I asked

one of the stewardesses for 'Vogue' and 'Harper's Bazaar', and showed them pictures of such shoes in them.

When we got to London Airport there was a flap because the two of them had no vaccination certificates. The health official was very patient, and asked them to give their names, and the addresses at which they would be staying, but they said the address was in a suitcase, which would be in the Customs area. They were the most engagingly and delightfully nonchalant and addleheaded pair I have ever met. They invited me pressingly to come and have a Persian meal with them in London, but didn't give me their address.

Chapter 18: Getting an ear for Asian music

If one is going to travel to distant lands, it is useful to be able to enjoy their music. In many primitive communities, a performance will go on all night, and as it is about the only form of entertainment the people have, they look forward to it eagerly and enjoy it immensely. If one has the good fortune to be invited to such a 'treat', one should therefore feel greatly honoured, and try to enjoy it - or at least not to give the impression that one is bored out of one's tiny mind.

Luckily, during the first three years of my life, I lived in Athens and had a Greek nanny from the island of Siphnos. She used to sing me hauntingly beautiful folk songs from her island, and I loved her very much. Ever since then, I have felt a strong affinity for Turkish, Arab and Moorish music, as well as for genuine Greek folk music. It all goes straight to my heart every time.

When I first went to India, I found that I was immediately able to empathise with the classical music there, especially the North Indian ragas. After a few months, I had the great good fortune to share a sleeping compartment in an overnight train from Lucknow to Delhi with the great sitar player, Ravi Shankar. I told him my theory that Greek music had been carried to India by Alexander the Great's armies, hence the similarities between my nanny's island songs and Indian classical music.

'That is not so,' he corrected me politely. 'It is the wrong way round. It was Alexander's armies who took back our music to Greece. It then spread via Byzantium to the Turks and Arabs and then to Spain and Portugal at the time of the Moors.'

Before going to India, I had spent six years in Indonesia. At first the music there, with its strange instruments and pentatonic scale, seemed very remote to me. But then I began to get tuned in to Balinese music, which is relatively simple, energetic and obvious. From that I graduated slowly to Javanese court music, which is highly sophisticated.

In the pentatonic scale, the equivalent of our octave is divided into five equal parts, and each of these is divided into quarter-tones. There are therefore twenty divisions where we have twelve. This often gives an impression of wrong notes to the untrained Western ear.

In addition, there are subtle variations in tempo and loudness in Javanese court music, and these at first seem meaningless to us. But in fact, they are far from being this, as one realises after one has had enough time for one's unconscious to soak up the patterns.

Because I had the good fortune to be a full professor at the University of Indonesia, I was invited to President Sukarno's palace at least once a week for five years to attend shows and concerts by the best performers from all

parts of the country. By the end of my time in Jakarta, my ear had stretched to accommodate - and in fact greatly enjoy - all the music of that country.

I then began working on appreciating Japanese music, and managed at last to achieve a breakthrough. But Chinese music I still find very remote.

One thing one has to realise about Eastern music is that most of it is not written down. The performer is bound by strict rules, but within these he improvises, so that no two performances are absolutely alike. In the Indian ragas, for instance, there is a different 'mood' for each time of the day, season etc, and there are rigid rules as to what a performer can and cannot do in each 'mood'. Woe betide the sitar player who steps out of line! A Bateman cartoon would have nothing on it. But an outsider like myself does not need to be an expert to enjoy the music enormously.

Eastern music does not have any polyphony, i.e one never has more than one note sung or played at the same time. In this respect, it resembles the Gregorian chant. Polyphony was a relatively late invention in Europe, and it was that that made possible the playing of chords on pianos etc, the singing of part songs, and all the rest. In Eastern music, there are no such things, and I, for one, enjoy this purity of note, as I enjoy it in the Gregorian chant.

Some Eastern music consists of the chanting of religious texts, and with those, the music is usually passed from one generation to the next with no variations allowed, as the exact sounds are supposed to have magical qualities. My favourite is the Moslem call to prayer. It can be heard on a record 'The Living Tradition : Religions of the Middle East', produced by Deben Bhattacharya (Argo, Stereo ZFB 54). For this LP, it was recorded at Kilis in Turkey.

When I was a small boy in that country, I used to hear the call to prayer regularly, and it still retains for me an extraordinarily nostalgic and romantic appeal. Unfortunately, there is nowadays a tendency for it to be broadcast by loudspeaker, often with inferior equipment which leads to distortion. But if one hears it chanted from the minaret by a real live muezzin, with his hands to the sides of his face to amplify the call, it has a haunting beauty that is hard to forget.

Chapter 19: Other people's little monsters

Other people's children can be a terrible pain in the neck if they are noisy and ill-behaved. That is perhaps why the British love animals, but only sometimes tolerate children. Have you noticed that there is a Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, but only a National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children?

You settle down for a quiet nap in your deck-chair on the beach, and have just fallen pleasantly asleep when a nearby child starts up.

'Mum! I want an ice-cream!'

Murmur, murmur from exhausted Mum, who is trying like you, to get some sleep.

'Mum, why can't I have an ice-cream?' Another murmur, murmur from Mum.

'Why isn't there an ice-cream man here?'

And so the little monster goes on, whining, quarrelling with its little brothers and sisters, chattering in those high-pitched nasal tones, and occasionally tripping over your feet, till you give up in despair and move away to try to find a quieter spot, remembering bitterly that you discovered long ago that living with children is like living in a lunatic asylum: you never know what the inmates

will do next.

I used to think there was nothing one could do about other people's little monsters till I witnessed a very neat, effective way of discouraging them. It was at a party in a friend's house (let us call him George) in New Delhi, and there were a number of adults and a few children present. One of the latter was being particularly obstreperous, screaming in that ear-piercing way that some children practise when they discover that it drives adults insane.

Mine host called the little fellow over, gave him a sweetie and began stroking him.

'What a dear little chap he is, isn't he?' George purred. But suddenly the 'dear little chap' let out an even more piercing scream than usual - a genuine one this time - and began to cry bitterly.

His doting mother ran over to him, squatted down on the floor and wiped his eyes. Then there were whispered consultations, with the child darting angry looks at George out of its reddened eyes, the mother answering incredulously, and George beaming solicitously at both of them.

For the rest of the party the 'dear little chap' did not say another word. Only I had seen that, while George was stroking him, he had given him a good hard pinch on the bottom.

I told my wife about this, and she stored it away in her memory. Years later, we were at a big celebration in a club in Italy, when the remembrance came in very useful.

We sat down to a nice buffet lunch, and as there were a lot of us, and the club was small, we were packed in like sardines. Jane found herself sitting back to back with small girl at the next table, who was unable to keep still. She was constantly jumping up, knocking her chair back against Jane's, pushing past between them to get out, then pushing in again, so that Jane could hardly take a mouthful without getting it all over her nice party dress.

As the child was pushing past for the nth time, I saw Jane's right hand disappear below the level of the table top, and then make a quick movement. The child stopped dead, gasped, held its breath and looked at Jane disbelievingly. She just went on eating without turning a hair.

After a good few seconds, the child came to life again. It rushed to its mother, too terrified to cry, and whispered in her ear. The mother looked at Jane, her mouth open in astonishment. But obviously she, like the previous Mum, did not believe her child. How could a respectable, middle-aged, kind-looking foreign lady like that do anything as despicable as to pinch her poor little angel's bottom?

Again, the treatment worked perfectly. The child stayed in its chair as good as gold for the rest of the meal - except that every now and then it cast a fearful look behind it to make sure it wans't about to be attacked again.

I can strongly recommend the treatment. But do please be careful not to look as if you are a child-hater when you are carrying it out, or Mum may believe the child, and then there may be trouble!

Chapter 20: Examining and teaching bodies - genuine and bogus

In the British Council we represented various British examining bodies so that students could sit their examinations without having to go to Britain, and soon after my arrival in Tehran I was accepted by the Cambridge Examining Board as an oral examiner.

I also made use of the services of Correspondence Colleges in Britain to prepare myself for my London University External BA in English, and found them very helpful, although it was slow and expensive to communicate with them, as it meant sending rather bulky lecture notes, test material and answer papers by printed paper rate airmail.

Unfortunately, however, we also used to come across very questionable organisations, both in Britain and in the United States, which claimed to prepare students for examinations, and then to award them degrees which were not officially recognised.

Once in Tehran I met an Iranian gentleman who claimed to have an American doctorate in agriculture, which he had obtained by correspondence. I was immediately suspicious, as I thought that in a subject like agriculture one would have to have some practical training at some point, in addition to doing examinations on paper. I therefore asked to see this gentleman's degree certificate, which he duly

presented to me. It looked highly impressive, with nice seals and signatures, but when I checked with the United States Information Services at their Embassy, what I had suspected turned out to be correct. The 'College' which had awarded the doctorate in agriculture was bogus.

Some years later, when I was flying from Delhi to Bombay to do a lecture tour in that area, I found myself sitting beside a pleasant American. We got chatting, and I discovered that he was a businessman based in Bombay.

When he found out that I was in education, the American grinned and said, 'And I'm a doctor of Ayurvedic medicine.'

He obviously enjoyed my wide open jaw of disbelief. Ayurvedic medicine is an Indian variety that has been in existence for countless centuries, and I found it difficult to believe that a young American could have mastered its intricacies.

'Well,' the American explained, 'it happened like this. I saw an advertisement in the local paper for a correspondence course leading to a doctorate in Ayurvedic medicine. The fees were so-and-so many Rupees a month - I forget exactly how much, so I wrote to the address given and asked whether they would be willing to give me the doctorate without having to do the course if I paid them twice the amount. Promptly came the answer, 'Yes,' so I sent off my money - it was very little, actually - and

a few days later I got my certificate.

'I've had it framed, and it now hangs above my head in my office. I find it's a wonderful ice-breaker for shy customers!'

Chapter 2§: Pneumonia strikes!

I went on leave with my wife and children in June 1960, leaving India when it was at its hottest. The difference in temperature between New Delhi and Henley was enormous - greater than that between an English winter and an English summer.

The first thing I did when I had dealt with business matters after my return was to begin to repaint the double-decker caravan we lived in when on leave. After I had been painting for several hours, I stopped for a coffee, and sat in the weak English sun for half an hour, sweating after my unaccustomed exertions with the paintbrush.

Suddenly I began to feel very cold, and my teeth started to chatter uncontrollably.

At once I went into the caravan, told my wife what had happened, took off my damp clothes, put on my pyjamas and went to bed. I lay under several blankets, but still my teeth continued to chatter, and I felt lightheaded.

After an hour of this, my wife called the doctor, who took my temperature and found that it was very high. I told him that I had come back from India a few days before, and he at once said, 'You'll have to go to hospital at once. You may have some dangerous foreign disease.'

An ambulance came and took me to Reading General

Hospital, where I was put in a small room in the Isolation Ward. It was Saturday, so some of the hospital's departments were closed, but a doctor came, bringing some students with him, to examine me and take blood samples.

The same day a specialist came down from the School of Tropical Medicine of London University to take more blood specimens. He questioned me closely about where I had been in India (I had toured many parts during the preceding year), and was clearly very interested in my fever.

Nothing much happened on Sunday, but on Monday morning two men came to my room, heavily protected with special clothing and masks, put me on a stretcher and took me to be X-rayed. That was the end of my peaceful existence in the Isolation Ward. The X-rays showed that I had nothing rarer than pneumonia in one of my lungs. Coming back suddenly from the heat of India to the cold of England, and then getting so sweaty while painting the caravan, had weakened one of my lungs, and pneumonia had taken over.

The big shots at once lost interest in me, and I was moved to an ordinary public ward in the hospital and put on a course of medicines and injections. One of the other patients in my ward was an old farmer who had double pneumonia. He was seriously ill, and in an oxygen tent. All that night he talked deliriously, shouted, swore, tried to get out of bed and kept the rest of us from sleeping.

The next morning I was moved to a quieter ward. I still had a high temperature and felt weak and ill. I found deep breathing painful, and did not feel like eating anything. The food in the hospital was as uninteresting as that in the Poona Club had been - English food of the dullest kind, such as I never ate voluntarily unless there was no alternative.

The other people in the ward were pleasant enough. On one side of me was a man with heart trouble. I was very surprised to see that he was given fat meat to eat at some meals. Even before the cholesterol scare, I was sure that fat was one of the worst things for the heart.

On my other side was another man with pneumonia, and now he also had liquid in his lungs. Every day a nurse came with a long needle which she pushed into his back and through into one of his lungs to suck the liquid out. I was amazed to see that this man was allowed to smoke. I had thought smoking was bad for the lungs. The smoke from his cigarettes certainly made me cough terribly.

The nurses were pleasant and kind, except for one very upper-class one, who obviously thought that working in a public ward like this was beneath her dignity. She was rude to me when I would not eat the food she brought me, but I was too ill to take her on.

The night nurses were Irish, and particularly kind. They brought me sleeping-pills, and sat and talked to

me until I fell asleep.

My wife and children were allowed to visit me for an hour every afternoon now that I was no longer in the Isolation Ward. My wife asked me what I would like her to bring me, and I said that what I would enjoy most would be some nice fresh eggs from the farm our caravan was parked on. I had been eating raw eggs ever since I was a child in Greece and Turkey, and liked them very much, but they had to be really fresh.

The eggs duly arrived, and I started sucking two or three a day to make up for the food I did not eat at meal-times. Once one of the prettier nurses saw me sucking one, and was shocked and disgusted.

'How ever can you do it?' she asked.

'And how ever can you eat the terrible food they serve in this hospital?' I retorted. 'I don't accept it as food, any more than you accept raw eggs!'

After that, we became friends, and she often stopped to talk to me, and even to hug me. She liked Chinese food, and we often discussed the dishes of the many countries I had visited.

Every day the doctor came to examine us all, with a group of students following him. I had made arrangements to drive to Greece with my family in two weeks' time, to see my

parents, and I was eager not to have to postpone the trip, because it was difficult to find place for a car on a cross-Channel ferry in the middle of the summer, when everyone wanted to travel.

At first the doctor dealing with me said it was quite impossible that I would be well enough to travel on the date I had arranged; but in fact I made a quick recovery and insisted on discharging myself from the hospital as soon as my temperature had fallen enough for me to do so. I was sure that, once I got back into the heat of more southerly countries, I would get well again soon.

At last the day came when my wife arrived to collect me, and I returned to the caravan to get my strength back for a week before leaving on our big journey. We expected to take five days to get from Henley to Athens, driving through France, Switzerland and Italy to Brindisi, then taking the car ferry from there to Igoumenitsa in North-West Greece, and then driving on to my parents' home near Athens.

We planned to camp on the way, with a big tent, four camp beds, two folding tables, folding stools, a double cooking stove using Calor gas, cooking pots and metal plates. The two youngest children would sleep in the back of our roomy estate car, which would connect up at night with the entrance to the tent.

Chapter 22: Exotic eating

In many parts of the world, you have to eat and drink what your hosts offer you, or make them lose face. This means that, besides having your typhoid, cholera and hepatitis injections before you leave home, it is useful to have a stomach (or rather a brain!) that is not too queasy.

Luckily, my parents started to make sure I had such a stomach almost from birth. For instance, we always had a raw egg for elevenses. One made a hole in each end with a pin, one hole bigger than the other, and then sucked. It was delicious - but the egg had to be absolutely fresh.

As a result of this habit, I have never been turned off by jellylike or glutinous foods such as oysters, raw clams, winkles, tripe, tapioca and sheep's eyes.

Strangely enough, we were not allowed to eat melon until we were about ten years old, although water-melon was allowed. I think Mother thought melon too indigestible for us. The result was that, whenever we found a discarded melon skin lying on the beach, or even floating in the sea, my brother Dick and I would take turns to scrape the last vestiges of pulp off it with our teeth. This gave us the erroneous idea that melons were salty fruits.

About once a week the main course at our family lunch was half a sheep's or calf's head each, boiled with vegetables and very little water, which produced a

delicious broth. We would eat the brains, cheek, tongue and - of course - the greatest delicacy, the eye, and then drink the broth and eat the vegetables. Offal of this kind is cheap and highly nutritious and full of all kinds of minerals etc that are very good for one. It used to be on everyone's menu in the old days in Britain, till we became too affluent, too squeamish and too incompetent cooks to continue having it.

Many years after my Greek and Turkish childhood, when I was living in Hampshire, my new wife decided to give me a real treat, so she ordered a sheep's head, sawn in half, from our 'Family Butcher'. In those days, such establishments still delivered, so a young apprentice duly arrived, wearing a smart blue and white striped apron, and carrying a basket covered with a cloth.

Luckily, my wife lifted the cloth before taking delivery and sending the boy away.

'Here,' she said indignantly, 'where are the eyes? I can't possibly serve a sheep's head up to my husband without the eyes!'

The boy turned a pale shade of green and hurried off, to reappear half an hour later with another basket and another cloth. My wife raised the cloth, and there - at last - were the two eyes, staring up at her from the bottom of the basket.

I have a few party tricks with which to regale children in particular. For instance, when we go shrimping, I eat shrimps alive as I catch them. It is advisable to hold them by the head and bite off only the part below that, otherwise one is likely to get nasty sharp bits stuck in one's gums or palate. It is a far quicker and more humane way of dealing with shrimps than dropping them into boiling water, incidentally.

I have also done the same with small fish caught by children in their little nets.

As for flying ants - or termites, they are delicious, but I roast them rapidly over a candle flame before eating them. They are a great delicacy among protein-starved communities in Africa and Asia. One catches them when they swarm, holds them by the wings over the candle, whereupon the wings fall off, and pops them into one's mouth. They have a pleasant nutty flavour. Unfortunately, one does not get termites in Europe, so this is a party trick one can really only perform in distant countries. I do it chiefly in restaurants with candles on the table. They are ideal for the roasting process.

I have seen Australian aborigines feasting on their fat wickety grubs on TV, but have not yet had a chance to try these myself.

My favourite delicacy so far is a bright red worm that lives in the crevices of coral reefs off some South

Pacific islands. It is called palolo in Samoa, and one eats it alive. It has a wonderfully intense fishy flavour, rather like sea-urchins, but even more concentratedly delicious. I first had it at Aggie Grey's in Western Samoa.

My favourite creepy-crawly story is of the British businessman visiting an Arab country who was invited to a big feast out in the desert. An expatriate friend of his who knew the ropes warned him, 'There'll be a beautiful tent way out in the back of beyond, with priceless Persian carpets draped over the walls inside, and in the middle of this tent there'll be enormous piles of rice'. Buried under the rice to keep warm will be pieces of lamb. And the further inside the pile you go, the hotter and cleaner and less sandy the pieces will be. So as soon as you get to the party, roll up your right sleeve as far as it'll go, plunge your hand and arm deep into the pile of rice, and feel around for a nice tender piece of leg of lamb.'

Well, our businessman friend did just this. But when his hand reached the centre of the mound of rice, to his horror he suddenly felt something wriggling there. It took him several seconds to realise that it was the fingers of the guest opposite him, who also knew the drill.

If you have read this article without feeling at all queasy, you are ready to proceed on your journey to remote parts of the world. If you felt any qualms, however, I

suggest you begin a course of acclimatisation with a few
whelks, a plate of tripe and onions and a couple of sheep's
eyes for a start.

Chapter 23: Getting acclimatised

Why is it that some people go out to Arabia in June, or Indonesia in January, and adapt to the heat - dry in one place, humid in the other - while others suffer agonies and perhaps never get used to it?

Well, that is just what I asked myself after my new wife collapsed in the heat of a summer's holiday in Cyprus, and we had to beat a hasty retreat back home.

I had spent many years in heat - both dry and humid - and had seldom felt uncomfortable. The first exception was in the army in Egypt, where it took me some time to get used to living under canvas in the desert, with the temperature rising to 120° in the shade, and our cooks turning out quite unsuitable English food.

The second occasion was in the Persian Gulf one September, when I boarded a ship with my first wife and two small children in Basra, to travel to Bombay.

That first night in the ship, while it was still in harbour, was highly unpleasant. The ship had been sitting in the blazing sun all day, and did not sail until the early hours of the morning. The air coming into our cabins through the ventilators felt like hot, damp cotton-wool. It was not until the next morning that we realised that we had been the only people in the ship foolish enough not to have slept on deck.

Before that, we had lived in Iran for four and a half years with no air-conditioning, no electric fans and at first not even a fridge. We had had to buy big chunks of ice, brought down from underground stores in the mountains on donkeyback, and put them in our icebox. Later we graduated to a kerosene fridge.

From Bombay we continued our voyage to Indonesia, where, as professor of English at the University of Indonesia in Jakarta, I often had to lecture for three hours a morning in a building with a corrugated iron roof and no air-conditioning or fans. On getting home, I used to take my shirt off and drtop it with a loud, squelchy flop on the tiled floor of the bathroom.

