

Living on a Bridge

The Life of Ruth Troeller

Written by Stephen Murray Kiernan



Part 1 – Introduction

It is a very complicated matter to tell your own story. There are many ways to tell it and there are also many ways we can judge what happened, or looking back to see what is really the past; not only *what* has happened but mainly what we think has happened long after, now in the present. There even exists the hidden side, those occurrences that we don't tell people and also those we don't even know or have forgotten. And so let me try, and probably try and try again, to see how I can put together a life of over ninety years. I have my diaries now in more than fifty volumes in which I have written very many things. But at the same time, they deal with things which interested me at a particular moment and therefore may not be of the greatest importance or interest to me and others after the passing of so many years. Keeping a diary is by definition a very personal activity and the important cannot be easily separated from the trivial except through the passage of the years; the point is that each entry was significant to me at the time of writing, the things I did, felt, created in my life. They deal with things that took place *in* me and *to* me. I have refrained from including all the personal reasons for changing countries, professions and interests – otherwise this attempt at a biography would have become unreadable and interminable. Each day I am confronted by the temptation of the white virgin paper, its apparent innocence, its alluring neutrality, upon which I write my thoughts and what has happened in my life. And also there is the temptation of tomorrow, an immense bag with thousands of destinies, an eternity not yet known but a perpetual present possessed of its infinite longing for the future.

Let me say even more. A few years ago, there were some celebrations in which a number of my colleagues and superiors at the Alliant International University (the US university in Mexico where I still work) gave me an honour for a few things I have done in my life. I listened to what they said

about me and it was interesting to see that what they really expressed was not about me but more precisely it dealt with the kind of things I have been doing in my life. And they are quite a lot, some of which had a degree of importance for the world or for the university itself, and at the same time most of what was written had very much less to do with my family or myself. And when I looked at some of the beautiful words said about me, I was thinking, "Well, it's wonderful to have that. Or is it wonderful?" In reality it was neither. They attempted to address me as a person but generally they were all talking about the things I have done, some of which seems to have been worthy of praise. But even so, I keep wondering whether they were really important in my long life, or in the life of a country and the life of the world – perhaps because some of them did manage to spread to the world's important places.

When you are looking at your past and present life, it's a kind of revolving you. And you are asking what was important and what was not important; what was your life? It is in a way a kind of confession, not a revelation of the bad things you have done but an explanation of what was done and why. And there are moments when I ask myself, should I tell the stories and should I make it into a book? I still think that as autobiography it has too many things that are not directly linked to me; they are other people's stories. How detailed and comprehensive should it be? There is a lot I could write about; for example, I visited thirty-eight countries, many on numerous occasions, and maybe eight or ten of them are rather important. But I do think that there is a need for an autobiography. However, until now I am only really telling a story, and not me in this story or my thoughts about the story, or what that has to do with the world at large or my own development. On the other hand, I tell myself, "Maybe the book will not be necessary because after all there are fifty volumes of my diaries." But they are going to be in the Stanford University repository, imprisoned for a thousand years where probably only some researchers will go and use them. I talked to my

son about it; he thought the book might be a useful addition to my half-century of annual memories. There are also the photocopies of the diaries; I don't even know if it is legitimate since the originals are entrusted to Stanford, but that I don't care. They can go for safe-keeping into the bank, where they were before, and then I can add in my will that the copies will go to my two grandchildren.

Now when I look at all that and I remember the "Ruth" who did this, I just ask myself, "How did *she* feel? How was that really done?" And most of these experiences were things which I felt were entirely important, at least in my remembrance. And then the world made a little bit of fuss about them. So I will try – and I don't really know if I'll succeed but I will try – in this autobiography rather to talk a little bit about the person I am. And perhaps even the Ruth that I aspired to be but did not become, and the many things she did become that she had never dreamed or wanted to be. So obviously there are many contradictions. And then I will probably end up asking myself, if I get to the end of this autobiography, where do I go from here and starting from now. Because I'm still fully active, I'm giving many classes, I have our Institute of Global Studies, and we have our weekly "think-tank" evening of conversation. What do we talk about? Often we are talking about economics: we are talking about the world crises at the moment and about what I consider is probably the case, the failure of globalisation.

But we mainly talk about the Philosophy of Religion. This phrase can appear quite elaborate and daunting but, very simply put, we try to find an answer to the question "What is reality?" I have many classes each time with one person and one aspect of the subject, in other words with just two persons present. And then we have our think-tank, in which we discuss the many facets of consciousness and the road for each of us to take. We talk,

for example, about Hinduism, a system of thought that tells us each person has his own way to God or to the Ultimate.