I soon discovered that the best rapid pick-me-up after that was sugar; but as a regular preventative of heat exhaustion, I took plenty of liquid and plenty of salt. My doctor in Jakarta was against salt. 'It's a poison, you know,' he used to say, 'and it's bad for the blood pressure.' But my blood pressure has always been unusually low; and furthermore, if I did not take salt, I got cramps.

I therefore made it a habit to drink a quart of weakish beer with my lunch,, with as much salt in it as made it taste pleasant to me. With my dinner I had another quart of the same. If I put in less salt than my body needed for replacing what it had lost by sweating, the beer tasted dull; and if I put in too much, it made me feel queasy; so I added the

salt gradually, stirring and tasting, until the beer tasted as if it had no salt in it, and at the same time pleasant.

The Bedouin Arabs never drink during the day. They ride for hours across the desert, with a smooth pebble in their mouth to help salivation, and then drink copious draughts of water after the sun has set. I believe very strongly in not drinking any liquids when one is out in hot sun, as one only sweats them straight out again. It is better to get into the shade, relax for a time, so that one's rate of perspiration drops, and then drink.

Spirits, of course, dehydrate, so if one must have one's whisky or gin, one should either dilute it considerably with something non-alcoholic, or chase it with beer, which is what I do.

I do not believe in air-conditioning, except for keeping machinery in. Dodging back and forth into and out of it prevents one getting properly acclimatised to the temperature outside.

After my wife's collapse in Cyprus, I got our local doctor to consult an expert on tropical physiology at the University of London on our behalf, and found his advice extremely interesting and useful.

He wrote that there are at least three things that are important for tolerating heat. One is to be able to sweat properly, as sweating cools the body through evaporation,

just as one can cool water in a hot climate by keeping it in a porous clay pot (chatti) through whose walls it evaporates slowly.

The second factor is one's fat cover. The fatter one is, the more difficult it is for the heat to escape, as one's body is too well insulated.

The third important factor is one's blood circulation. If this is rapid, it carries the heat away quickly from the torso to the extremities, where it is dissipated.

In addition - and very important - there is the question of exercise. Some people's reaction to great heat is to say, 'God, isn't it hot!' and to spend the day lying or sitting down. But that is the worst thing one can do. By taking brisk exercise (exercise that makes one lose one's first wind and get one's second), one triggers off the metabolism that helps adaptation to heat. I have heard that, before sending troops out to fight in places like Kuwait, the British army used to put them in a very hot room for several hours a day, with packs and haversacks, to do brisk exercises. After some weeks of this, a unit could go out to the hottest spots on earth and immediately fight effectively instead of collapsing with so-called heat stroke.

Strangely enough, I had always taken a lot of brisk exercise in hot countries, without knowing that it was good for me. In Greece I used to row. In Jakarta I went for long, fast walks in the middle of the day while the Indonesians

had their siesta. I used to come home - my desert boots full of water where the sweat had run down my legs - feeling on top of the world, and with my torso ice-cold.

When I was in the army in the Western Desert in 1941, we still had to wear solar topees. It was a courtmartial offence to go about bareheaded during sunlight. But soon after, it was discovered that sunstroke is a myth, and the topee was discarded. When I went to India in 1958, I saw that it was only still worn there, chiefly by Anglo-Indians, as a status symbol.

However, one should treat the sun with respect. After many years of going round in it hatless, I developed two rodent ulcers, one after the other, on the side of my forehead. They are open sores that never heal, and have to be cut out and the skin sewn together over the places where they were. I had mine done with a sprayed-on 'anaesthetic' which did not work very well. It was a messy business, with blood running down into my eye. I try to avoid a recurrence now by wearing a hat in the sun.

Actually, rodent ulcers are quite different from melanoma, which is skin cancer. That too is caused by too much sun, but unlike melanoma, rodent ulcers do not produce secondaries in other parts of the body, and they do not kill, but they can be quite disfiguring. Australians get them a lot because, unlike the majority of peoples who live in hot countries, they like sunbathing.

Chapter 24: Paolo the parrot and Limburger cheese

Just as my early love of monkeys led me to buy a pair of them in Jakarta, so the fact that Jane's mother had kept parrots led her to buy a young green-fronted Amazon in Harrods soon after we were married.

It looked so sad and forlorn in its cage in the Pets Department that her heart went out to it at once, and soon it was installed in the conservatory of our house in West Meon in its smart Harrods cage. Jane called it Paolo, and gave it the run of the house except when we were out and at night.

It quickly showed it was a male by attaching itself to her, although it always treated me politely. It loved nothing more than to be perched on her shoulder, or even exploring inside the top of her dress, and when Jane would take it, lying on its back, in the open palms of her hands and rock it back and forth, it was in its seventh heaven.

It quickly learnt to speak, and finished up knowing some fifty words and expressions, and a few snatches of song, such as on 'On a brrp brrp busy line', which came from a contemporary pop song.

We never clipped its wings, and sometimes when we took it out in the garden it would fly up into a tree. But being very young, and possibly having been born in captivity, it was not a skilful pilot. It could fly upwards,

but had obviously never mastered the skill of descent, so that I always had to climb up the tree it was perched in and rescue it.

All well went with Paolo until Jane's daughter came on the scene. Paolo quickly realised that Jane loved Sarah even more than she loved him, and he went wild with jealousy (strangely enough, he clearly did not regard Jane's love for me as a menace!) and began to fly at her, screeching menacingly. As his beak could have inflicted terrible injuries on Sarah, Paolo had to go.

There was a good pet shop in Winchester where we used to buy food for him, and through them Jane advertised him, saying that she would give him only to a good home where he would be loved and well looked after. In due course he was taken over by an elderly lady with an ample bosom in which he was sure to find as much affection as he had had from Jane.

Besides its Pet Shop, Harrods had a famous cheese counter, with an enormous range of products from all parts of the world, and one day when we were there, Jane said to me, after she had chosen her favourite camembert and reblochon, 'And now what would you particularly like, darling?'

I remembered the Totenfinger I had had in Berlin as a child - fingers of cheese that were so old that they had hairs growing on them, hence the name of 'dead men's fingers'. I loved really strong cheese, so I looked along the counters

in Harrods, searching for something really tasty. There were no Totenfinger - perhaps they were no longer made nowadays, but I spotted some Limburger - a particularly pungent cheese from the borders between Germany and Holland, so Jane added half a pound of that to her purchases.

It was shortly before Christmas, and the lift up from the Food Halls on the ground floor where crowded. Suddenly Jane turned to the lady standing close beside her and thought, 'Christ, not in the 1960's surely! The dirty bitch!' She had caught a whiff of something that she connected with dirty schoolgirls' knickers rather than ladies shopping in Harrods.

We made some purchases on upper floors and then got into the lift again to go down and home - when there was that whiff once more! 'Not again!' Jane thought, looking daggers at another lady standing at her side. 'Two on the same day! I'd never have believed it!'

We always went back to West Meon in a commuter train, and it was always packed, so that, although we had first class tickets, the corridor filled up with gents in bowler hats and smart coats with rolled umbrellas shortly before we left Waterloo. As we did not have offices to stay in until the last moment, we used to get to the train early and find the best seats.

By the time we left that evening, our compartment was

packed, and there were people standing in the corridor. Jane was sitting in one corner, with me opposite her, there was a lady in another corner, and the other seats were taken up by members of the bowler-hat brigade. But soon after we left, one of these gentlemen after the other got up and pushed his way into the crowded corridor, from where we could see them casting dark looks back into our compartment and muttering angrily.

Jane wondered idly what had prompted this behaviour (I am so used to people doing apparently senseless things that it arouses in me only pleasure at being right once more!) - until she smelt that smell again. When she looked angrily at the other lady remaining in our compartment, she was surprised and incensed to see that she was looking at her in the same way.

Then at last the penny dropped! The Limburger cheese! Of course! She took the carrier bag down from the rack above her head, took out the packet of Limburger - now unmistakable in the warmth of the heated train, and handed it over to the lady.

When everybody had registered the cause of the smell, we all burst into fits of laughter till the tears were running down our three faces.

I am still allowed Limburger cheese from time to time but I have to keep it in a tightly sealed glass jar, and eat it outside in the garden!

Chapter 25: My smoking wives

Both my wives were heavy smokers. Margaret, the first one, still smokes, but Jane stopped - with great difficulty.

The only time I have ever had a cigarette between my lips was when, in the early days of our romance, Margaret tried to get me to start smoking. I put the thing in my mouth, but deliberately puffed out through it instead of breathing in.

My mother never smoked, but my father did until he was about 30. He managed to give up by threading horsehair through cigarettes and then smoking them. The taste was so disgusting that he had no problem in kicking the habit.

My uncles all smoked, and so did my Aunt Lopie - till she was over 80 in fact, though this did not stop her living to 97.

When I was at school and university, it was fashionable for the young bloods to smoke. At school, our house was ten minutes' walk from the main buildings, and within easy reach of secluded spots in the countryside where one could smoke safe from the prying eyes of teachers and prefects. It was also not yet known what devastating effects smoking could have on one's health. However, I was a keen oarsman, and knew that smoking interfered with one's breathing, so I was never tempted to start. Also, I was a rebel against

my own generation, so anything they thought fashionable I rejected automatically.

This came in useful during my time in the army. In the Western Desert, for instance, we had a weekly cigarette ration, but it was quite inadequate for some of the keen smokers in the anti-tank troop I commanded. I therefore saved up the whole of my ration, and doled it out to needy smokers towards the end of each week. I called it my 'Poor Box'.

Then during the last seven months of my two and a half years as a prisoner of war, and also during the six weeks I spent in a Gestapo gaol after an escape, I did not suffer from the lack - or extreme shortage - of cigarettes. While avid smokers were making their own out of dried tree leaves rolled up in newspaper, or paying astronomical amounts for ones that non-smokers had hoarded out of the Red Cross parcels we had received earlier, I was able to keep my hoard in case I needed it for bribery if the SS tried to take us over, and on the night we finally knew that our camp was surrounded by American forces, and that our release was imminent, I was able to hold a party at which I distributed my cigarettes while we feasted on porridge made from the oatmeal I had also hoarded.

One of my early memories of my first marriage is waking up in the middle of the night to find cigarette smoke drifting past my nose from Margaret lying beside

me.

As I mentioned above, Jane gave up smoking. She had started smoking secretly when she was a schoolgirl, and on her eighteenth birthday her father had given her a gold cigarette case. When we first began living together, she used to have boxes of cigarettes and lighters at strategic points all over the house.

But then she began to cough. She went on coughing for a couple of weeks, and finally went to the doctor.

'My dear Jane,' he said, 'when I first took this practice over 10 years ago, I had one woman with cancer of the lung. Now I have seven. It's up to you.'

With a heavy heart Jane came home, collected all her packets of cigarettes together and gave them to the daily. And that was the beginning of three years of torture. It was the most difficult thing she had ever done. She used to get up in the morning and drive into the nearest town for something to do. She would burst into tears in the street, and bang her head against the walls. She was beastly to me, hoping I would say, 'For God's sake start smoking again!' But I am not that sort of person.

Then just as things were beginning to ease off, Jane's father, whom she loved very much, died of cancer of the lungs and cirrhosis of the liver. That started her off again - but this time she thought that cigars would be

safer. So after a nice dinner in a restaurant, I would ask for a white coffee, a black coffee and a Havana cigar. The waiter would duly bring Jane the white coffee, and me the black one and the cigar. After swapping these all over, Jane would light up, and puff away at her enormous Havana.

But, alas, she did what most cigarette smokers do when they take to cigars - she inhaled, which is a thing that real cigar smokers do not do. And a couple of weeks later, the cough was there again.

By now we had moved from England to the island of Jersey, and here Jane went to see the specialist.

'Madam,' he said severely after a brief inspection, 'your throat is like a piece of raw steak. You know what to do, don't you?'

She did, and the agony began again.

Now Jane is the most fervent anti-smoker one can imagine. It is partly fear, because she believes that if for example she had a car crash, and a sympathetic helper put a cigarette in her mouth and lit it, she would be off again. Anyway, she now hates the smell of tobacco smoke of any kind more strongly than I do.

Chapter 26: A woman Rolls driver in France

I have never liked driving: having been brought up in Moda, which is a small village opposite Constantinople in Turkey, where the only car was my great-grandmother's chauffeur-driven Rolls, and the rest of us lesser mortals went around in horse-drawn cabs, I never took to driving. I had to in the army a bit, though there, as an officer, I always had a driver. And when I was released from being a POW I bought myself a small car for £25 for my repatriation leave, selling it again for the same amount after a couple of months. So it was not till I was 31 that I bought a car for permanent use, and began to drive regularly.

Both my wives, however, are excellent, experienced and keen drivers, so when we did longer trips, I contributed mostly by using my superior knowledge of map-reading, learnt the hard way in the Western Desert.

Soon after I married for the second time we bought a convertible Rolls Royce - the most prestigious car in the world, and took it to France for holidays. On the rare occasions when I drove it there, nothing remarkable happened. But as soon as Jane got behind the wheel, things began to happen: numerous men whom we passed driving cars began almost killing themselves to overtake us. Usually the man was young, often he had a grinning girl beside him, whom he was obviously trying to impress with his dashing driving, but in any case, what he clearly wanted to do was to be

able to say that he had overtaken a Rolls.

Jane ignored these dangerous thrusters, just as they ignored all road signs and safety precautions, just keeping up her normal speed. Inevitably the young man could not keep the pace up, and, after having got in front of us and pulled in sharply, thus forcing us to brake hard to avoid hitting him, he would race his engine in a vain attempt to outdistance us, only to be overhauled after a mile or so.

However, there were good sides of driving a Rolls in France too. Whenever we stopped at a hotel or restaurant, the doorman always made room for us somehow to park as close to the front entrance as possible. After an over-zealous doorman had scratched the paint on the car by trying to clean it with a dry cloth, we always used to ask them politely not to try to do this, although they were welcome to wash the windscreen.

One year, while the car was parked directly under our first floor bedroom windows outside the Hotel Marguerite in Dinan, the Spirit of Ecstasy emblem was stolen off the bonnet. (for reasons of safety, it was not fixed, but held by strong cables, so that it gave if it hit someone. It was thus easy to pull it up out of its socket, and then sever the cables with strong wire-cutters).

After that, we had the emblem wired to the horn, so that if anyone fiddled with it, it emitted a seven-second blast. We got a lot of innocent pleasure out of seeing

curious passers-by, who could not keep their hands off the car, jump back in terror when they set this alarm off. We also often heard it go off at night while we were in hotels, and once it happened in the bowels of a car ferry.

One of the big problems with the car was spares. We had a major breakdown on the autoroute between Geneva and Lyons one summer, and unwisely opted to have the car transported to the Rolls agent in the latter city, as it was nearer, and on our way home. It was a Thursday, and we were told, 'Sorry, we don't have the spare parts ourselves. They have to come from Geneva. That's where the central store for Europe is. We can order them tomorrow, but they won't be here till Monday evening at the earliest.'

Actually, they arrived on Tuesday evening, so in the end we had a six day wait in Lyons.

Petrol was, of course, another problem: a fill-up cost something like £25 each time, which was a lot of money in those days - and that was when the tank was by no means empty.

One thinks of a Rolls being so silent that one can only hear the clock ticking. Actually, the modern clocks were completely silent; and in a convertible like ours, even when the roof was closed, the noise from the wind when one was driving at speed was colossal. It was no

use trying to listen to Jane's favourite Frank Sinatra tapes then; a rousing Wagner overture was much more likely to get through the noise of the wind.

Our first convertible Rolls Corniche was a Mark I, and had very light (power-assisted) steering. In our later Mark II, the steering had been made much more positive, so that one could feel one's way round corners more definitely. The Mark I was ideal for a woman who was not particularly strong in the arms, but I hated the loose feel of its steering. I thought nostalgically back to the army jeep and eight-hundredweight truck, where there was no power-assisted steering, and also no automatic gear-change or - for that matter - synchromesh, so that everything had to be done by muscle and ear. With those, one could throw the car round corners, feeling one's way round every inch.

Alas, after some twenty years of Rollses, we sold our last, and my wife bought a Honda. The end came when our last Corniche, a second-hand one that had only done a few miles, stopped dead in the middle of the road on two occasions while Jane was alone in it. As the power-assisted steering goes dead in such cases, it is very dangerous, especially if the wheels happen to be pointing away from the kerb at the time. Jane was not willing to risk it, so the Corniche had to go. Actually, the Honda has everything it had, except that it is not convertible; and it has not given Jane a moment's trouble in a couple of years.

Chapter 27: Tom cats amid the daphne

The scene is an outdoor restaurant on the edge of Athens, the city of my birth. It is embowered in sweet-smelling honeysuckle and daphne and oleander. You are eating your stuffed vineleaves, or your taramosalata, amid enchanting whiffs from these flowers. But suddenly the wind changes slightly - and the smell changes a lot. Tom cat! And really strong!

Then you look around you at leg level, and become aware of a cat. It is weaving its way among the table legs, scenting out which customers are eating fish or meat. It seems to have a knack, no doubt born of long experience, of avoiding people who will give it a kick, and spotting the soft touches - foreigners, mostly female, who will give it a handout. No Greek will. Occasionally, the cat is wrong, but not often.

Now it chooses a likely-looking, blue-rinsed American matriarch, delicately manipulating her grilled fish, using nothing but a fork held like a surgeon's scalpel.

But the cat is wrong this time: the matriarch has obviously been warned about rabies. 'Waiter,' she rasps at the maitre d'hotel in her haughty, nasal, smoker's voice, 'take that cat away!'

'Do you think, madame,' he replies equally haughtily, 'that I have time to chase cats? I have my own job to do.'

He stalks off to the nearest table where there are Greek customers, and mutters to them darkly. Greeks are by nature anarchists, and do not take kindly to orders. Incidentally, there is no translation for an inferiority complex in Greek.

The American matriarch has never been spoken to like that before by a member of the opposite sex. She looks at her poor, cowed little husband for help, forgetting for the moment that over the years she has reduced him to a doormat. Then she takes it out on him, while the cat, having understood every word of the exchange, saunters off to an indignant English lady, who looks daggers at the American wife, and then observes in a loud voice, to no one in particular, 'I don't know how people can be so cruel to a poor dumb animal!' and proceeds to give the cat two large pieces of the best lamb kebab.

A fraction of a second later, all hell breaks loose. Another tom cat appears out of the shrubbery, streaks across the floor like greased lightning and explodes into caterwauls of feline abuse before clouting the first cat round the ear and seizing both pieces of meat, the first cat thereupon beating a hasty retreat on to a ledge. Obviously, there is some demarcation dispute in progress.

By now the American woman is feigning near-hysteria. 'I am not going to stay another moment in this disgraceful place,' she shouts hoarsely, 'to be attacked by rabid cats

(she pronounces it 'ray-bid'). Cecil (she pronounces him see-sill), you will go to the cashier's desk and pay the check at once! We are leaving this hotel immediately!' She sails out majestically in a flurry of diaphanous purple streamers, with See-sill bringing up the rear after gulping down the last of his double bourbon on the rocks.

Actually, cats are a big problem in countries that do not have Animal Shelters, especially when the natives have superstitious qualms about killing strays themselves. They multiply at a great rate, living mostly on rats and garbage, both of which are available in sufficient quantities to keep large populations from complete starvation.

Rabies is practically unknown in Greece today, but this used not to be the case earlier this century, and there is always the danger of it returning. Also, cats carry other diseases. Children playing in streets or parks and coming into contact with the cats' faeces can, for instance, pick up germs that lead to blindness.

It is difficult to poison cats. Their sense of smell usually warns them when there is something wrong with food; and on the rare occasions when this does not work, the poisoned food is sicked up as soon as it starts to be digested in their stomachs.

The usual way to get rid of cats in Greece is to

catch them in a big net, put them in a box and take them a long way away before dumping them. Then they become someone else's problem. But even then, some cats return - sometimes over incredible distances. And it is not everyone who has the time, the equipment, the energy and the private transport for such an undertaking. Public transport is, of course, out of the question: no Greek bus conductor would allow a boxful of angry cat on to his vehicle, to disturb the other passengers.

For the moment, therefore, both cat-loving and cat-hating tourists in Greece have to try to be patient and understanding. Or they can go elsewhere for their holidays. But not to Portugal, Spain, Italy, Yugoslavia, Turkey, the Iron Curtain countries, or most of Asia, Africa, Central America or South America, where the situation is the same - or sometimes worse.

Chapter 28: Mud, mud, glorious mud!

'My God, Doctor Hill, what has happened to you!'

Our housekeeper's Madeiran husband was aghast to see me returning from our strip of woodland bespattered from head to foot with mud. Which was understandable, since he had left his island to escape from the dirty work of a farm labourer into the clean one of waiting in a restaurant. To him, the idea of a professional man like myself actually enjoying getting muddy was quite incomprehensible.

But the fact is that, ever since I was a small boy, I have always loved messing about in mud; and once I became my own master, there was no disapproving Mum to stop me.

Actually, when I was a small boy, I had an ally in my favourite aunt, who married a German and knew all about the curative mud baths in European spas. I used to sit wide-eyed, listening to her tales of elegant ladies lying up to their necks in hot, thick, black mud, and then putting mud-packs on their faces. What bliss it all sounded!

Then one day Aunt Penelope showed me pictures of women wrestling in mud in Berlin. My mother was shocked, but that made it all the more exciting for me, and established a more intimate bond with my dear aunt.

One hears a lot these days about the pleasures of

sounds, sights, tastes and scents, but very little about the equally exquisite tactile pleasures one can enjoy if one concentrates on them. The feel of warm, gooey mud squeezing up between one's toes as one walks over it is - to me at least - one of the great pleasures of life. The consciousness that there may be a razor-blade lurking somewhere in it only gives an added thrill of excitement.

When we first moved to our present property, the strip of woodland bordering the small stream which is our southern boundary was so boggy that I sank up to my knees in it.

One day, I tried digging a deep hole in the thick, sticky soil some ten yards from the stream, and was surprised to find, the next day, that it had filled up with water to a higher level than that of the stream. Obviously the water in the bog was fed from underground sources, and did not just seep in from the stream.

I proceeded to buy myself a pair of long waders, and during that summer I dug myself a large pond, using my left hand and a bucket. Why my left hand, you ask? No, not because of my time in India, but because I was born left-handed, and also because I preferred the direct contact with the mud to using a spade.

But I found that the water quickly became smelly and cloudy, so I dug two channels from the stream to the ends of the pond, to allow the water to flow through. Immediately things improved: the water became clear and

wholesome.

But then another problem arose: the stream now flowing briskly through my pond brought down silt from higher up the valley, especially during the winter rains, so that by spring, there was not much water to be seen in the pond.

At first, this annoyed me, and I cast around for ways of stopping the silt coming in, while still allowing the water through. But then I realised something: the task of removing each winter's deposit of silt each summer would provide me with pleasant exercise for ever more! So now, as the weather gets warmer each spring, I put on my waders and a pair of shorts, take my bucket, and start in again with my left hand on that lovely mud. My muscles get strong once more, my waistline trims down, and I get as brown as the proverbial berry.

When the weather is really hot, however, I am joined by a host of varied flying insects, which particularly relish the taste of my salty sweat. It is difficult to shoo them off with mud-covered hands; and to put on a shirt with long sleeves and a high collar would interfere with my tan, so what I do is to put a piece of old mosquito netting round the sides and back of my head, and then put on a hat over it. The netting hangs down loosely, and its constant movements as I work confuse the flies and mosquitoes and gnats, so I am left in peace.

The first time my Madeiran friend saw me like that, he laughed till he nearly had hysterics. I suppose I looked rather like a bride who had been discarded on a particularly messy rubbish heap.

But my memories of mud have not always been pleasant, alas. In April 1941, I was in the British expeditionary force fighting the Germans in Greece, and there I came upon the sinister side of mud. After delaying the German advance up near the Yugoslav frontier, our British armoured brigade spent several terrible days struggling along minor, unmetalled roads to rejoin the main force of Australians and New Zealanders.

Mud was our greatest enemy during that retreat. Even when low cloud grounded the German stukas, our motor-cycle despatch riders had to discard one machine after another as they got hopelessly bogged down; and it was only four-wheel drive on our other vehicles that finally got us through to Larissa and relative safety from immediate capture.

Luckily, I never seem to remember those dark days for long when I sally forth to my rendezvous with my beloved mud on a warm summer's day.

Chapter 27: An innocent abroad

'Hullo.' The voice was the University Registrar's.

'I've been told you speak Greek. Is that so?'

'Yes,' I answered. 'It's more or less my second language. My mother's Greek.'

'Oh, good. The police have rung up to say they're holding a young Greek sailor who jumped ship. He's being prosecuted in the court this morning for entering the country illegally. The chap speaks no English, and they're having the devil's own job finding out anything about him. Could you go down and help?'

'Certainly. What time and place?'

'The Law Courts at 10.30. Ask for Inspector Mavoa. Bye.'

'Goodbye.' I was working for the United Nations in the South Pacific at the time, and one of my duties was to lecture at the University here in Suva, the capital of Fiji.

Inspector Mavoa was waiting for me on the steps of the Law Court. He was plump and cheerful, like most Fijians. He took me into a small office, and quickly explained the position while the electric fan whirled noisily above us.

'He's about 18 years old, and as far as we can tell, he jumped ship because of a Fijian girl he met here during

his shore leave. He hasn't got a passport - still less an entry visa, of course. We've had him in prison here for a week, and have tried to question him, but it's been very difficult, because he doesn't speak anything except Greek. He's coming before the magistrate at 11, and then - if you don't mind - you can interpret and we can find out exactly what the position is.'

'Okay,' I answered. It sounded intriguing.

The Greek boy was small, thin and very plain-looking. One can see thousands like him in Greece. He looked rather bewildered, and did not show any signs of pleasure when I spoke to him in Greek. Rather, he looked suspicious. Obviously, for him, I was just another of 'them' - people trying to come between him and his lady love.

I took the oath, promising to interpret truly and faithfully, and the case began. 'Did you arrive in Fiji on the eleventh of June on the Greek ship "Salamis"?'

'Ne,' said the boy, shaking his head.

'Does he deny it?' the magistrate broke in in surprise before I could interpret.

'No, sir,' I answered with a smile, realising what had caused the confusion, 'Greeks shake their heads to mean "Yes", and nod upwards to say "No". And "Ne" in Greek means "Yes," not "No."'

There was a gasp from the policemen who had been interrogating the boy for the past week. 'That had been puzzling us very much, Your Honour,' Inspector Mavoa interjected to the magistrate. 'Whenever we managed to make him understand one of our questions somehow, he always did the opposite of what we expected. We thought he was either soft in the head, or deliberately cheeky.'

I turned to the Greek boy and said to him kindly, 'It would be a good idea if, instead of just shaking your head and nodding, you spoke your answers. It would save misunderstanding.' I told him the English words for 'Yes' and 'No'.

For the first time he smiled.

Gradually we established that the boy had fallen in love with a Fijian girl and had stayed ashore when his ship left because he wanted to marry her and take her back to his home in the Piraeus. I had a bit of trouble understanding him at first, because instead of using a Greek word for 'girl', he used a garbled version of the Spanish word 'doncella'.

He had known nothing about passports and visas and such things. It was clear that he was an innocent abroad - a boy who had probably never before found a girl who was willing to sleep with him, and had been swept off his feet by the first one who was. Everybody in the court

was sympathetic and trying to find ways to be kind to the boy, within the limits allowed by the law.

'The owners of the ship have agreed to repatriate him at their expense, Your Honour,' said the prosecutor, 'so we suggest that a fine would be in order.'

The magistrate agreed. But the boy had no money, and no prospect of getting any to pay a fine. So the magistrate had no alternative but to send him to prison, after which he was to be deported to Greece.

'Can I marry the girl while I am in prison,' the boy pleaded, 'and take her back to Greece with me when I am deported?' But that was outside the jurisdiction of the Court.

I thought that was the last I would hear of the affair, but a few days later I had a phone call from the governor of the prison. He was apologetic about disturbing me again.

'Could you please come and help us?' he pleaded. 'The Greek boy won't eat.'

I drove to the prison, and was met by a worried but kindly man in a khaki uniform who was the governor of Suva prison.

'The Greek boy's very polite and well-behaved,' he said to me, 'and he works very willingly, but he won't eat. Could you speak to him and find out what's wrong?'

A warder brought the boy in, and when he saw me, he gave me a half-smile.

'Well,' I said to him, 'what's the matter? Why aren't you eating? Don't you like the food?'

I knew that the Greek lower classes - like peasants everywhere - were notorious for eating only what they were used to. There is a German proverb which runs 'What the farmer doesn't know he doesn't eat'. And immediately after World War II, when the Greeks were starving after years of Axis occupation, and UNRRA rushed nourishing tinned food to them, they refused to eat it, preferring to barter the tins for a few beans, or a little rice or macaroni, or anything else they were accustomed to.

'No, it's not that,' said the boy. 'The food's not good, but it isn't too bad either. But while I was on remand, my girl was allowed to visit me every day, but now it's only once a week for an hour. And I want to arrange for us to marry, and for her to get a passage to Greece with me, but nobody understands.' He looked on the verge of tears.

I explained quickly to the governor. He smiled in obvious relief and answered, 'But how does he communicate with the girl when he does see her? She speaks no Greek.'

I asked the boy, and he smiled broadly this time.

'We don't need to understand each other's words,' he answered simply. 'We know we love each other.'

'Well,' said the governor with an equally broad smile when I had interpreted, 'as an exception, I will allow him to see the girl this afternoon. But you must interpret, if you will be so kind. Then we can get it all sorted out. I'll do what I can to help.'

When I arrived that afternoon, the boy and the girl were waiting in the governor's office. She was small, very black and not at all what I had expected: she was clearly not a hard-boiled prostitute, but a very simple, unsophisticated girl of the servant class. She spoke some English, like most town dwellers in Fiji, and was willing to marry the boy and to go and live with him in Greece.

'Of course you still live with your parents?' I said to the boy.

'Yes.'

'What work does your father do?'

'He's a docker.'

'D'you think he and your mother would accept a black girl, and half-and-half children?' I knew that, if he took this girl back to the Piraeus, she would be the only black for many miles, and that the colour

bar was very strong in Greece, especially among the lower classes.

I could see by the way the boy blushed and cast his eyes down that he knew these facts too. But the set of his jaw made it plain that he was determined to go through with his plan.

Then I turned to the girl and explained with brutal frankness what living in the Piraeus would be like for her.

'I don't mind,' she said simply when I had finished. 'It won't be any worse than my life here. And we love each other, so everything will be all right.'

I felt very sorry for the two young things, but I had done my best, and could do no more.

The next day I had to set off on one of my frequent tours of other islands in my 'parish', and by the time I got back, the boy had been returned to Greece. I never did find out whether he managed to marry the girl and take her back to his parents in the Piraeus.

Chapter 30: Cruising on the SS 'Geriatrica' with our Yankee cousins

I am far from anti-American. Without their nuclear umbrella over me, I would have been red - or dead - long ago. But cruising with Americans can be traumatic unless one is well prepared, so here is some advice, based on painful personal experience.

On cruises starting from a US port, one can expect 95% of the passengers to be American. And on the longer cruises, 90% of those will be old - very old.

That means women who have had everything lifted. Not only are their faces set in a permanent mask, unbreakable by a smile, but their breasts and stomachs and even their buttocks have been jacked up dramatically too.

You spot a bevy of slender blondes in Dior bikinis round the swimming-pool, and hurry to join them. But as you get nearer, you first see those set masks under wiry, over-peroxidized, over-sprayed hair, and then the tell-tale crepe rubber skin on necks and insides of thighs that even the most skilful cosmetic surgeon cannot disguise. When the women are fully clad, high-necked dresses, silk scarves and long skirts do the job instead.

The men make no attempt to hide baldness, deeply lined faces, hanging jowls and pendent bosoms and bellies. But some dye their hair, and nearly all camouflage the ravages

of age under the most bizarre clothes - peaked caps with admirals' scrambled egg on the front, shocking pink tuxedos, frilly purple shirts, sunburst kipper ties, tartan Bermuda shorts, co-respondent shoes - the lot.

Both the men and the women are desperately keen to be matey: the greatest sin is not to be on 'Hi, there' terms with everyone. So if you want privacy, stay in your cabin.

But you usually sit on deck, minding your own business and trying to catch up on the latest best-seller. Suddenly, a strident, nasal voice, husky from many years of excessive smoking, pipes up from another deck-chair twenty yards away: 'Hi, there, do you like that book?'

If you pretend not to have heard, or look around as if searching for the person the lady is addressing, she continues, 'Hi, you there! I'm talking to you!'

If you do not play the social game the American way, you may be branded a snobbish Britisher and sent to Coventry - a blessed relief for some of us, but social death for an American; or you may actually be physically attacked.

One of our brushes was with an ancient female of the species who had probably been a swimming champion many, many years before, and had chosen a cruise because it would allow her to take her favourite exercise in the pool. Regardless of how many people the small pool already held, and ignoring the 'NO DIVING' sign, she would take a neat

header, just missing one or two of us, and then swim up and down the pool with a fast, purposeful crawl, expecting everyone to get out of her way.

After she had scraped my wife several times, the latter protested, whereupon the old crawler had the cheek to say, 'You ran into me!' And when I did the socially unforgivable thing by butting in and giving the old bag a flea in her ear, she got out of the pool in high dudgeon and we never saw her again. Perhaps she got the rest of her exercise by swimming home to California.

Another time, there were six of us in a lift that officially took eight. But as one of us was a very old American lady with two replacement hips and two canes which she held at a wide angle, there was really no room for another two.

The lift stopped, and we saw a little American man with white hair and a bright red face approach purposefully. Both my wife and I said simultaneously, 'There isn't much room, but if you want to get in, I'll get out. I don't mind walking up.'

I promptly got out, but my wife was at the back of the lift, supporting the little old lady with the canes, so she could not move very fast.

'Right,' the little man said, looking at my wife as if he could kill her, 'you get out!' We figured afterwards

that it was probably our British accents that had triggered him off. He lurched forward determinedly, but was stopped by a very tall, very infirm old American who turned out to be the old lady's husband.

'Now, look here, look here,' he said pacifically, putting a hand on the little man's chest to restrain him.

At that, the little man went berserk. First he rained blows on the tall man's front. Then he pushed past him and began to beat him from behind, at the same time violently kicking my wife's shins with the heels of his dress shoes till they were raw and bleeding.

The old lady with the sticks was hysterical by now, but my wife hung on to her. At the same time, she gave an almighty push against the little man's back. She is a large woman, and at the second attempt, she managed to propel both him and the tall old man out of the lift, whereupon she pressed the button for the dining-room deck.

Arrived there, she put the old lady in a chair, and then ran into the dining-room shouting, 'Quick, quick, there's been an attack in the lift on the next deck down!'

The maitre d'hotel and purser sped to the rescue, but in the meantime the little old man's wife had managed to shepherd him away, shouting threats and obscenities, not only to the old man, but also to me, who had done nothing but get out of the lift to let him get in..

We took the incident up with the captain of the ship, but he didn't want to know. But we had influential witnesses, including a German consul-general and his wife, who had been in the lift with us. There were also the wounds on my wife's legs to show. But our trump card was the threat to call a press conference at our next port, which was in New Zealand, and reveal the whole story, so the captain agreed reluctantly to put the little man off the ship there. His wife, incidentally, stayed on the ship, and always gave us a warm smile whenever she saw us!

When you are living in close propinquity to Americans, you also have to be prepared for their extraordinary insularity and ignorance (one lady asked my wife whether volcanoes are seasonal). The daily news on a cruise liner dominated by Americans is hardly conscious of the existence of any place outside the USA. The ship's closed circuit radio entertainment programme assumes an intimate knowledge of, and interest in, the American pop scene, baseball and American football of the past fifty years. And if there is a celebrity aboard, such as 'Miss America 1921', one is expected to recognise and pay deference to her at all times.

On shore excursions too, one is struck by the Americans' complete lack of interest in anything outside themselves. After paying good money for a trip through the New Territories of Hong Kong, our American neighbours on the train spent all the time talking to each other about 'back home', and

hardly glancing at the scenery.

Another problem is that Americans, particularly old ones, like only bland food. You see lyrical descriptions of exotic dishes on their restaurant menus, but when they come to the table, they taste of nothing to our more sophisticated (or jaded?) European palates. The famous American coffee tastes like dish-water to us. And the tea, made by putting one tea-bag into a large pot of hottish water, is even worse. As for Californian jumbo olives, the less said about them the better!

I made a point of getting to know the French head chef on one ship (I speak French), and pointed out to him, politely but firmly, that the brochure which had promised us a 'gourmet Continental cuisine' was a load of old rubbish. He agreed privately, but explained that the brochure had been carefully drawn up to appeal to American eyes. He said it had to be impressive, to make the Americans feel they were keeping up with the Joneses, but if he served up real European gourmet food, he would be inundated with complaints from the Americans. As they outnumbered us Europeans by nearly ten to one, I regretfully saw his point, and we laid in a stock of tasty native sauces at the next port.

As for the waiters and barmen, nearly all were from the Latin countries. Inevitably on a ship, many were homosexuals, and some flaunted this irritatingly. The answer is to complain firmly to the maitre d'hotel if the moods and

posturings of your steward get you down. After all, you have paid good money to have a restful trip.

The star turn on our ship was a Frenchman called Claude. We were put at his table one day when we were entertaining important guests in port. Claude started removing our plates before we had all finished the first course, so I said to him very quietly and politely, in French, 'We prefer to wait until everyone's finished, otherwise our guests will feel they are being hurried.'

You would have thought I had called Claude a bastard and a thief. He immediately went into a histrionic display that would have earned him a standing ovation in a Naples theatre.

'Oh, my God,' he shouted, 'he still thinks he is living in the days of Queen Victoria!' He flounced off to some of his cronies and they went into a huddle, with rude remarks about me and Queen Victoria flying about loudly.

For the rest of the meal, Claude tried to shame me by staring. But luckily I can beat anyone at that. Our family have developed a delicate sneer with the left nostril which is able to quell even the most hardened head waiter. I fixed Claude with a cool, unwavering eye, my nostril twitching slightly from time to time. Very soon he gave up his own attempt to shame me. And after a few minutes he was in a state of tremulous agitation as, every

time he took a quick glance at me, he saw that I was keeping up my barrage.

Then there were the barmen. Americans love to have their glasses filled to the top with ice - no doubt to anaesthetise their taste buds as they drink their weird concoctions. This is a godsend to barmen, who become millionaires by short-measuring their customers. With all that ice, it is impossible to detect their tricks.

What my wife and I always insist on doing, much to the fury of the barmen, is to have the alcohol in one glass, one lump of ice in another, and the tonic, or bitter lemon, or whatever it is, left in the bottle. Then we can make our own mix - after checking that we have received full measure.

I must not leave you with the impression that on the SS 'Geriatrica' every prospect pleases, and only (American) Man is vile. In fact, we always find a few charming, civilised, amusing Americans to team up with. Usually they come from the Eastern seaboard. The women have allowed themselves to grow old gracefully, like my mother and aunts. And the men tend to wear smart blue blazers, with the buttons of real clubs.

Furthermore, as you will have seen, we get plenty of fun and excitement out of the antics of our fellow-passengers. 'Never a dull moment' is our motto!

Chapter 11 : An island paradise lost

I finally bought 'The Birds of the Seychelles' in the Marxist bookshop. The other bookshops in Victoria, capital of the Seychelle Islands - the ones that catered for the tourists - had wanted twice what I would have paid for it at Foyles in Charing Cross Road in London if I had not stupidly forgotten to buy it there before setting out on our cruise.

But here, in the Marxist bookshop, where it nestled cheek by jowl with the complete works of Lenin, it cost no more than in London. Lenin, incidentally - volume after massive volume of him - retailed for no more than a good dinner at the Beau Vallon Hotel on Mahe.

That, to me, neatly epitomised what had happened to the Seychelles since my previous visit in 1971, before the international airport had been completed, and before President Rene had seized power.

In 1971, the pace of life had been gentle and unhurried. All the people I had met had been happy, relaxed and friendly. Prices had been low, and good-humoured bargaining had been the order of the day in the shops and markets. The little waitresses in the better hotels - I could have sworn that some of them were under 14 years old - had worn frilly caps and aprons which looked as if they had come straight out of Jane Austen's novels.

Now, in 1981, it was four years after President Rene's left-wing regime had seized power, with the help of black soldiers from Socialist Tanzania. What a contrast!

First of all, the people had become glum and sullen. Secondly, prices had rocketed. And the men selling vanilla pods in the market - they grow like weeds in the Seychelles - wanted more for them than one pays in Harrods - and refused to bargain.

We tried to buy orchids for our cabin in a small shop we had known in 1971, but the hard-faced woman who was now selling the flowers there demanded more for them than they cost at that prestigious flower-shop in Berkeley Square. She too would not budge an inch when we tried to bargain, so we let her get on with it.

By then we were too disgusted to see whether the little waitresses had been made to discard their bourgeois frills for - perhaps - engine-drivers' uniforms.

There was no sign of Tanzanian soldiers in Victoria when we were there. But there were plenty of groups of Russian sailors off the naval vessels in the port. They strolled awkwardly along Revolution Street, or past the hideous modern 'sculptures' erected by the Marxist regime to glorify its seizure of power. Each Russian group was clearly under the eagle eye of a commissar, although I thought that any of the sailors who tried to jump ship and ask for asylum would get short shrift from President

René.

Strangely enough, the Seychelles' main industry was still tourism in 1981, and the tourists still came almost exclusively from capitalist countries. I wondered whether the Seychellois ever asked themselves how it was that the only people with enough money to spend on lazy holidays in the sun came, not from countries that President Rene extolled as people's paradises, but from the 'decadent', capitalist, bourgeois countries, which should, according to Marxist theory, long ago have become hopelessly impoverished.

Perhaps the Seychellois believe that the hordes of tourists who descend on them every year are rich capitalists, still able to pay for expensive holidays by grinding the faces of the poor. Actually, extremely few of them are gilded butterflies from the Jet Set, nor representatives of the Beautiful People, but ordinary factory workers, clerks, school teachers and the like, from places like Leeds, Essen and Enschede. The rich go to places like Mustique, and Sandy Lane in Barbados, and Mykonos.

During the centuries since the Seychelles were first discovered, there has been speculation that they were the site of the original Garden of Eden. In 1971, I found it easy to believe this. But not in 1981 any longer, alas!

Chapter 32: The celebrity cult

The cult of 'celebrities' has always existed, but in the second half of the Twentieth Century, the masses have so much more disposable income than ever before in history that it has become a multi-billion pound industry.

Why should people think that someone who appears in films or on television, or who is good at football, would know more about toothpaste, or coffee, or wines, for example, than the next man or woman? Yet, obviously, many people must buy what 'celebrities' are paid huge sums to advertise, otherwise the advertisers would not use their services, would they?

Why buy a cheap tennis racket because it is sponsored by a tennis star who would never use such an instrument himself?

This applies even more strongly to politics: any silly, empty-headed little pop singer's views on nuclear energy, or intercontinental ballistic missiles, command maximum attention in the media, whereas the real experts are ignored because they are not 'celebrities'. But why should Vanessa Redgrave, or Jane Fonda, or Melina Mercouri, be allowed by the masses to sway their opinions?

The cult of 'celebrities' reaches its abysmal depths when they are hounded by unscrupulous photographers who invade their privacy with sophisticated instruments of

surveillance to catch them in embarrassing situations; or by newshounds out to collect any dirt about them that they can find - or often invent if it is not there.

Obviously, none of this would happen if the masses were not eager to pay good money for the results.

What is happening, in fact, is that clever and unscrupulous psychologists are getting rich by exploiting the worst sides of unintelligent human nature. They not only supply demands that people already have; they go one step further by creating new demands. They do this by digging into the unconscious and finding what is potential but not yet realised. Only crime is a more rewarding trade than this, because it is untaxed, and the chances of being caught are very small these days if one is one of the clever ones who do things on a big scale.

Is it too much to hope that a day will come when the masses will refuse to continue subsidising the 'celebrity' cult? Or when the clever people will decide that it is immoral to continue pandering to them over this?

Chapter 33: Taboo subjects

There seems to be a conspiracy of silence in the Western media about certain subjects. The reason is probably that they are either instant death to circulation, because people simply do not want to see or hear anything about them; or that editors consider them too sensitive or controversial to handle.

This, of course, means that freedom of the press is a myth. If you hold views that are so unpopular that no one who owns or controls any of the media will let you air them, you are in effect muzzled.

Even more sinister is the fact that supposed guardians of free speech in the West - notably universities - have joined in this muzzling process. If someone wants to expound an unpopular view at a university, he or she is met by a crowd of mindlessly baying students, and sometimes even by physical violence. The university authorities refuse to discipline the culprits.

Violence and disaster are, of course, eminently newsworthy - provided they happen to other people. But warnings about violence and disaster that might befall us unless we take positive and unpleasant avoiding action are taboo. Nobody wants to know about them.

For instance, nobody wants to see or read what life will be like in the West after the Russians occupy us.

Nobody wants to see or hear warnings that we are pouring much too much money down the drain of luxurious living in our affluent (or effluent?) societies - that we are spending too much on colour TVs, video recorders, CD discs, dishwashers, washing-machines, pop records, discos, holidays abroad etc, etc, and not enough on the armed forces that alone can enable us to go on having these things.

Just mention this to someone - even if he or she is in one of the top socio-economic groups - and you will get an instant brush-off: 'Steady on, old chap, that's a gross exaggeration! Yes, I've read all about what those poor Poles and Afghans have been suffering. But that's a long way away, isn't it? Couldn't happen here. Quite impossible. For one thing, the Russkies are getting everything they want without fighting us! Ha, ha! No, I certainly wouldn't consider sacrificing my three weeks in Barbados, or my Jag, to put a bit more in the defence kitty! Now do go away and leave me to finish my champers in peace, there's a good fellow!'

The conspiracy of silence about certain other topics, which the editors consider too sensitive or controversial to handle, means, for instance, that it is absolutely taboo to suggest that we might be able to help our black citizens more if we were to encourage serious research into finding out whether they might perhaps - conceivably - have a lower average IQ than the whites, or yellows, or browns. It has been shown that the USA today has a lower

average IQ than Japan, and when that fact was published, there was no outcry, remember? If it turned out that blacks similarly had a lower average IQ than whites, it would help us to solve some of our racial problems in sensible, practical ways. But we are not even allowed to suggest this without a great outburst of irrational emotion.

It is also taboo to question the policy in some places of positive discrimination in favour of 'oppressed groups' - women, blacks etc. If one dares to suggest that, in a country dependent on its ability to compete with others for the maintenance of the standard of living of the mass of its population, it is unwise not to choose the best people available for higher education, better jobs etc, regardless of their sex, colour and so on, nobody wants to know.

And yet, if one kills the geese that lay the golden eggs, it is precisely the disadvantaged groups in a society who are going to suffer most.

There is also a conspiracy of silence about Independence, Home Rule, Decolonisation and the other various names given to the break-up of the British, French and Dutch (but not Russian!) Empires.

If you have gone to India a few years after Independence in 1947, as I did, and if you had spoken privately to a representative selection of peasants and manual workers

there, you would have found that the vast majority of them regretted the passing of the Raj, and considered themselves a lot worse off as a result. Only a minute group of politicians, civil servants, intellectuals, idealists and wide boys were much better off.

Peasants who had absolutely nothing to gain from being nice to me would sidle up and say, 'Ah, Sahib, the British officials were honest and did their best to help us, but now our own officials are so grasping. We have to pay bribes to get anything, even if we have a legal right to it.'

When Java was ruled by the Dutch, there was no bribery there, and you could walk from one end of the island to the other by night with no danger. After Independence in 1951, bribery, corruption, mugging and terrorist attacks became rampant. Now, when you arrive in Jakarta to do business that will benefit Indonesia as well as your own organisation, a police official comes to your hotel and suggests that it would be wise if you paid 'protection money' to avoid being robbed or perhaps even murdered. If you are unwise enough to refuse, you will certainly meet with a nasty accident - and unless you are a complete fool, you will know who arranged it!

I was in Indonesia during the first seven years after Independence and saw bribery and corruption grow there gradually. Protection money was organised in a very gentlemanly way in those days. When you parked your car

anywhere, for instance, a small boy appeared and offered to be your 'jaga' (guard). If you agreed, your car was left unscathed, and you gave the small boy the equivalent of a penny when you came back. But if you refused his services, you would come back to find your car scratched, the windscreen-wipers missing, and the red lights at the back removed (these would later be cut up to make 'rubies' for rings).

Similarly, at night you always employed a 'jaga malam' (a night watchman, but this time an adult one). You paid him extremely little, and he actually slept all night, but as long as he was there, your house was absolutely safe from burglars because you were, in fact, employing one of their union.

We should frankly accept that, in most cases, Independence means misery, injustice and exploitation for the masses. Trying to sweep this fact under the carpet gives us a distorted view of the world today, and prevents us having a perfectly legitimate pride in what we did for our colonies for many years. The fact that we have now got rid of them may be a good thing for other reasons - for example, because it has improved our international bargaining position vis a vis the Communists, or because it has given us a moral boost - but it is certainly not a good thing for the average ex-colonial.

Another taboo subject is that of cruelty to animals

if it is based on religion. There was a great outcry in the British press a few years ago because of publicity about the cruel treatment of dogs in Korea before they were slaughtered as food. I wrote to the press, pointing out that, although there were strict laws in the UK about humane slaughter of cattle etc, Jews and Arabs were allowed to continue with their methods of hallal and kosher, which involved cutting the animals throats while they were still conscious.

The media did not want to know; neither did the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Not even the violent Animal Liberation group dare to make an issue out of this. It is a taboo subject.

Then there is the question of unemployment: the Labour Party makes loud noises about the level of unemployment in Britain whenever it is high. But no one is allowed to point out that this is largely due to three simple facts: Britain almost alone among European countries has no National Service; the population has grown enormously; and since the end of World War 2, the British have felt themselves too superior to do any dirty work or to be servants.

100 years ago there were millions of domestic servants in the UK. Then swingeing tax increases, and the growth of the idea that service is a dirty word put an end to that. In addition, millions of Indians, West Indians, Chinese etc were imported to do all the dirty jobs like refuse

collection which the white British considered beneath their dignity.

If one adds up the number of jobs they have lost in these ways because they do not want to do a period of National Service, or to be domestic servants, or to get their hands dirty, one will find that these account for all the unemployment and more.

But, of course, if one tries to point this out, the taboo operates at once, and nobody - least of all those who in the media who decide what we should and should not know - will listen.

Chapter 3~~4~~: Mammy wagons and so on

We always travelled around Nigeria in a chauffeur-driven office car, but the mass of the population used what were affectinately referred to as Mammy wagons. These were small, gaudily painted trucks with rough seats for passengers. They hurtled along the rough country roads at great speeds, and all other traffic got out of their way.

As most Nigerians in the North and West of the country were Presbyterians, and also superstitious, the Mammy wagons were always liberally plastered with religions slogans to protect those in them from danger - rather like the nuns I sometimes came across driving cars, who ignored all safety considerations because they trusted absolutely in God.

One would see one of these Mammy wagons hurtling towards one with 'GOOD GOD!' written boldly across the front above the driver's cab. Then, when the thing had passed, one looked back and saw another inscription over the back window 'CHRIST ALMIGHTY!' Often that is what other road users felt about the way the Mammy wagon was being driven.

In spite of the slogans, crashes were unfortunately not rare - at any rate frequent enough to give full-time occupation to one gentleman we came across on a country roundabout. He was resplendent in a khaki uniform, with scrambled egg on his hat and a smart cane tucked under

his arm as he stood beside a red-painted jeep with the inscription 'ACCIDENT SPECIALIST' painted on it in bold white letters.

One of the strange things about driving in the countryside in Nigeria is that one would suddenly see a hoarding with a mysterious message on it. One of these was 'WALES - COUNTRY OF 1000 CATHEDRALS.' When I got back to Britain, I checked, and sure enough I had been right: there are certainly not more than ten cathedrals in Wales.

Our other funny experiences in Nigeria were mostly in hotels, where we used to go into the noisy 'DINNING ROOM' to have our meals. While we were there, there was a big reception in honour of Lord McCorquodale, the chairman of a big British printing company, and it was at this that we heard the little Master of Ceremonies, in his robes and Pinocchio hat, announce, 'And now Lord McCorquodale will come to the microphone and say how pleased he is to be here.'

It was in the same city that we read, in the local newspaper, a report of a big society wedding that had taken place the week before. After going into raptures about the bride's beautiful wedding dress and accessories, the report finished with the words 'and the bridegroom looked very smart with a white carnation in his bottomhole.'

Less amusing was my first encounter with a fresh cashew nut. I had often had these nuts at cocktail parties, roasted and salted. I had seen photos of them growing, so when I recognised some on a tree in the garden of a small hotel I was staying at, I picked the pear-like fruit to which they are attached, split open the container in which the nut itself grows, and put the latter in my mouth.

At once I felt a vicious burning sensation, and spat the thing out at once, but not before it had taken the skin off both my lips. No one had ever told me that the juice of the nut is highly corrosive, and that one can only eat the nuts when they have been well dried.

Even worse, and potentially lethal, was an experience I had in Malindi on the other side of Africa, on the coast of Kenya. I was walking along the main road, minding my own business, when a swarm of African black bees - the very vicious ones that were later imported into Brazil to deal with another pest, and have now spread up to the USA - suddenly came down and settled on my head.

I rushed off towards my hotel to dive into the swimming pool, knocking off my glasses in my haste, so that I could not see at all clearly. I was aware of hysterical laughter from English ladies who were witnesses of my plight.

Before I could reach the swimming pool, my wife came out, attracted by the noise the women were making.

She at once took me by the arm and rushed me into the hotel kitchen, intending to wash the bees off my head under a tap. But alas, lunch was over, and the taps were all dry. She therefore took a kitchen cloth and for some reason tried to smother the bees on my head.

Naturally, they all stung me.

My wife then tried to find a doctor. The resident British one was out of town attending a wedding, but she managed to find an African doctor who plied his trade in a small shack in the bazaar. He wore a huge white apron, soaked with blood, and had a white bandeau with a big red cross on it round his curly hair.

I knew that what I needed was an antihistamine injection, but the doctor did not have that, so he gave me a big anti-tetanus one instead, after which I retired to our room to rest. The glands in my neck quickly swelled up, but luckily I was not allergic to bee stings, so I survived. An Italian tourist was stung in the arm by one of my bees, and it swelled up enormously. No doubt he was allergic. And when my mother heard of what had happened, she said I had been extremely lucky: when she had been in Kenya, a Salvation Army official had been stung in the same way and had died very quickly.

Then there was Uganda. We arrived in Kampala on a Saturday, and were met by my old colleague from the South

of India, Lionel Billows. It was he who had been the creator and inspirer of the Madras Snowball. He had intensely blue pop eyes, a huge RAF moustache, a red face, a breezy manner, and a loud horsy laugh.

After having dinner together, Lionel arranged to collect us after breakfast the next morning to take us for a bathe in a lake which was free from bilharzia.

That night, Jane suddenly woke up in her hotel bed and thought, 'That's strange! Leslie's shaking my bed. What ever's he doing that for?' She looked up, and saw that I wasn't in the room.

Then she became aware of a constant blaring of car horns outside in the street. And then the penny dropped! It was an earthquake - and a severe one!

As I emerged from the bathroom, Jane cried, 'Leslie! We're in an earthquake!'

'Yes,' I answered calmly. 'It's been going on for some time.'

'Well, let's get to hell out of here before the place falls down!' she shouted.

I began to collect our passports and traveller's cheques, but she screamed, 'There's no time for that! Go, go, go!'

We left the room and hurried out onto the lawn in

front of the hotel. We saw that we were about the last people out.

The car horns were still blaring away, so we asked a member of the hotel staff what they meant.

'You see,' he answered, 'there is a lot of car stealing in Kampala, so everyone has an alarm on his car. If anyone moves the car in any way, the horn goes off. So every time the earthquake shakes a car, you hear that sound.'

We stayed there for an hour, until the tremors seemed to have ended, and then we went in again. But almost at once they recommenced, so we took blankets to lie on and went out again for the rest of the night.

The next morning, when Lionel arrived, we expected him to be full of the earthquake, but he did not even mention it, and when I finally asked him how he had got on in it, he said, 'What earthquake?' He had slept right through it all.

Chapter 3⁵: The Gilbert Islands medical launch

'Okay, Leslie, time to strip off,' said the gorgeous blonde, beginning to remove her skimpy cotton dress.

Sounds like the beginning of a steamy love story, doesn't it - but alas it was not. The speaker was one of the United Nations staff in Tarawa, capital of the Gilberts (now Kiribati), and she was acting as my guide on a visit to a convent school for girls from all parts of the Gilberts, the Immaculate Heart College, at Taborio on the other side of the vast lagoon. At 6.30 that morning we had boarded the medical launch, which did the trip round the lagoon every Friday, taking a medical team and supplies to the outlying villages, and at the same time serving as a ferry. It went round once early in the morning, and then again late in the evening to pick up anyone who had been left to do something on the first trip. We had now been in it for two and a half hours.

'Keep your shoes on,' Dorothy warned. 'There may be stonefish.' I knew about those: they had poisonous spines on their backs which could kill one in a matter of minutes.

I could see the convent school, immaculate in its whitewash, ahead of us and to the right, but was puzzled that we were not making straight for it, but apparently steering past.

'Perhaps there's a narrow channel opposite,' I thought.
'That may be why ^{he} ~~thy~~ chose that spot to build the place.'

But I was wrong. When we were exactly opposite the school, and about half a mile out, the launch stopped, and one of the crew came towards us. Dorothy, the beautiful blonde, took his hand, and he helped her to slide over the side of the launch and into the sea, wearing only a one-piece bathing dress and sneakers. To my surprise, the water was only waist deep. The sailor then handed Dorothy her dress and handbag in a neat bundle, and she put them on top of her head.

Not to be outdone, I gathered my trousers, shirt, socks and briefcase together, handed them to the sailor, and slid over the side unaided. The water was pleasantly warm.

'Okay,' Dorothy said, 'now we walk - or rather wade. It's the same depth right to the shore. The launch'll pick us up here again at 1.'

We ploughed our way through the water over coral reef and soft sand, and I tried to make light conversation, but Dorothy was obviously saving her breath for the half mile walk with our goods and chattels held on our heads.

As we approached the shore, I saw a figure all in white come out of the school and walk down towards the water, and as we got nearer I realised it was a

nun in summer attire, like the ones I used to seeing bathing in full dress, wimple and all, in Turkey when I was a boy.

'Welcome to the ^{immaculate} Sacred Heart College,' said the nun in an Australian voice as we waded ashore. 'Here are two towels. Please dry yourselves and put on your clothes here.' Obviously, she did not want us to shock - or tittilate - her charges by our skimpy dress.

The nuns and the pupils were as charming as I had known them in convent schools in many parts of the world. I gave three demonstration lessons and got the girls in the senior class to talk informally to me about their plans for the future, so as to assess their level of spoken English. As usual in convent schools, I was impressed by the oracy of all the girls I listened to in the various classes, even the ones in Form I, who had spent only seven months in the school.

The medical launch was four hours late, but as we did not set out on our long walk - or wade - over the reef till it came in sight in the distance, it just meant more time with the classes.

When we finally clambered abroad, accompanied by Sister Austelle, a nun from the headquarters of the order in Tarawa, who had spent a week at the College preparing them for my visit, it was crowded with villagers taking

their goods to market in Tarawa. They had big woven baskets of dried fish, breadfruit and other tropical delicacies, and the launch continued along the northern coast of the lagoon for half an hour, and then we had to wait another half hour while more passengers came out to join us. We now looked overloaded to me.

Finally we set out back across the lagoon to Tarawa at 6 o'clock, as darkness was beginning to fall. The launch showed no lights, and the further we went, the bigger the swell became. Each time we nearly rolled under on one side or the other, the villagers laughed uproariously. I knew this reaction already from Indonesia, where fear - or embarrassment - were always hidden under laughter. I looked around for life-jackets or life-rafts, but there were none of either.

I have always been a very bad sailor, so I was afraid of being sick. Luckily, however, the side to side rolling, and the fact that I was in the open air, able to see each wave as it approached from the left, enabled me to hang on without actually being sick, although I felt queasy.

Instead of landing at the place at which we had started our trip that morning, which was near our hotel, we landed up at the small harbour, which was miles away, and had to take a taxi back.

My wife was, of course, very worried by our four-hour delay - particularly as she had spent the time with two nuns, who had come to collect Sister Austelle, and who had been regaling her with stories of the number of nuns who had been drowned while crossing the lagoon during the previous six months!

My other memories of the Gilberts were of pleasant walks on the reefs, looking at beautiful fish, corals and sea anemones; of tours of the grim reminders of the Japanese occupation, and our bitter struggle to retake Tarawa from them - and of toddy tappers.

I had already come across toddy in South India and the Seychelles. It is the liquid that is found in the nut of the toddy palm. The nut is considerably smaller than a coconut, and the liquid in it ferments quickly into a cheap intoxicating drink once the nut is opened. One can stop this fermentation by adding a little slaked lime, so that in Madras State, for example, it was possible - and quite legal - to buy this non-alcoholic drink, whereas its limeless sister was strictly illegal.

To show that they were ruthlessly pursuing the toddy suppliers, while at the same time taking bribes from them, the police in Madras State had organised a system whereby volunteers for imprisonment for this crime appeared before the courts regularly. There was considerable competition to get onto the roster of

volunteers, as imprisonment was not very rigorous compared with the daily life of many of the Indian poor, one had enough to eat, it cost one nothing, and the toddy dealers gave one a small subsidy on top of it all.

So when we were woken early the first morning in our hotel by a tapping sound outside, it did not take me long to guess what it was. A quick look out of the window confirmed it: there he was, the familiar figure of a toddy tapper, who had shinned up a nearby palm-tree with the help of a bit of rope tied round his feet, and was now busy getting the liquid out of the nuts.

I have tried toddy, and cannot say it is to be recommended to the connoisseur. But I preferred it to the 'whisky' distilled in Egypt during the war. The army joke about that was 'Not a drop sold till seven days old.' Toddy took far less than that to ferment.

Chapter 36: To prison in Grenada

We were having a lovely February holiday in a beach hotel in Grenada. The food was good, there was a big supermarket a hundred yards from the front gates, where one could buy cheap rum, fruit juices, cocktail snacks etc, a pizzeria with the most enormous pizzas only a few yards further on, and a really genuine French restaurant half a mile down the beach.

Add to this a glorious sandy beach about four miles long, a nice hotel swimming pool and nightly entertainment - what more could one want?

Well, perhaps a bit of excitement, and we certainly got that.

Our first call to fame - or notoriety - came when an American frigate paid a courtesy call to the island. We became aware of this when one morning large numbers of its crew descended on the hotel, but things did not hot up until just after lunch, when I retired to our room for my usual siesta, while my wife - also as usual - sat beside the pool reading.

Jane very soon became aware of loud shouting - mostly making liberal use of four-letter words, from the shuffleboard pitch, which was situated between the pool and our room. It was now occupied by American sailors, most of them black, who had obviously drunk too much in the hotel bars,

and were now letting off steam.

Driven in by the noise and profanity, Jane returned to our room, walked through it quietly so as not to disturb me, and went out onto the little patio outside.

Almost immediately, she heard a wolf whistle from the next building, across a pleasant stretch of lawn. She looked up, and there, on a balcony on the top floor, was a pair of large white buttocks, with balls and a penis hanging between them.

She returned to the room, and as I was now awake, told me what had happened. 'I didn't mind at first,' she said. 'I saw nothing I hadn't seen before. But I think it's really not on. Those boys are letting down the American name. They should be stopped.'

I agreed. I dressed, went to the front desk of the hotel and said to the girl on duty, 'I'd like the telephone number of the US naval police in case things get worse.'

What I was thinking of, actually, was a rather similar incident in Goroka, in the highlands of Papua New Guinea, a few years before. I had been there on a lecture tour, staying in a hotel with Jane, when on Saturday afternoon truck drivers and local Papua New Guineans had begun to fight with broken-off beer bottles. As the door of our room was flimsy, I had thought it wise to take precautions.

'Worse than what?' the girl asked in puzzlement. So

I told her about the noise, the profanity and the bare bottom.

At once she picked up the phone, and after she had had a quick conversation with someone in quiet tones, she wrote something on a sheet of paper and handed it to me. 'This is the phone number of the charge d'affaires at the American Embassy here,' she said. 'You can ring him if you have any more trouble.'

We did not. But that evening, when we were having drinks beside the pool, the manager of the hotel, whom we had already met, arrived with an immaculately dressed American naval officer.

'This,' said the manager, 'is the Executive Officer of the frigate that is visiting Grenada.'

We shook hands and invited them both to sit down, whereupon the Executive Officer apologised to my wife, on behalf of the US Navy, for what had happened. She repeated to him that she did not feel shocked or insulted for herself, but that she thought that members of the armed forces should be discouraged from letting down their side by such behaviour. The officer agreed completely, and we parted on the best of terms.

The following evening, when we arrived for dinner, we were told by the maitre d'hotel that our meal would be on the US Navy that night, and the wine waiter then

brought us a bottle of the best champagne in the place, a good Dom Perignon, also courtesy of the US Navy.

A few days later, we met a young German couple by the pool. I always take every opportunity I can of practising my German, so we were soon chatting away busily. I discovered that the wife had learn some Italian, so we launched into that language too. We found the Adamis a bright, cheerful pair, and determined to see more of them. He worked for Air France in Munich, and had come to see if it was possible to arrange for his company to fly tours to Grenada.

But the next evening, the Adamis were glum. 'Do you know,' the wife said to us, 'my husband has spent most of the day in a Grenadian prison, and he has to appear for sentence at 9 tomorrow morning.'

Of course, Jane and I were both staggered to hear this. What had happened was that, the morning before, the Adamis had decided to hire a car to see more of the spectacularly beautiful island. They had asked at the front desk of the hotel whether Mr Adami's International Driving Permit was valid, and had been told that it was.

They had next asked to be recommended to a hire car firm, and were given the name and telephone number of the most prestigious one in the island. Its owner had been given a special badge by President Reagan when he had visited the island after the Americans had liberated

it from Communist dictatorship.

The hire car firm had confirmed that an International Driving Permit was quite acceptable in Grenada, so the couple had hired a car and gaily driven off - only to be hit in the back by another car a few minutes later outside the US Embassy.

Mr Adami had immediately gone into the Embassy to report the accident to the police, and when they had arrived, they had asked to see his driving licence. When he showed his International Permit, he and his wife had been taken to the police station, where a senior police officer had told Mr Adami that his licence was not valid in Grenada, and had had him put in a cell.

Hours later, he and his wife had been taken to the house of an old magistrate, who had come down in pyjamas and dressing gown and granted him bail in a small sum of money until his appearance in court the next morning.

'We'll come with you,' Jane said, 'and Leslie can interpret.' The Adamis were clearly relieved and delighted. Although they spoke good English, they were obviously glad to have our moral support in the court.

The owner of the hire car firm arrived at the hotel himself the next morning to take the Adamis to the court house, and was happy to take us along too. He was obviously a worried man: it didn't do his business any good to have

his customers put in gaol.

We reached the court house a little early, and were introduced to the Adamis' defence counsel. He was tall, very black, and beautifully dressed in what Jane, who has more experience about such things than I have, said was a Savile Row suit and the most expensive London handmade shoes. When he heard I was going to interpret, he asked for my particulars, so I gave him my card with my qualifications on it. It obviously impressed him a lot. He also asked me to give him an oral translation of the preamble to Mr Adami's International Driving Permit.

When we went into court, we found that we were the only four white people in a motley group of defendants, families and police.

A case of drunkenness was dealt with first, and then it was our turn. Defence Counsel handed the magistrate my card, saying that I was going to interpret, and I was then asked to come forward and take the oath.

'I'm sure we've met before,' the magistrate said to me. 'Perhaps in London?'

I pretended I remembered meeting him. 'Better keep on the right side of the old boy,' I thought. 'He seems a good sort.'

A worried policeman, who was prosecuting, then stammered through the indictment, after which it was

the turn of our defence counsel.

He began with a sparkling exchange of legal wit with the magistrate, in which Shakespeare quotations flew back and forth. 'Obviously for my benefit, for some reason,' I thought.

Then we got down to brass tacks. 'Your Honour,' said Defence Counsel, 'my client has a valid International Driving Permit. These permits were introduced at a time when Grenada was a British colony, and it therefore acceded to the international treaty accepting these Permits whether it liked it or not. They are therefore perfectly valid in Grenada.'

The magistrate agreed, and proceeded to state that the defendant had no case to answer. All this time, of course, I was busily interpreting.

Mr Adami then said to me in German, 'And what about costs?'

When I had interpreted this to the magistrate, an embarrassed smile came over his face. 'No one has ever claimed costs from the Grenadian police,' he said. 'But don't worry - everything is arranged.'

In fact, the car hire firm had engaged the most prestigious lawyer in Grenada and was paying all the costs of the case.

But the magistrate had not finished: he proceeded to castigate the police severely for ever having put Mr Adami in prison, pointing out the damage that such inconsidered actions do to places that depend heavily on tourism for their economic survival. Then we were allowed to go.

That evening we had dinner with the Adamis, who very kindly bought us a bottle of Californian Hearty Burgundy as a thank offering.

Chapter 3⁷ Our report on our first visit to the St Geran Hotel in Mauritius, 3 February to 3 March 1988

1) General. While we were at the St Geran, it was declared by two British tour operators to be the best hotel in the world. That, of course, depends on what one is going to a hotel for: if one wants elegant decor, luxurious fittings and antique furniture, the Saint Geran is not anywhere near in the same class as, for example, the Gritti Palace in Venice, the Sacher in Vienna, the Hassler in Rome, the Plaza Athenee in Paris or the Carlyle in New York, to name but a few we have been at. The Saint Geran is comfortable, everything one needs is there - a minibar, plenty of towels (including beach towels), face flannels, air-conditioning, and a ceiling fan (but no TV) in one's room, but the decor is austere and practical.

But the Saint Geran is superb in three things in particular: its setting, which is quite spectacular; its staff, who are the most charming, attentive and patient we have ever come across; and its food, which would not be out of place in any of the best hotels in the world, despite the large numbers that have to be catered for each day, and the distance from what are normally thought of as the centres of haute cuisine. For people who want a seaside holiday hotel, we are quite willing to accept that the Saint Geran is the best in the world.

The island of Mauritius as a whole is very lucky to have a mixed population who get on well together and are on the whole well-mannered and cheerful.

2) The airport. Very clean, airconditioned, efficiently run, with courteous staff, and plenty of trolleys and porters. Enormously better, for example, than Athens Airport or any of the big airports we have been to in the USA.

3) Airport to hotel and vice versa. An efficient, air-conditioned minibus service, which gives one an excellent introduction to the scenery of Mauritius as one does the one hour drive to the hotel, passing through endless sugarcane plantations, skirting the reefbound sea, and passing through picturesque little villages. Striking is the very small volume of traffic on the roads.

4) Hotel reception. Polite, speedy and efficient. The one thing that we did not like was having to sign a legal document absolving the hotel of all responsibility for losses occasioned by default of members of their staff. We doubt whether this would be legally enforceable in many countries.

5) The room. As we have mentioned in 1), above, this was quite adequate, the only problem being keeping the floor clean, as, getting from the beach into the room,

there was no way of arriving with clean feet, and the bath, in which one could wash them, was at the other end of the room. What we did was to have a bathmat inside the door to the beach, with a bathing towel on the floor beyond that. We then had to step onto the towel and shuffle across to the bath on it to wash our feet. Inevitably, this left the towel pretty dirty.

In other places we have been to, it has been possible to wash one's feet under a tap on coming off the beach, and then to walk along a tiled path to one's room.

6) Sunbathing arrangements. Much in demand were the excellent adjustable sunbathing chairs with wheels, but there were extremely few of these for the large number of hotel guests. They were really intended for use around the small swimming-pool at the centre of the hotel, but very early every morning they would be wheeled away by eager guests and positioned near their rooms, with belongings on them to show they had been 'bagged'. This was not really a very satisfactory arrangement.

There were other sunbathing facilities - waterproof mattresses and triangular backrests, and a couple of deckchairs on the patio or balcony of each room, and there were enough of these for everybody.

7) The sea and beach. These, as mentioned in 1), above, were magnificent. Very occasionally there was a whiff of drains, especially during our first week, which was very dry. It would be a good idea to analyse the water periodically, and to check for sources of pollution (drains), if this is not already done.

As all beaches in Mauritius are quite rightly public up to high-water mark, hawkers of clothing, beads, seashells etc roamed the beach regularly, but were not allowed onto the hotel land. Most were courteous, but there was very occasionally the odd exception who was over-persistent and rude if one refused to buy.

The main fly in the ointment was a young gentleman who owned a waterscooter and touted for business in it along the shore. Despite warnings from the hotel management in their handouts to guests not to encourage this man, there were always a few takers. Waterscooters are very noisy, but even worse, they are dangerous to swimmers in general, and to snorkellers in particular. This young man also had the habit of doing very tight turns at high speed as close to swimmers as he thought he could safely get, usually with the result that everyone quickly left the sea. We saw a number of hotel guests remonstrate with him, whereupon he came even closer. Before we left Mauritius, we wrote to the Minister of Tourism pointing out the danger, and

suggesting that he should get the Government to ban the use of such waterscooters within, say, 500 metres of a bathing beach.

8) Daytime activities. There was always a lavish programme of sports etc available, but as we had gone there for a rest, we did not participate.

9) Evening entertainment. There was a good band every evening, with frequent song and dance shows, in which the performers showed a happy and enthusiastic approach which was refreshing after the often oversophistication of floorshows in, for example, Paris, Hamburg and Amsterdam. As most of the hotel guests came from very sophisticated Continental European backgrounds, they appreciated this very much.

The two flies in the ointment were a tendency by one of the male singers to turn the sound up too high, which the manager of the hotel firmly sat on on at least one occasion, and the habit of the same man of fooling about on the stage as if to show his contempt of the audience.

10) The casino. The one-armed bandits were open most of the day and night, and the blackjack and roulette from 10 p.m. to early morning on most nights, and from 2 p.m. on Sundays. Most of the croupiers were female, and outstandingly charming, efficient and patient with

punters who did not know the rules, some of which were different from those in, for example, Cannes and Monte Carlo.

11) Taxis. We took one of these on two occasions. The first time, our driver was a charming and extremely helpful old man, badly crippled by arthritis, whose cab was equally old and infirm. The second time, we had a man who started off affable, but then became taciturn when we refused to sit in the heat for half an hour while he did some of his own business in a village. We explained that my wife was suffering from diarrhoea and wanted to get back to the hotel as soon as possible, but he was not impressed.

12) Fauna and flora. We saw a hedgehog in the hotel gardens one night, and a small variety of birds - much fewer kinds than in any other tropical place we have stayed in. We were able to identify what we saw from our bird book. Most were English sparrows and Indian mynahs. We only saw two sea birds throughout our four weeks.

13) Weather and temperature. Although our four weeks were well within the rainy season and the season of cyclones, we had little rain, and then mostly at night ('boss's rain'). When it rained during the day, it was in short, sharp, tropical showers.

However, an Italian fellow-guest told us that he

had spent 13 days there at the same time the year before, and it had rained on 11 of those.

Winds were moderate - nothing near a cyclone.

14) Things on sale in the hotel lobby. Almost every night, different outside traders were allowed to display goods for sale on a table outside the main restaurant in the evening, and they were well patronised. However, we discovered that among the goods of one firm were articles made of tortoiseshell, which are now internationally banned in most countries, including Mauritius. When we remonstrated with the traders, they just giggled inanely, and when we went to see the hotel management about this matter, we were told they could do nothing about it. As we are aware that there are wheels within wheels in every country, we did not report the matter to the police, but are certainly taking it up with the World Wildlife Fund through its president, HRH the Duke of Edinburgh.

15) Management. We met both the General Manager, Mr Jean Claude Koster, and his deputy, Mr Walter Immooss, on many occasions, and were impressed by their quiet, unflappable efficiency. We know only too well from our own experience that, in a job like that, in a multiracial society, human relations are of paramount importance, and that was a thing that these two gentlemen excelled in.

16) Room staff. These were unfailingly courteous, eager to help and nearly always efficient. During the first week there were occasional lapses when we were not left bathing towels, face flannels or bath foam when our room was done in the evening, but after that we had no problems. The man who did our room, Max by name, could not have been better.

17) Restaurant, bar and room service. We rarely used room service, as we prefer to eat socially, but when we did, we found it swift, efficient and accurate, with excellent food, except for a beef sandwich and a chicken sandwich, which were dull and tasteless. Perhaps we just did not know what condiments to order with them.

We rarely used the bar, as we discovered that they had no price list covering what they had on offer, the tots were tiny (what a joker once called 'a dirty glass' in a letter to 'The Times'), and the prices exorbitant. Whereas it was possible to get a perfectly drinkable 750 cl 40° bottle of rum in a supermarket for Rupees 24.10, a 50 ml 40° miniature of rum in the minibar was Rupees 35 (the same kind of rum as the latter was the equivalent of Rupees 45 for a 750 cl bottle in the duty-free at the airport). Somebody was obviously making an excessive profit on the hotel rum.

In the restaurant, the food was incredibly good, as we have mentioned in our para 1), above. Breakfast provided a vast choice, including sparkling wine, Black Velvet and Bloody Mary as the hair of the dog that had bitten one the night before, a wide variety of luscious tropical fruits (in some Caribbean hotels with pretensions one has only bananas, apples or oranges) and hot dishes prepared in front of one's eyes on grills and skillets, cold meats and fish dishes of all kinds, pancakes with a variety of fillings, excellent pastries, first-class croissants, fresh oysters, etc.

Dinners were either table d'hote, with a choice of main dish, or barbecues, with a wide choice between French, Indian, Chinese and Creole cuisine, everything of a very high standard as regards ingredients and preparation.

As the executive head chef, Mr Mesh, had trained in, among other places, the Moulin de Mougins near Cannes, which we knew well, we got to know him, and found him a brilliant and inventive young chef. He showed us round his spotless, partly airconditioned kitchens, and we saw his highly talented pastry chef at work on the superb croissants we had every morning.

As in the case of the management, Mr Mesh combined great expertise with an outstanding talent for human relations, so that his staff were happy and eager.

The serving staff in the restaurant showed the same qualities to a high degree, and were outstandingly patient, although occasionally they did not quite understand what one said to them. The only criticism we in fact had of them was that they were sometimes overzealous, whipping away one's plate before one had finished, or before one's spouse had. We mentioned this to the Assistant General Manager, and he made the very true observation that one has to be extremely careful about curbing excessive zeal, as it may lead to laziness, but that he would think out tactful ways of doing it.

At breakfast, and whenever one had to serve oneself at dinner, one's plate was immediately taken over by a waiter or waitress when one had put one's food on it, and carried to one's table.

We would like to suggest, firstly, that waiters and waitresses should be encouraged to check whether guests are left with the crockery and cutlery they need for their next course after those for the previous one have been removed (this applied especially to breakfast); and secondly that they should be discouraged from leaning across in front of a customer, for example to fill her/his glass, or to remove unneeded cutlery, but instead to go behind. This is particularly important when a guest is actually engaged

in lifting food to her/his mouth.

Wines were a problem for people like ourselves, who have a few glasses of good wine at home every evening. There were a few good French wines available, most of them champagnes, but the prices were sky-high (£70 a bottle on average). The ubiquitous Portuguese Mateus Rose was here, but we find it too sweet and unpleasant. The vast majority of wines on the wine list were South African. We tried a number of them, including ones recommended by a nice young South African honeymoon couple we met, but were not impressed.

We suggest, in particular, that wines should be kept at the right temperature, and lying on their sides. We happened to discover that neither of these elementary rules, particularly important in the tropics, was consistently observed.

18) Security. The grounds of the hotel were constantly patrolled by security guards in uniform, who seemed to do their job efficiently.

19) Fellow guests. It was very refreshing to find oneself among so many young people, including children of all ages, and to see that most of them were bright Continental Europeans, with Italians in the majority, but plenty of Germans and French, and a few Swiss, British and South Africans. Thankfully, although it may

sound rude to say so, there were no Americans, who tend to swamp Caribbean resorts with their over-effusive bonhomie and appalling taste for bland food.

20) Insects. We saw only one cockroach and four mosquitoes, none of the latter the anopheles variety that carry malaria, but we were plagued with flies. Valiant attempts were made to keep these at bay by spraying, but they were everywhere.

We suspect that they contaminated the food on display in the restaurant (although not in the spotless kitchens), as both of us had repeated attacks of violent diarrhoea, which we had not suffered from in other tropical countries.

Early on during our stay we suggested to the Deputy General Manager that he should adopt the practice we had seen in other tropical countries of putting netting frames over exposed food, and he promptly began to do so, first of all with breads, pastries and cold meats, and then with the cakes etc at teatime. Unfortunately, he was not able to complete the process before we left by providing covers for the fruit too, but he assured us that these were under construction.

Chapter 38: Our trip to Brazil, Dec 1988 - Jan 1989

We flew from Heathrow to Rio non-stop, overnight, in eleven and a half hours, but as there was only a three-hour time difference, we did not feel much jetlag.

The Royal Viking line had arranged for all our transport to hotels, docks, airport etc, and this was carried out very efficiently, especially in Rio, where our chauffeur-driven limousine was accompanied by a very charming and helpful young man, who warned us against wearing any jewellery, even wedding rings, in the streets, and against taking any public transport or even taxis, because of the high crime-rate.

He also changed money for us at a favourable 'grey-market' rate (I had taken the precaution of finding out, from a Brazilian magazine on the plane, what this was), and arranged three guided coach tours for us.

The hotel, the Rio Palace, is on the list of the Leading Hotels of the World, at 16 of which we have stayed in other countries, but it was more like Fawlty Towers!

We found we had been put in a room at the back, looking out on a vista of anonymous, concrete high-rise blocks, so we at once asked to be moved to a front

room. Before they would let us move, however, the hotel authorities made us sign a promise to pay another \$40 a day for it.

Then the fun began. When we turned on the bath taps, the water came only out of the shower above, drenching us. Then the bidet, which had one of those powerful jets shooting up in the strategic place, proved to have a hot tap that needed superhuman strength to turn off (ow!). The neon light in the bathroom was very dim, with occasional bright flashes. The TV in the bedroom produced only a hazy picture, which was not surprising as the aerial wire did not have a screw-on terminal, but was simply pushed bare into the socket. And the net curtains over the French windows did not close completely, so that Lerslie was badly bitten by a mosquito the first night. Luckily it was not an anopheles, which carry malaria, as Leslie discovered before killing it.

Gradually all these faults were put right, although Leslie had to show the 'engineer' how to fix the TV aerial.

The next thing was that, when two days passed and we had still not had messages from our friends in Rio and São Paulo, we went to enquire at the hotel conciergerie. There we discovered that they still had us down as in the room we had first been allocated, so

that their reply to messages had been, 'Not arrived yet.' In due course we did get the messages we had been waiting for, after the concierges had put us down as being in the right room.

By now Jane was hopping mad, so we went down to reception to complain to the manager. We were told that he was having dinner and could not be disturbed. Jane insisted, and after a considerable delay, a very haughty lady with 'Assistant Manager' on her bosom arrived, and said, 'Yes?' in a frosty voice.

'Can we speak to you in private?' Jane asked. The woman took us into a corridor at the back, and again said, 'Yes?'

We enumerated our complaints, and said we expected to get a rebate on our room as a result. She said that was impossible. Jane then said we wanted to see the manager the next morning, but the woman answered, 'You'll have to make an appointment yourselves,' and that was that. No apologies, explanations or even a smile.

The next day a lady telephoned to say that we would not be charged the extra \$40 for the last three days of our stay, and that we would be allowed to stay in our room till four o'clock on our day of departure, instead of having to vacate at 12.

The same day we had a message that the credit manager of the hotel wanted to see us, but when we went to reception, we were told that it was not the credit manager, but the social hostess. We said we had to go out, but would like to meet her in the downstairs bar at 7.30 that evening before being taken out to dinner by the Longman agent in Rio.

We waited till 8 that evening, and then sent a waitress to reception to investigate. She came back to say that they knew nothing about an appointment, and we never in fact got to see either the social hostess or the manager.

However, the view from our room, right along from one end of Copacabana Beach to the other, with the Sugar Loaf and picturesque islands in the background, was stupendous, and we had pleasant meals in restaurants close by, so we were quite happy.

Our first conducted tour was to the Botanical Gardens and the Sugar Loaf, which one goes up to in two stages by cable car - most dramatic, especially the second leg, up a great cliff of rock from the intermediate platform to the spacious top, where there are gardens, shops, a restaurant, a small zoo and an auditorium. The view, of course, is quite spectacular.

Our next trip was up to the top of Corcovado by rack-and-pinion railway to see the giant statue of

Christ at the top. Unfortunately it was cloudy that day (it was the rainy season), so we could not see much of the magnificent view of the town and coast.

On the way down we changed to a coach to be taken through unspoilt virgin jungle, which Leslie already knew from Indonesia, but which we both enjoyed greatly.

Our third tour was to see the nightlife of Rio. First we were taken to a so-called 'churrascaria', which serves food gaúcho-style, i.e. straight off huge big spits carried around by waiters dressed as gaúchos, who cut off slices of a variety of meats in front of each customer and put them on his plate. It was interesting, but overwhelming to people who had not spent a long day in the saddle rounding up cattle.

Then we were taken to a big theatre for a show. There was a performance by a first-rate percussion band, and another by highly competent gymnasts, but the girlie shows (no bare bosoms!) were disappointingly unsophisticated when one has seen the Lido and Folies Bergere in Paris. What was worse, in a town full of stunningly beautiful girls, they had managed to choose a chorus of uniformly ugly females. The noise level was also unacceptable to people not brought up on discos, and wishing to preserve their hearing for as long as possible. The singing was done by a quartette of middle-aged men and women in a balcony at the side of

the stage, and there was a band on the other side, while the people on stage mimed.

Rio is as vibrant and exciting as one has been led to believe, and the people as friendly, charming and happy, even the poor ones, who abound. From behind, one thinks that many of the women are wearing only two strings, one under their arms, and the other round their hips, but when one sees them from the front, one sees that the top one is attached to a minute bra, and the bottom one, by another string hidden between the buttocks, to a little triangle of cloth covering most of the pubic area. We were not surprised to learn that Brazilian men are turned on by buttocks, not boobs!

Men, too, could be seen in the main streets wearing nothing but the briefest of bathing trunks.

Beggars were everywhere, including children with one lower arm amputated. We were told that it was no good giving them money, because it was immediately taken away by sinister-looking men we saw lounging about in the cafes, who presumably controlled the children. We therefore took to giving them food, which they devoured avidly while we protected them.

Then came the cruise: unfortunately there was a dock strike on, so three of our suitcases reached our cabin with holes in them, obviously deliberately made

with a sharp pointed instrument; and the four bottles of Spanish brandy Jane had ordered three months before were never put on the ship. As it is the only spirit she can drink without a hangover, she faced either a dry voyage or a series of unpleasant mornings-after, but fortunately the concierge of the ship came to her rescue, giving her a bottle of nice Spanish brandy he had received as a present, and refusing to accept payment for it.

On the ship we had the good fortune to be seated at a table for two with a pair of outstandingly efficient, pleasant and helpful waiters, one of them an Italian who had worked in Jersey. Leslie was able to practise his Italian three times a day as a result. The head waiter in our part of the dining room and our wine waiter were also very pleasant and competent.

We were also lucky to have a delightful couple at the table beside us. They were Brazilian, he of German Jewish origin, having been brought to Brazil by his parents in time to escape the Holocaust, and she of Russian origin. They were most helpful on shore excursions, and also highly entertaining, with some really superb dirty stories!

There were also several very nice Turkish waiters on board, with whom Leslie passed the time of day in Turkish in bars and lounges. But our main stamping

ground was the Discovery Bar, right at the top of the ship and in the bows, where Anne, the Midlands girl married to a Portuguese waiter on the ship, dispensed the drinks highly efficiently and with scrupulous honesty, helped by two other nice English girls.

Jane attended keep-fit classes religiously and finished up with a certificate to the effect that she was 'royally fit', but Leslie was disappointed to find that, instead of the traditional rowing machines he had found on earlier cruises, there were two very expensive, gimmicky 'aerobic' things which flashed lights and did not reproduce in any way the movements of real rowing. He abandoned them in disgust after a minute, with some well-chosen words to the charming instructress about the fact that aerobics had been thoroughly discredited by US medical science some years ago. He then took to walking briskly up to eight miles a day round the top deck.

Entertainment was laid on almost twenty-four hours a day, and some of it, notably a pair of strolling players, the band, a troupe of British dancers, a conjuror, and two puppeteers were first-rate. A classical duo were less successful, but that is presumably not what the mass of the passengers were interested in anyway.

The large majority were in fact either from the

US, or Jewish, or in most cases both. However, there were more non-US ones than on any Royal Viking cruise we have been on before - one third, in fact, including a number of Australians, South Africans, British, Germans and Brazilians. There were quite a few teenagers, and several small children.

We did the quiz nearly every day, winning Royal Viking leather key rings most days for the correct answers. Leslie created rather a sensation with one of his answers: One had to give a rhymed pair of words which meant the same as the clue, which in this case was 'hilarious affair.' The 'correct' answer was 'hearty party', but he proposed 'gay lay', which the cruise hostess conducting the quiz reacted to with horror, although many of the other passengers were highly amused.

We also took part in bingo, with Jane winning on the first two days, when prizes were low, but never thereafter, when they went up to a maximum of over \$1200, won by a teenage boy.

Our cabin stewardess was a very pretty, soft-looking Swedish blonde, who turned out to have a Greek boyfriend in the crew, and to have spent some years as an au pair in Athens, so Leslie was able to speak some Greek with her.

Unfortunately, Jane had a short but vicious

attack of what was clearly salmonella on the ship, and then got a severe cold (there were many passengers in the same state) and therefore had to spend three days in the cabin. During that time she discovered that the cabin stewardesses tended to be casual and forgetful, not bringing what she had ordered.

Our first shore excursion was to have been at Bahia on the Brazilian coast, but we had to skip that because the ship was late in leaving Rio because of the strike, which had also meant that large quantities of food that had been flown to Rio to be put on the ship did not arrive.

The food was good at first, except for the desserts (with the exception of excellent tropical fruits and sorbets), but then it deteriorated, and some of the dishes were really disgraceful. We were told on the grapevine that all the trained chefs except the head one had been transferred to the new ship, the Royal Viking Sun, which was on its inaugural world cruise.

Our first two trips ashore were in Belem and Santarem on the Amazon, but as Jane did not want to go, Leslie accompanied our Brazilian dining room neighbours, and had a most interesting time as a result, seeing museums of Amazonian life, a magnificent cathedral with rare marblework from Italy, and

surprisingly fine stained glass.

At Manaus, some 1000 miles up the Amazon, Leslie went ashore to see the town, and missed the last conducted tour of the day of the famous art nouveau Opera House by a quarter of an hour. The Opera House is in a state of decay inside and out, but is being restored at present. The town, like Belem and Santarem, is hot, humid and dirty, with potholed streets, but charming, friendly people. Girls one has never seen in one's life smile at one in the streets, and try to hold one's eyes in the shops. In fact, they behave like men rather than women!

That evening Leslie went on an alligator-spotting trip. First a largish ferry took the participants some miles up tributaries of the Amazon, and then they transferred to ten-seater canoes with outboard motors, the passengers sitting two by two behind each other. A guide in the front shone a torch to reflect in the alligators' eyes and therefore make it possible to spot them.

Sure enough, after a quarter of an hour of exploring narrow creeks, the guide whispered, 'There's one!' and in the light of his torch we saw a baby alligator, about two foot long, up on a muddy bank. Leslie noticed that it was facing the other way, so realised that the guide had not seen its eyes reflected

in his torchlight, but had probably planted the creature there himself an hour before! As they are very torpid at night, being cold-blooded, they presumably remain where they have been put until the sun rouses them again.

Anyway, the guide took hold of the alligator and began passing it back to us. Unfortunately, however, Leslie's canoe contained seven English schoolgirls, who at once started shrieking and pushing to the side, nearly capsizing the narrow canoe into the piranha-infested waters. Leslie took hold of the alligator and had a good look at it, and then passed it back through the squealing girls to another adult sitting at the back, and a schoolboy, who was also not afraid of it.

On our return to the ferry boat base, we found that the other canoes had been equally 'lucky', and after we had examined each other's booty, the poor creatures were put back into the river, no doubt to be fed and fished out again next evening for the next lot of tourists.

The ferry boat base contained a bar and little stalls where Indians sold local souvenirs - small blowpipes, feather armbands, stuffed piranhas, etc. There was also a charming juvenile spider monkey, which reminded me very much of my two crab-eating macaques in Indonesia. It was quite tame, and spent most of its

time shinning up to the ceiling of the open hut to catch and eat moths round the lights, and then shinning down head-first (the only time I have seen a monkey do this), often landing on someone's head on the way, and then climbing down the person to the floor. When I held out my hand to it, it came and sat on my arm quite happily.

Of course, the teenagers went wild about this creature, trying to catch and hold it. It put up with this treatment for a time, but then began to squeak irritably. It ran to a dog that was sleeping on the jetty, climbed onto its back and held on just behind its neck, whereupon the dog stood up and carried it to a safer place in the darkness.

The next day both of us did a similar ferry trip to the same place, and from there walked along a raised wooden gangway to a big pond where the huge pads of the Victoria Regia lily were to be seen, some with small alligators basking on them. There we saw a beautiful red-headed kingfisher, fish eagles, and huge, brightly-coloured butterflies. Unfortunately, we had not managed to get a book of South American birds before leaving Jersey (the standard one is published in the USA), and in Rio there had only been huge and unscientific coffee-table ones.

While we were on the Amazon, moths and beetles

often flew onto the ship, some of them huge. When Leslie found any dead ones, he collected them, and on his return to Jersey framed them as a memento.

From Manaus we set off again downstream for several days, and when we got into the open ocean, and the ship began to heave and screw, Leslie put on the wristbands the doctor had recommended against seasickness, which are based on acupuncture principles. Leslie had thought they were just an autosuggestive gimmick, but they worked 75%, so that, although he still felt rather disorientated, he was able to live a normal life for 48 hours, after which, as usual, he was all right.

During this period there was a fancy dress do, at which Leslie went as an Arab peasant, as usual, wearing his little red felt skullcap, the galabia he had had made in 1960 in Port Said, and his Indian chupplis, and fingering his amber worry-beads. Every participant received the same 'prize', a superior metal Royal Viking key ring.

The first stop after leaving the Amazon was Barbados, which we had spent a month in some years ago and not liked very much. Leslie went ashore for a fast two-hour walk. It was Monday, January 2nd, and a public holiday because New Year's Day had fallen on a Sunday, so things were quiet ashore.

After another day at sea, we came to St Thomas,

capital of the US Virgin Islands, and there both of us did an excursion on an open-sided sightseeing bus through magnificent scenery. As usual, the only flies in the ointment were our fellow-passengers, particularly a vulgar and arrogant Brazilian 'lady', who never stopped yacking in the loud voice such women affect. She was with a cowed little husband, who said nothing, but Leslie turned round twice and said to her, 'We have not paid to listen to you, madam, but to the guide on this tour.' However, as the 'lady' apparently spoke no English, it did not help much.

Finally we got to Fort Lauderdale, where we disembarked, going to the Doral on the Ocean Hotel in Miami in a chauffeur-driven limousine, with our luggage in the same vehicle this time. The driver was a Pakistani student at Miami University!

When we had settled in, we phoned Leslie's eldest daughter, Rosemary, whom we had warned of our coming, and she spent most of the waking hours of our two day and one night stay with us. She runs her own catering service, supplying food, waiters etc to parties given by some of the wealthiest people in the USA, and amused us by introducing us to the word JAPS - an acronym for 'Jewish American princesses' (what we would call 'primadonnas' as an insult). These ladies abound in Florida, and are renowned for their arrogance,

stridency and money. They also screw everyone down to the last halfpenny when they have any money dealings with them, and Rosemary often suffers from this.

Our return Club World class flight by British Airways from Miami to Heathrow was again overnight. While we were away there had been the Lockerbie disaster, so we were not surprised when the pilot announced, about a quarter of an hour after we were due to leave, that a passenger had suddenly pulled out after registering his luggage in at the airport, so that all baggage now had to be taken out of the hold, and the pieces belonging to the defaulter removed. This meant an hour's delay, during which we were given nothing but a small glass of orange juice. When it took the stewardesses another hour after take-off to get us a drink, Leslie remonstrated, as we were by then very thirsty after the heat of Miami.

As usual, Leslie slept well during most of the flight, but poor Jane could not do the same.

We had to spend four hours in the Executive Lounge at Heathrow waiting for our Jersey flight, and most of the time dozed under the influence of jetlag.

As members of the Executive Club, we had been preassigned seats 2D and 2F on the Jersey plane, hopefully with an empty seat between us, but when we got onto the plane, we discovered that an officious air

hostess had moved a man who had arrived in a wheelchair forward into 2E. He kindly changed to 2F so that we could sit side by side, but both he and we were annoyed to see that 2C, across the gangway, remained unoccupied throughout the flight. The man would have preferred that seat, as it was easier to get out of.

Back at home, there was the usual mass of mail to deal with, especially as it was the new year, so that tax and insurance had to be coped with. Also, we were due to go off to Mauritius in less than a month's time. But that is another story.

Chapter 39: Our report on our second visit to the St Geran Hotel in Mauritius, February 1989

1. Booking. We were not impressed by the way our booking was dealt with by Sovereign in London. In our original application in March, we had stressed that we wanted a ground floor room (they have patios), but again and again we received forms in which a room with balcony (i.e. an upstairs room) was mentioned (see Appendix A). This necessitated writing to query this several times.

However, for the worst blow, see 7, below.

2. Jersey to Heathrow. Excellent breakfast, with a really fresh, tasty filled croissant. Pleasant and helpful cabin staff.

3. Excelsior Hotel, Heathrow. We had lunch at the Draytone Manor on 6 and 7 February. As usual, the food was very good, and the staff friendly and helpful.

4. Heathrow to Bahrein. This started off badly with a long queue at the Club World registration counter, and a crowded Executive Club lounge (see Mrs Hill's irate questionnaire answer, Appendix B).

However, things looked up when we got on the plane. The dinner was good, and the cabin staff pleasant and helpful. We discovered two superior loos at the front of the Club World section, which made it unnecessary to

scrum down with the tourist passengers in the two rear ones.

The seats are still not at all comfortable for people built like Mrs Hill - rather short and on the plump side.

5. Bahrein. We got off here as usual although it was in the middle of the night, to stretch our legs, but when we were tired after three quarters of an hour and wanted to get on again to get some sleep, we were told that we were not allowed to. After asking the reason, we were told that the security lady who searched women passengers had stepped out.

A delay for operational reasons was then announced, so we began to put pressure on, for the benefit of the other dozens of stranded transit passengers as well as ourselves, and in due course we shamed the authorities into allowing us back on the plane.

There we were told that the heating system for the fuel of one of the engines, needed to prevent freezing at high altitudes, had broken down, and was being repaired. The plane was towed to a maintenance area, and after another hour's wait, we were told that the engine was going to be tested, and if it was now functioning properly, we would be off in half an hour.

After much roaring of the engine, it was shut down, and

we were told that the repair had not worked, that a new engine was going to be flown to us from Kuwait, and that meantime we would be taken to an hotel.

We opted to take our four big suitcases with us in case the delay was lengthy, and spent a few hours in a very comfortable room in the splendid Gulf Hotel, where we managed to get a couple of hours sleep before being taken back to the plane.

6. Bahrein to Mauritius. By now we were eight hours late, and the plane's meals schedule had been thrown into chaos, but we were well fed, and had a particularly pleasant, charming and helpful cabin crew.

7. Airport to hotel. We arrived at Mauritius airport at about midnight, and began with a brush with a couple of British yobbos who queue-barged, and were then very offensive when Mrs Hill objected. They actually threatened to thump her. Only the British behave like that!

Then we discovered that the Sovereign Tours representative knew nothing about us. She wanted a voucher for transport to the hotel, but luckily I had a letter from Sovereign (see Appendix C) saying we did not need one. As the minibus to the hotel was full, the representative finally put us in a rickety old taxi, which swayed dangerously over the appalling roads for

an hour and a half before we arrived safely at the St Geran hotel.

We arrived there after 2 a.m instead of at 6 the previous evening, and although we were warmly welcomed, we were told that Sovereign Tours had told them we were arriving on the 12th, not the 8th. They showed us the Sovereign letter to prove it. Our room was not ready, so we were put into a hot little one at the back of the hotel for the night, and finally moved into our proper room at 2 p.m the next day.

8. The St Geran. We enjoyed our three weeks greatly, as usual, but the chef, Mesh, with whom we had become friendly the year before, left for France a few days after we arrived, and did not come back until we had left. The standard of cooking was noticeably lower as a result than last year, although we had one excellent meal on our last night.

Notable was the lack of beef, except stews etc. Twice we ordered a steak each at 9 a.m for that evening, and both times it was an hour after we had started our meal before it arrived. We had ordered dauphinoise potatoes with the steaks, and the first time, they were almost raw. We like the nouvelle cuisine method of undercooking other vegetables, but draw the line at potatoes done that way. The second time we had steak, we asked for it medium (a point). One steak arrived

like that, but the other was more than well done - almost suitable for shoe leather.

As last year, all the staff of the hotel were as charming and helpful as they could be, from the new manager and assistant manager to the lowest garden sweeper.

We were, however, sorry to see that drinks were still grossly overpriced, and the wines poor except for champagnes at £80 or so a bottle. We had mentioned these points in our last year's report, and received a reply from the then manager saying that he was looking into the problem (see Appendix D). Unfortunately, he does not seem to have any success.

There was a noticeable shortage of tropical fruits, which was ascribed to a cyclone that had recently hit Mauritius. When we go to tropical countries, it is depressing to find little but the fruit we have back home.

Also noticeable was an economy drive, which meant that, when we arrived at the hotel, and when we left, we were offered only orange juice or coffee, instead of last year's rum punch in a coconut shell. Also, the regular manager's parties which had taken place once or twice a week the year before, at which free drinks were served, had been abolished, giving a feeling of niggardliness compared with other similar hotels we have stayed at.

We were also sorry to see that there was still a waterscooter plying from the St Geran beach, despite our suggestion to the Minister of Tourism that they were dangerous, and his kind reply (see Appendix E).

Incidentally, while we were in Mauritius this time, a Portuguese tourist was injured by a boat while swimming off another beach, and had to be taken to hospital.

Finally, we noticed that our protest at the sale of turtleshell objects in our our last report had fallen on deaf ears. These, and also seashells and coral off the reefs, were still on open sale, both on the beach and in the lobby of the hotel on some evenings.

We have booked to go to the St Geran again for another three weeks next February.

8. Flights back. We had pleasant, helpful cabin crews all the way back to Jersey, and good food. We took the precaution of not getting off at Bahrein this time. However, a delay of an hour at the airport there lengthened the already long journey. It was caused by the fear that a passenger had got on and then off again, possibly leaving something behind on the plane. In view of the Rushdie affair, it was natural to take extra precautions, but the sight of official after official going through the plane counting heads, when the sensible thing to do in an almost full plane is to

count empty seats and then deduct the total from the capacity of the plane, struck us as childish.

voice To: **APPENDIX A**
BRITISH AIRWAYS TRAVEL CENTRE
75 REGENT STREET
LONDON
W1R 7HG

CLIENT COPY

GROUNDSTAR HOUSE
LONDON ROAD
CRAWLEY
WEST SUSSEX RH10 2TB
V.A.T. REG. No: 233 6989 31
TELEPHONE: 0293 560777

SOVEREIGN WORLDWIDE
Ref: 11886/2
ISSUE DATE 17-NOV-88

CLIENT(S)

MR L HILL
MRS J HILL

ACCOMMODATION

21 Days

MAURITIUS

GRAND BAIE

Hotel

ST GERAN

HB Room with Bath and WC. *Patio* Balcony

1 Twin

LIGHT DETAILS

Dep. 07-FEB-89 LHR/MRU BA-0065 TU 19:15 14:40
Ret. 01-MAR-89 MRU/LHR BA-0064 WE 17:20 06:55

2 Adults	2181.00	4362.00
2 CLUB CLASS SEATS	1769.00	3538.00
Total		7900.00

*Seats 18A+B outward
20A+B inward*

DEPOSIT PAID 170.00

BALANCE DUE 7730.00

AYMENT DUE BY: 07-DEC-88

SPECIAL REQUESTS (NOT GUARANTEED)/COMMENTS:

FOR MONEY QUERIES RING: 0293 547632

FOR INVOICE QUERIES RING: 0293 549773

CLUB CLASS STS RVYTR4 BA EXECUTIVE TVL INS

Please remit deposit with FOOD CODES AND FURTHER DETAILS ON REVER

DETACH ALONG PERFORATION

Appendix B:

British Executive Club Members 601546
Terminal 4 en route Mauritius 169943
5.30 p.m.

What did we do well today?

Not much. Queues of 30 people at inadequate Club World outlets. After 30 mins of not moving me of your Supervisory ladies, when tackled, officiously stated that you were understaffed. I say if you want to retain our custom this attitude is not helpful.

What could we have improved?

Executive Club lounge full. No seating - passengers standing.

R. Hill

[DR. LAHILL]

Jane Hill

(MRS. J.E. HILL)

Please hand this questionnaire to a British Airways staff member or representative before boarding.

Thank you for your co-operation.

APPENDIX C

24 January 1989

Dr L.A. Hill
La Prairie
St Mary
Jersey
Channel Islands

HOLIDAY CENTRE
65 Regent Street
London W1B 2ER
Telephone 01-477 4444
Cable 333333
A.R.E. 10000

On 1st

Name

Dear Dr Hill,

Thank you for your letters dated 21 and 23 January addressed to Mrs Jankovic.

The accommodation details are printed automatically by computer and must show the basic accommodation contracted between Sovereign Holidays and the hotel. I would like to confirm however that a ground floor room with patio has been noted as a special request as shown on the accommodation details.

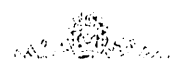
I am also happy to confirm that transfers will be provided in Mauritius at no charge to yourselves. Sovereign do not issue vouchers for transfers and all arrangements will be made by their local representative.

May I wish you a most enjoyable holiday.

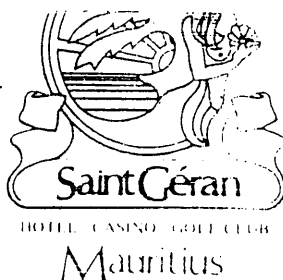
Yours sincerely,



Richard Shead
Manager Holiday Centre.



APPENDIX D



JCK/ct/148/03

2 March 1988

Dr and Mrs L A Hill
La Prairie
St Mary
Jersey
CHANNEL ISLAND

Dear Dr and Mrs Hill

Thank you so much for having taken the time to complete our guest questionnaire. We welcome guest comments and suggestions, as it is your recommendations that assist us in either maintaining or improving our standard of accommodation, service, cuisine and entertainment.

Thank you for your constructive comments regarding our beverage price structure. We are taking note of it.

We are delighted that you enjoyed your stay with us, and we sincerely hope that your recent visit is just one of many many more to Mauritius and the Saint G ran Hotel.

With renewed thanks for taking the time to complete the questionnaire, and with warm personal regards

Yours sincerely



JEAN CLAUDE KOSTER
GENERAL MANAGER



DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE
MAURITIUS

WEE/L/109

21st March 1988

Sir

I am directed to refer to your letter dated 27th February 1987, addressed to Sir Gaetan Duval, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Employment and Tourism and to inform you that this Ministry is taking appropriate measures to restrict the movement of water scooters along our beaches.

I would like to convey our appreciation for your invaluable suggestion.

I am, Sir
Your obedient Servant,


(V. Kowlessur)
Permanent Secretary

Mr. Leslie ACHILL
Mr. Pradine
St. Mary
Jersey
CHANNEL ISLANDS

Chapter ⁴⁰₄₀: 'There is no god but God'

'La illah ila Allah' - 'There is no god but God' - is the call of Moslems. I always envy enormously those who have faith in a God or gods. But I sometimes wonder whether one shouldn't stop after the first 'god' in the above invocation - i.e whether one should not simply say, 'There is no god - full stop'.

If God is all powerful and all knowing and created the world and all that therein is, He must have known all the terrible things that He had made living creatures capable of and that they would in fact get up to - all the appalling cruelties of Man to Man, let alone to animals; and the terrible sufferings that animals would inflict on other animals to satisfy their natural hunger.

I often watch nature programmes on television. My family call them 'munch and crunch' programmes, because one so often sees an animal or bird or insect catching another creature and eating it alive while it writhes in agony.

'If I had had been all-powerful and all-knowing,' I say to myself, 'I would have created a world in which all creatures were vegetarian, and in which there was no violence, no serious illness and no extreme pain.'

'Ah,' say the religious, 'but God moves in a mysterious way that we poor humans cannot understand. There is an

ineffable plan behind all this apparent cruelty and injustice. One must have faith in God's love and goodness.' Again I say that I can only envy those that have such faith.

I can quite believe that it helps people who have faith to pray. It calms their minds and gives them hope; and if their prayers are not answered this time, they always hope they will be next time - after all, they have heard of people who prayed for something and got it (on a purely statistical basis there must be a certain percentage of such people).

But that need have nothing to do with organised religion or a belief in God. One can use prayer to calm one's mind - and even to overcome psychosomatically caused illnesses - without belonging to any organised religious body, and without believing in a God. The Buddhists do not believe in God, but they are masters of meditation.

I admire gurus who are selfless and helpful to others. They can really help people who are emotionally disturbed, or who are suffering from psychosomatically caused illness. But unfortunately there are a lot of charlatans about whose main interest is money. One reads about Indians who have numbers of Rolls Royce cars, and perhaps a helicopter as well, huge bank accounts in Switzerland, etc, etc - all paid for out of donations from followers, many of them very poor.

Some of these self-appointed gurus claim to be able

to perform miracles of healing. I do not believe them. With any disease, there are always a percentage of cases of natural cure. Not all cancers get worse and finally lead to death. A small percentage fade out, leaving the person as he or she was before - not because of anything the person has done, but quite spontaneously. If a guru can get his hands on such a person while he or she is still ill, he can claim to have cured them when the cancer fades away of its own accord. Of course, one never hears of the far more numerous cases where the guru's efforts fail.

There is a little church in the middle of an important street right in the middle of Athens. It is so old that it is partly below ground level, since over the centuries the rubbish thrown out into the street rose and rose.

My Greek mother and aunts used to go into this little church quite often to pray and light a candle, and whenever I went to Athens, I made a pilgrimage there too. Until one year when, while returning in our convertible Rolls after this visit, a car ran into it and damaged it considerably.

I was still sufficiently superstitious to think, 'That's really not fair. If I was to have an accident, it should not have happened during my pilgrimage to the little church.'

Within groups of animals, it is the strong that dominate. This was also the case in the early days of homo

sapiens. But just as there have always been big variations in physical strength, there have also been big variations in intelligence; and in due course one of the cleverer members of a group would get the idea of pretending that he had special knowledge of - or even influence over - the elements that affected his group's life - things like rain, sun, floods, thunder and predators.

That, I think, was the beginning of religion - a clever confidence trick by wily self-appointed medicine men, who gained power in this way over their credulous fellow-tribesmen, who were only too eager to placate the outside forces that ruled their lives.

When more sophisticated religions came along, they took this process a step further: whereas it was obvious when a medicine man's incantations failed to avert a disastrous flood, for example, the really wily priest of an esoteric religion was onto a much safer bet. 'Obey me, give me a tenth of all your possessions, etc, etc, and God will reward you in Heaven. But if you don't do these things, He will send you to Hell to roast for ever.'

What a clever ploy! The priest lived off the fat of the land without actually having to give the believers a thing! And there was no possible way of proving that what he offered was a swindle. We know from the works of people like Chaucer and Boccaccio how the priesthood lived it up in the Middle Ages. Their tales of high living,

gluttony and sexual licence among priests, monks and nuns have amused readers ever since. There is the abbot of a monastery who was so grossly fat that the women he had sex with always had to get on top and balance precariously on his enormous pot-belly while the performance went on.

Now how would a simple person imagine God to be? Obviously, he would equate Him with the figures of authority he knew in his own life - his father, a judge, the head of the tribe, the king etc. That is what anthropomorphism is all about - giving human characteristics - especially those most familiar to one from one's own environment - to non-human entities. Primitive peoples see thunder and lightning as having human feelings and passions; Aesop's Fables do this to animals; the Greek gods and goddesses have all the weaknesses of human beings.

It is therefore not surprising to find that the God of the Bible is much like a king of those days: He is quite ready to punish people in ways that some of us today consider atrociously cruel - because in those days, severe floggings, often leading to death, and execution by lingering and extremely painful methods, were considered normal and perfectly acceptable.

When one reads the Sermon on the Mount, one is struck by its wonderful simplicity and purity and honesty. But then came St Paul, the efficient organiser, who set up a wonderful business machine for exploiting the whole thing

in terms of power and riches - the biggest and most successful confidence trick the world had known until the Communists came along at the turn of the 19th Century, promising bread, equality and the withering away of the organs of State, and instead bringing famine, gigantic differences in standard of living between the rulers and the ruled, enormous armed forces, Gulags and a vicious network of secret police.

The Communists are, of course, violently against religion. The reason is clear: in spite of Karl Marx's claims that Communism is based on inescapable scientific economic laws, the ideology of Communism is just as much based on a series of dogmas as religion is, and the Communists see that the dogmas of religion are in conflict with their own, whatever some left-wing churchmen may claim.

One of the disastrous results of the growth of religion is, in fact, sectarianism. Each group claims to have the exclusive right over truth, and attacks adherents of other groups as vehemently as it attacks those who belong to no group at all. Attempts are being made by some religious leaders to build bridges to each other, but we still have fanatics who claim to be the chosen people, dressing in ways which cry out, 'Look at me! I'm different from you! And I'm better than you! I have a place reserved for me in Heaven, from which I'll be able to look down and see you roasting in Hell! So sucks boo to you!'

I shall be extremely happy if and when I discover that

there is in fact a God; but I do hope He will turn out to be very different from the God of the Bible, with his toleration of what to us is extreme cruelty. It would be nice to find that a God exists Who is morally on a level with the good Buddhist, or the good Humanist of today.

Chapter 40: An anti-intellectual intellectual

I suppose I can fairly claim to be an intellectual: I have five British University degrees, including a BA with First Class Honours, an MA with Mark of Distinction, and a Doctorate of Philosophy.

But I am an anti-intellectual intellectual. Why? Because I have seen what disasters some intellectuals have been responsible for throughout history by persuading men of action and the ignorant masses to adopt their airy-fairy ideas.

John Milton, the intellectual poet, was one of those responsible for the revolution of 1649, in which King Charles I of England was executed, and an equally bad - if not worse - form of government put in his place. Luckily that lasted only 11 years. But its abject failure did not teach other intellectuals a lesson.

Throughout the 18th Century in France, a group called the philosophes, one of the leaders of whom was Diderot, preached Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. In due course (1789) this led to the French Revolution, when King Louis XVI and his wife were executed, and a vicious Reign of Terror instituted, which put the small injustices perpetrated by the previous Kings in the shade, and led ultimately to the dictatorship of Napoleon.

Incidentally, Romantic British poets like Shelley

had welcomed the French revolution at first, but had the grace to repudiate it when they saw its bloody results.

That revolution, like the one in England, proved to be a complete failure; but lo and behold, towards the end of the 19th Century, another prophet of revolution, the German Jewish intellectual Karl Marx, reared his lovely head, soon to be supported by another, Friedrich Engels. Marx, who has since been completely discredited, was a typical armchair theorist, with no knowledge at all of real life. He claimed that the dogmas he enunciated were in fact cast-iron historical facts, forecasting the 'inevitable' collapse of capitalism and its replacement by a glorious millenium of benevolent rule by the proletariat. A century later, capitalism is still flourishing, and is alone responsible for the rise in standard of living despite enormous increases in population; and benevolent rule, and power for the proletariat, are as far away as ever in the countries ruled by Communist dictators.

But Marx found eager disciples among Russian revolutionaries, eager for some kind of pseudo-respectability for their plans to seize power from the decaying Tsarist system. People like Lenin and Trotsky found Marx a godsend. Without his theories they might well have failed to seize power in Russia. They did so in the name of the proletariat, but it very quickly became evident that the ordinary peasant and manual worker had absolutely no say in anything

that mattered. An oligarchy of tough, ruthless men grew up, which chose the only candidates permitted for all elections, set up an enormous network of secret police with high pay and valuable perks to spy on the population, starved 15 million recalcitrant peasants to death, and in fact instituted a reign of terror unparalleled in the history of the world for its efficiency. By comparison Genghis Khan was a random dilettante.

In spite of all this, some starry-eyed British intellectuals went to Russia and came home full of praise for Lenin and his henchman Stalin. Prominent among these was the playwright Bernard Shaw, who claimed to rival Shakespeare as a dramatist. Later there was Dr Hewlett Johnson, the Dean of Canterbury, the notorious 'Red Dean', who also praised the Soviet system to the skies.

Is it surprising that I am an anti-intellectual intellectual?

Chapter 41: Modern 'art'

In the Museum of Modern Art in Amsterdam, there is a painting three quarters of which is covered with blue paint, and the other quarter with red paint. I am told that it is worth millions of pounds because it is by some 'in' artist whom I have never heard of.

The six-year-old daughter of our Madeiran housekeeper is a keen artist, and could turn out several dozen paintings just as good as the one in the Amsterdam museum, but when I asked an art shop in London whether I could sell them some, they laughed at me. You see, Michelle Teixeira is not a name accepted by the art Mafia.

Because that is what it is: it does not matter what or how one paints 'modern' art; the important thing is whether one is accepted by the self-appointed 'experts' or not.

Of course, the rich jump onto this bandwagon eagerly, especially if they have hot money to get rid of. They go to an 'expert', who advises them - for a nice fat fee - what to buy for capital appreciation and at the same time to keep up with the other drug smuggling Joneses, and lo and behold, in a few days' time, the walls of Mr and Mrs X's house in the Costa del Sol or Majorca are hung with weird pictures that they personally hate, but which they are confident will be worth another million or so in a few years' time - and equally importantly - will impress Mr and Mrs Y when they come visiting.

It reminds me of the story of the Emperor's Clothes: provided everybody agrees that the emperor is wearing the most fabulous get-up, the fact that he is, in fact, naked is utterly ignored.

Only a few days ago I saw another 'masterpiece' in the preview catalogue of a prestigious sale. It consisted of about six vertical lines, drawn in black ink with a pen. The lines were approximately parallel, and of slightly different lengths. It was expected to fetch over a million pounds. Michelle could have drawn it in two seconds flat.

Music is another sore point with me. I love it very much, but after 1800 my tastes tail off very sharply. The rot set in with the Romantic movement as far as I am concerned. With rare exceptions, I like strictly structured, mathematical music. I have read recently that children brought up on such music develop better logical brain power than those brought up on other kinds. I can well believe it.

I also greatly prefer monophonic music, such as the Gregorian chant, to polyphonic. The purity and simplicity of it goes straight to my heart. Among Twentieth Century works of this kind, I particularly love Carl Orff's work - 'Carmina Burana' etc, which are based on medieval songs.

As for modern discordant music, I have the same opinion of it as of modern art: it is pure cheek to present such stuff, which anyone with no knowledge of music at

all can produce by banging on a piano, as 'art'. Here, again, there is a Mafia of 'experts' who decide who is an 'in' composer, and who is just a Michelle Teixeira. I despise these impostors - both the arrogant and talentless composers, and the self-appointed 'experts' who pontificate about them.

Chapter 43: Getting my way

Having been brought up in Greece and Turkey, I learnt at an early age that the best way to get most things is not by force, but by wily roundabout means. I very seldom depart from this principle.

I have long practised a way of getting through crowds that is swift and causes the minimum of disturbance and bad feeling. I turn sideways, clasp my hands across my midriff, and move through the crowd like a crab, with one of my protruding elbows leading, and gently separating people who are in the way. It works very well. I once greatly amused an old American lady in Harrods by showing her how to do this. She was standing hesitantly at the entrance to one of the crowded food halls when I said to her, 'Follow me.' We sailed through the serried ranks of all nationalities with the American lady sticking close to me until we reached the counter she wanted.

Occasionally I take pleasure in putting someone obstreperous down in a more direct way. Both my wife and I are non-smokers and object to people polluting the air we breathe. Once, as we sat in the frontmost part of a British Airways plane on our way to Greece, we noticed that Greek passengers were strolling up to the space just behind the pilots' cabin, and standing there smoking and chatting to one of the male cabin crew.

I pressed the button on my armrest, and in due course

this steward sauntered over. He turned out to be the senior steward on the plane.

'Will you please ask that gentleman to stop smoking while he is standing in the aircraft,' I said.

The attendant gave me an insolent look and answered, 'I have given him permission to smoke there.'

'As you know,' I answered, 'that is against safety regulations on all planes.'

The man continued to argue, so I said, 'I wish to speak to the captain.'

That calmed him down a little. He went into the cockpit, and came back after a minute. Meanwhile, the Greek was still smoking in front of us.

'The captain is busy and can't come just now,' the attendant said.

'Then,' I answered, 'please bring me a Comments form, and give me the name of the captain and your own name.'

That quietened him right down, and he began to make excuses. 'You see, sir,' he said confidentially, 'both the captain and I have recently been on a course, at which the importance of doing everything one can to make the passengers happy was stressed.'

He could see from my slight sneer that I was not taken in. I did not bother to point out that being nice to passengers stopped short of breaking safety regulations. Also that allowing one passenger to smoke in a place where he was inconveniencing other passengers was not the way to be nice to the latter. After all, he could go back to his seat and smoke to his heart's content there.

I contented myself with pointing out that I was a member of the British Airways Executive Club, and would be reporting the incident to them as well as to British Airways itself - which is exactly what I did when I got home. In their reply, British Airways assured me that the steward concerned had been severely reprimanded and given a warning that his future behaviour would be monitored. What I had objected to was the man's arrogance, and his obvious belief that he could browbeat me.

Then later, on a Swissair plane that we took from Athens to Geneva, Greeks insisted, as usual, on smoking in the non-smoking area (Greeks are anarchists by nature, and allergic to obeying orders).

Finally my wife could not take it any longer, and made some rude comment about Greek indiscipline in a loud voice.

At once a Greek gentleman sitting with his wife in the row in front of us protested, saying that it was

insulting for a citizen of one country to make such sweeping generalisations about people of another country.

I at once told him in Greek, 'Sir, my mother was Greek, so I reserve the right for myself and my wife to say what we like about the Greeks.' That shut him up.

Chapter 44: What is a teacher?

I was suddenly pitchforked into teaching at the age of 21 when war broke out in 1939 and I was made Director of the British Council Institute of English Studies in the small town of Kavalla in the north-east of Greece to give me something to do until my specialist knowledge of Greece and the Greek language was needed.

I managed to teach reasonably successfully right from the start, without having had any training whatsoever, but it was not till many years later, after I had done a lot of teacher-training - and even training of teacher-trainers - that I discovered why I had been successful.

I learnt from direct experience that successful teachers are born, not made by training. Either one has it, or one does not. If one does have it, training can help one by showing one tricks of the trade that others have used successfully, and therefore speeding up one's own progress towards learning to teach with the minimum waste of energy. But if one has not got it in the first place, one can go on teaching for years and still be a bad teacher, who does not hold students for long.

In the British Council classes I taught, and those I supervised, in Greece, Iran and Indonesia, attendance was not compulsory, so students voted with their feet. If they discovered a good teacher, they tried hard to remain in her or his class, and recommended her or him to their

friends. Bad teachers quickly found the numbers in their classes fading away, and the registrars had difficulty in filling them up again.

I have seen people who knew only a little more than their students make a good job of teaching them, and others who were highly qualified in their subject failing to make any impression on them. And it has nothing to do with education: one of the best teachers I have ever come across was a company sergeant major at the Officer Cadet Training Unit in Egypt who taught me gunnery. Although his level of education was low (for instance, he constantly used 'literally' when he meant 'metaphorically', which could have had catastrophic results if one had done what he said), he was a brilliant teacher.

So what is it that one has to have to be a good teacher? Briefly, empathy and inventiveness.

Empathy means that one has to be able to see things from the student's point of view (the worm's eye view, I used to call it in my training sessions). It is no good talking learnedly way above the heads of one's students. Unless there is contact between minds, one is wasting one's time. It is not the job of the student to make contact with the teacher's mind, but vice versa. One must start from where the student is, not from where the teacher is, and one must be constantly aware of the extent to which one is succeeding in getting one's message over to the

student. If one loses contact, it is a complete waste of time to continue along the same line.

So what does one do? This is where ingenuity comes in. If one finds that the line one is taking is not producing results, one has to cast around for another one, starting once more from the student's background, not one's own. One must ask oneself: 'What does the student already know that will help her or him to grasp one's message?' If one does not find it at first, one must try, try, try again.

It also helps very much if a teacher is a good actress or actor. Actually, there is a big and important difference between the skills required of an actress/actor and those required of a teacher. The former has to memorise the lines written by the dramatist and repeat them accurately, whereas the teacher has to improvise constantly. But both will be more successful if they can impress and hold their audience by their personality and dramatic gifts.

A teacher can, however, go too far in this - so far that he or she ceases to teach successfully. I have seen teachers who are so carried away by the success they are having in amusing their students that they fail to teach them. There is, in fact, a great temptation, if one is a gregarious, extrovert person with a gift for acting, to try to be popular with one's students at the expense of some of the hard grind of actually teaching them. The good teacher must steer a middle course here.

Chapter 4~~5~~: Why I do not contribute to Oxfam etc

Children are dying of famine in Ethiopia and the Sudan. The Burmese and Haitian people are struggling to liberate themselves from the tyranny of the same cockeyed misinterpretation of Communism that the poor South Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laotians hoped the Americans would save them from in the Vietnam war. The Kurds, the Armenians and the Palestinians are fighting to have countries of their own, as the lucky Israelis now have. And all we do is contribute money to Oxfam, and Save the Children, and other charities. When we have put our money in the box, or given our credit card number, we feel really good, don't we?

Well, I don't, because I don't give a penny to such charities on principle. Why? Firstly, because, having lived and worked for many years in poor, so-called 'developing' countries, I know that very little of the money contributed gets to those who really need it. Often the government of the country to which it is sent insists on taking full control of it as soon as it arrives.

When it reaches the port or airport in the target country, the first people to take their cut are the dockers or airport workers. Next come the railway officials and workers. After that are the officials who are supposed to distribute the food to those who are in desperate need of it.

They, of course, are clever enough to make sure that a few of the goodies do in fact reach their destination, so that the media can get some shots of gaunt and grateful recipients carrying off scoops of flour or something.

But my main reason for not contributing to relief collections is that I lay the blame for all these cases of famine, persecution etc on the electorates of Britain, the United States and other rich countries of the Free World.

How come? Well, if the governments of these Free World countries had a free hand, they could make sure that all destructive dictatorships in the world were replaced by democratically elected governments that would work for the good of their people, and would be thrown out on their ears if they did not. Yes, this would be interference in the internal affairs of sovereign countries, but so what if it was in such a good cause?

Why can't the governments of the Free World do this now - say through the United Nations, as they did over Korea? Only because they are frustrated by the Soviet Union, which has the military might to stop them.

It is in the interests of the oligarchy that rules the peoples of the Soviet Union to prevent crooked or hopelessly idealistic Marxist dictatorships from being overthrown. This oligarchy thrives on trouble and misery.

The governments of the Free World could put an end to Soviet trouble-making by crushing the Russian armed forces militarily. They could do this with consummate ease if, instead of having to provide the electors of the West with washing machines and dishwashers and colour TVs and video machines and CD players and and, they could devote the money at present spent on such vulgar affluence and effluence to military preparations. And if, instead of encouraging the employment of yuppies who simply shuffle paper and computer programmes while contributing absolutely nothing to the economy, and large numbers of workers who are needed in factories etc because of union go-slow tactics, demarcation rules etc, they put vastly more people into the armed forces.

Of course, at present no Free World government would last a week if it tried to do what I suggest, so it is not the fault of these governments that millions of children suffer from famine, and whole races from persecution. As I said at the beginning of this chapter, the fault lies fairly and squarely with the greedy, self-indulgent electors.

Chapter 46: Making up my mind by opposites

When I arrived at Cambridge as a student in 1936, I already had a healthy disrespect for philosophy and psychology, but I had never studied economics, so I was curious to find out about it in case it proved to be a real science and not just another airy-fairy one. I therefore joined a University society (I think it was called the Marshall Society) which met on a number of evenings each term for lectures and discussions on this subject.

I soon discovered that it was just as woolly and tendentious as philosophy and psychology. If one was a left-winger, one searched for evidence that Socialism and Communism worked, and if one was a right-winger, one did the same for capitalism. But none of the evidence offered seemed to me to bear any relation to the facts of real life. I therefore stopped going to the evening meetings before the end of my first term at Cambridge.

Many years later, sociology reared its lovely head to join philosophy, psychology and economics as what seemed to me pseudo-sciences. And at about the same time I found an infallible guide to help me form my opinions on economics. I discovered that in or about 1956, at the time of the Hungarian attempt to throw off the Russian yoke, two Hungarian economists had escaped to the West, and obtained professorships in economics at Oxford and Cambridge Universities, where, to my great surprise, they began to preach left-wingery.

I would have thought they would have seen the failure of Socialism from close up in Budapest before they escaped.

Anyway, they were a heaven-sent help for the Labour government under Harold Wilson, as they could be relied on to trot out Socialist propaganda and advice with all the authority of professors at the most prestigious universities in Britain, and it was not long before they were both made lords.

Of course, they frequently wrote long letters to "The Times" expounding their views, and I quickly discovered that, if I was in doubt about any particular economic policy, I could immediately make up my mind by reading their letters. Whenever they said something, I at once recognised it as the opposite of what my opinion should be, which saved me a lot of hard ratiocination.

Chapter 47: Tu quoque!

The so-called developing countries of the world, and particularly Brazil, are coming in for a lot of criticism because of the way they are cutting down vast areas of rain forest every year to replace them with arable land grasslands for their cattle, or gold and diamond mining. We in the advanced, affluent countries tend to take up a holier-than-thou attitude, and to complain that the loss of all these forests is threatening us with disaster through the spread of the Greenhouse Effect, the holes in the Ozone Layer and so on.

But really we have a cheek to do this! Did we not cut down our own forests centuries ago for the same kinds of economic purposes? The fact that the world is so short of ozone is just as much our fault as that of the poor countries who are now merely following our example.

When the whites first settled Australia, they began to cut the trees down. Dying trees emit carbon dioxide and methane, both of which harm our atmosphere. After 200 years, only half Australia's forest cover, and three quarters of the actual rain forests, have been cut down, to be replaced by sheep, camels (there are more camels in Central Australia than in Arabia!), rabbits and other creatures that are environmentally disastrous because they not only eat away the vegetation and lead to erosion of the soil, but also emit methane gases that are lethal

to the Ozone Layer.

The other major pollutant of the atmosphere that alone prevents our earth turning into an uninhabitable planet like those around us in the sky is the carbon dioxide given off when we burn coal, etc, and here again we in the advanced countries are vastly ahead of the developing ones in the damage we do with our factories, electricity generating plants, motor vehicles and so on. The poor countries are now trying to provide their ever-increasing populations with some of the things we consider essentials but for them are luxuries - things like refrigerators. But refrigerators too are an environmental disaster, because they use CFC gases in a big way, another serious pollutant.

Lastly, there is this question of population growth. In the past, expectation of life in poor countries has been very low, infant mortality very high, death by famine and disease common. But now these countries are beginning to want medical facilities similar to those we have enjoyed in the rich countries for the past century or so. With more children surviving to adulthood, and people living longer, there are constantly more mouths to feed, which means greater demands for land to grow the food on for them, which in its turn means the cutting down of more rain forests.

When we in the advanced countries criticise the developing countries for the damage they are doing, they

can easily turn to us and say, 'Tu quoque - only a few centuries earlier!'

But damage to the atmosphere is not the only thing our environmentalists castigate the developing countries for. They also accuse them of rapidly destroying the wild fauna, more and more different kinds of which are becoming extinct each year because their habitats are being taken over, and because they are being killed for food, their skins, their tusks etc.

But did not we white people do exactly the same thing in our own countries, or the countries we colonised, many centuries ago? Where now is the Irish elk, which once roamed over not only Ireland but the rest of Western Europe? And what about the European bison and wolf and bear? A few of those still exist in remote isolated pockets or, in the case of the bison, artificial enclosures, but the large numbers of all these creatures that formerly roamed free were long ago killed off by European man.

When the whites came to North America, there were vast herds of bison roaming the prairies and providing food, skins and so on for the local Indians. But the whites soon stopped that! Within a few centuries, they had almost entirely been wiped out.

So again Tu quoque is in order, isn't it?

Chapter 48: Puzzling nuns and monks

My first memory of nuns is seeing a group of them bathing, fully clothed in habits and wimples, in the sea in Turkey. I was about 8 years old at the time, and I immediately realised that there was something strange and remote from real life about nuns when I saw their black-clad heads bobbing about in the water off Fanaraki.

It was a long time before I became conscious of nuns once more. Shortly after the outbreak of war in 1939, when I was 21, and had just finished at Cambridge University, I was put into the British Council by our Embassy in Athens, to keep me available until I was needed, and so in September of that year I found myself Director of the Institute of English Studies in the small town of Kavalla in North-Eastern Greece.

There one of my duties was to teach classes of boys in a Catholic school run by monks, and classes of girls in the equivalent school run by nuns, three times a week each.

The girls in the top class at the convent school whom I taught were nearly as old as I was, but that was nothing compared with some of my students in Institute classes, who were easily old enough to be my father. One thing that puzzled me about the convent was that there was always a nun there at the back of my class,

so one day, after we had finished, I said to her, 'Do you attend my classes to protect the girls from me?'

'Oh, no,' she protested, 'I am there to protect you from the girls!'

In my arrogance as a young man, it had never occurred to me that I might be the one at risk and not my pupils.

Many years later came India. By then I was a teacher-trainer, and some of my students were nuns teaching English in Calcutta. What surprised me there was their perfect cheerfulness and carefreeness. I knew that they had to minister to the poor under appalling conditions in the Bengali slums, and that they must certainly have seen and heard everything vicious and sordid that it is possible for a person to see and hear, but they were completely confident, in a charmingly childlike way, that they were in God's hands, and that therefore all was supremely well.

Some of the nuns were very pretty indeed, and their vivacious and open manners therefore sometimes stirred feelings in me which were quite unsuitable when directed towards a bride of Christ. I have no idea what would have happened if I had been tempted to overstep the mark with one of those ravishing creatures, whose openness often gave the impression of being a come-hither signal.

Nuns' complete trust in God was also evident in the way they drove cars. Everybody knew that, when faced by

a carful of nuns, with one of them at the wheel, it was a question of taking cover, because they drove with the gay abandon of people who are convinced that God's will will be done in everything, so that they do not themselves have to take precautions against such earthly things as traffic accidents. As other people gave them a wide berth, they did in fact have very few accidents, which presumably only went to confirm them in their faith.

In those days, nuns in India were not allowed to eat with us, so at mealtimes my colleague, Education Officer, Calcutta, (I was Chief Education Officer, India) and I would sit in solitary state at the long refectory table, having our food served by two of the nuns.

I soon discovered that convent education was highly prized in India. Hindus and Moslems would send their daughters to the exclusive convent schools in the hills, and this greatly increased their value in the marriage market, because it was well known that convent-educated girls were well-disciplined and reliable in every way. This meant that a girl's father had to pay a lower dowry for her, and she could expect a more affluent and important husband. A convent training was about equivalent to a wheaten complexion in the marriage stakes - another of the things that figured high on the list of desirables in the advertisements for brides and bridegrooms in the Sunday editions of the newspapers.

Incidentally, most men wanted to marry a girl with a

paler skin than their own, so that they could hopefully produce paleskinned children too. I was amazed to find a very pronounced colour bar operating in India. It was apparently a relic of the old days, when lighter-skinned Aryans invaded India, and drove the dark-skinned Dravidian aborigines down into the South of the country, just as the Anglo-Saxons in the British Isles drove the earlier Celtic inhabitants into Scotland, Wales, Ireland and Cornwall.

In India I also came into contact with monks more closely than I had done in Kavalla. Again, I used to run teacher-training courses for some of these people, and I remember in particular one Jesuit school, because the monks there were the jolliest group of men I ever came across in India. To my surprise, they smoked, drank alcoholic drinks and joked with the best of them. Never once did religion obtrude here.

Later, when I toured most of Black Africa, lecturing mostly to teachers, I again visited a number of schools run by nuns and monks, and my main memory from that period is again a puzzling one: I was given a number of essays written by black convent school girls, and was surprised to read in a number of them complaints about the vicious beatings with sticks they had received from the Mother Superior.

Chapter 4~~6~~: The Lord save us from the do-gooders!

If the average sane inhabitant of Ulster, or Beirut, or Jaffna in the north of Sri Lanka, sees a group of men with kalashnikov rifles in their hands and balaclava helmets hiding most of their faces, her or his first thought is that they are probably up to no good - in fact, that they are out to murder people. She or he is therefore delighted if the police, unable to arrest them peacefully because of those rifles, manage to kill them.

Not so, of course, the families of the kalashnikov bearers, and those who support and excuse violence. They at once start up a hue and cry: 'Murder! Murder! Policy of shoot to kill! Breach of democratic rights! Etc, etc!'

One expects those people to protest, of course. But wait a moment! Why are these ordinary citizens, who claim to deplore violence, joining in the hue and cry? Do they think that the kalshnikov-carrying posse might, in fact, have been a party of innocent huntsmen after nothing more unusual than pigeons?

What about their balaclavas then, you may ask? Well, answer the do-gooders, they might have been wearing them as camouflage, mightn't they? Or against the cold (in Sri Lanka, in a temperature of 35 degrees?!).

Then there are the dog-lovers. Everyone, say the do-gooders has a right to keep dogs, however dangerous,

and to take them out on the public roads, pyblic beaches,
public heaths etc.

Some dogs come of races that have for generations
been trained to kill in protection of human beings, animals
such as flocks of sheep, and property. In recent years
there have been numerous reports in the newspapers of dogs
whose owners have sworn that they were quite harmless
suddenly turning on people and hurting them severely -
or in some cases killing them.

I quote from the 'Daily Mail' of 22 October 1988:

'Baby Justin Guest will be mutilated for life after
being "ripped apart" by an Alsatian....The eight-month-old
boy was found lying in a pool of blood' after being left
in a room with the family's ten-week-old guard dog.

Then ('Daily Mail', October 18 1988) there was the
widow who 'may never walk again after being savaged by a
neighbour's bull terrier.'

From the 'Daily Mail' of October 10 1988 we have the
story of 'a screaming five-year-old girl' who 'was savaged
by her pet Dobermann' which 'bit Michelle Crilly's scalp
and forehead, leaving wounds which needed 38 stitches.'

And what do the do-gooders say about such cases?
'Everyone has a right to keep dogs, however, dangerous,
and to take them, out on the public roads, public heaths,
public beaches etc.'

Then there is the question of whether the media should provide a free forum for supporters of violence. When the British government sought to prevent the press and television from acting as mouthpieces for those who defend the right of the IRA to kill people indiscriminately, there was a great outcry from the do-gooders: 'Limitation of free speech! Fascism!' (but not, significantly, 'Communism!', although enormously more people have been gagged by left-wing than by right-wing regimes during this century).

Incidentally, I have not yet heard the do-gooders claim the same right to free speech for drug-smugglers, or supporters of child abuse. How would they respond if such people asked for the same freedom to propagate their views and tout for new members as supporters of the IRA etc enjoy? And why does one not hear a word from the do-gooders when Ministers of the Crown are prevented from addressing meetings of university students by the mindless braying of their opponents?

Then there are the pressure groups for children's rights. An organisation calling itself Approach recently issued a survey claiming that they had carried out research over a period of 30 years, based on interviews with 700 families, and that they had found that almost three quarters of children caught breaking the law before they were 20 had been smacked or beaten at least once a week by their parents at the age of seven, whereas much fewer of those

who had not been treated in these ways turned into delinquents before 20.

Approach is a group that was set up to campaign against physical punishment. Even if one accepts that their published results really represent research that was carried out completely honestly and without bias, without special selection of the families interviewed, and even if one is sure that they would have published the survey if the statistics had turned out to be the other way round, what proof is there that the information given to the researchers by the members of these families was true? And is it not possible that the children who were smacked were treated in this way because already at the age of seven they were behaving delinquently?

I am equally suspicious of the best selling reports on human sexual behaviour that are published in book form from time to time, and which make fortunes for some authors. Again let us assume that everything that appears in these books is what the people interviewed have actually said, and that it has not been invented, or gingered up, by the author to improve sales. But what proof is there that the interviewees have told the truth? Those who are most likely to volunteer for such interviews are surely exhibitionists, who are only too likely to invent glamorous or shocking or bizarre experiences they would have liked to have had rather than tell about their dull daily lives.

Here again, psychologists and psychiatrists try to draw lessons from these supposed research works, mostly to try to persuade governments etc to put more money into do-goodery - in this case really into the pockets of the psychologists and psychiatrists themselves, so that they can supposedly help the public to become more sexually adjusted.

Appendix: Countries Leslie Hill has been to (* and worked in; o in transit only)

Aldabra Island

* American Samoa

o Antigua

* Australia

Austria

o Bahrein

Barbados

Belgium

Brazil
* Ceylon (later Sri Lanka)

* Channel Islands

Comoro Islands

* Cook Islands

Cyprus

Czechoslovakia

* Egypt

o Ellice Islands (later Tuvalu)

* Ethiopia

* Fiji

* France

* Germany

* Gilbert Islands (later Kiribati)

* Greece

Grenada

* Hong Kong

* Hungary

* India

- * Indonesia
- * Iran
- o Iraq
- * Israel
- * Italy
- * Japan
- * Kenya
- * Libya
- * Malawi
- Malaysia
- Mariana Islands
- Marshall Islands
- Mauritius
- o Monaco
- Netherlands
- * New Hebrides (later Vanuatu)
- New Zealand
- * Nigeria
- * Pakistan
- Palestine (later Israel)
- * Papua New Guinea
- Philippines
- * Portugal
- * Rhodesia (later Zimbabwe)
- o St Vincent
- Seychelles
- * Singapore
- * Solomon Islands