And so, as a prelude to continuing these reminiscences, a recollection comes to mind. When I talked to her on the phone about undertaking this task, a friend of mine made the remark: "You know, if ever there's a book made of some of the things you have been saying, it should be called *Towards Ruth*." Of course Ruth is my name and I don't know if it's a coincidence but in English there is a word "ruthless": "a ruthless person" or somebody who couldn't care about people, who may be in business or any walk of life, and he is "ruth-less" or in other words "without Ruth". That brings me to remember the biblical story of Ruth, who was not a Jew and came from the land of Moab. She and her husband were desperately poor and when he passed away, she was left with her mother-in-law. And she went behind the people who worked in the harvest in order to get together the little bit that was left of the glean ... tellingly to give to her mother-in-law, not to keep for herself. So that Ruth was supposed to be somebody at least who was not "ruthless"; hopefully I have followed her good example.

Part 2 – Childhood and Youth

To begin with my childhood. This first part of the chapters of my life can cover the years up to when I turned fifteen, because at that age we left the German town of Wiesbaden. I was in the *liceo* in that beautiful town. We left a happy, comfortable, bourgeois life and emigrated to Luxembourg. My parents, two brothers and I left for political reasons; straightforward, important, political reasons. Up to that time we were members of what I suppose could be called the very comfortable, upper middle-class, residing in a house with beautiful rooms, with a cook called Rosa in the kitchen who worked for us throughout all my childhood, along with a series of governesses.

I was the eldest of three children and the only girl. I was a good student but I had some troubles as a result of the different regimes at school and home. My mother was a person who very carefully looked after beautiful things, and insisted that we sit properly at table and be clothed in the correct way. And indeed I did have beautiful clothes. But in school I was a “tom-boy” and often fought with the boys. Though I was a good student I was unruly. Fortunately, my mother never found out about that, even though my damaged clothes should have revealed it clearly to her. Thankfully there was a woman in the school who looked after the girls and this lady struggled to repair my beautiful clothes before I went home.

My mother could not tolerate me doing nothing; in fact she never recognised that very often what I was doing was just sitting and thinking. It is a practice I continue right up to the present. At nights upstairs in my room I sit in my armchair and very often for about twenty minutes or half an hour I play with my plate of lentils and do nothing. Back then and nowadays I'd just sit – I call it “my sitting”. Suddenly I would put away my food and start writing. My mother was a nice lady and though I admit she was not really

my kind of person, I owe a large part of my ethical perspective to her. What she did was, she gave me structure and a confidence not to fear the possibility of being ashamed. I was educated by nannies, *frauleins*, whom we did not like, my brothers and I. But I loved my father. I was educated by him and this early paternal influence had a clear psychological effect on me. My relationship with him went far beyond the ordinary. And while he was an extraordinary man, he was not an extraordinary man for the world. He was more often than not completely in his thoughts. From the perspective of the outside world he was not a success, but as a human being he was. I recorded in my diary in December 1972 the following opinion of him:

My father just wanted to help and never get the glory from it ...
He took life as it came and at the same time he was wise.

My mother on the other hand was a very strict person. She loved us very much but she very much wanted things to go her way. The bonds between us were very strong; so strong in fact that, after the war when they went to live in New York, I wanted to join them there to have my first child. I have never understood how my father and mother loved each other so much. It was a genuine love affair between them and yet they were so different. My father was a very sensuous person and a dreamer. When he abandoned his business, my mother took over completely, she became the business-person among the two; otherwise I would never have had the education I got. The firm was about to go broke because my father was not interested. So she took over and made a success of it. I readily admit that I have something of her. There is a part of me that appears on certain occasions which is, when things have to be done, they are done. I think my mother's part has shown itself in the way I am with myself: challenging myself, organising myself and circumstances to meet that challenge, and with no tendency to be depressed should matters go wrong.

Apart from my parents and brothers I was not very keen on any of my relatives. When aunts and uncles came to the house my mother would say to me, "Be kind to them." I generally was kind for five minutes and then disappeared, because I just did not like their ways, their interests. I was polite and just nothing else. There was one exception, however, a cousin called Gretel whose surname was Ackermann – her father was to lose a large fortune in the Great Crash in the autumn of 1929. Gretel herself was someone I admired. She must have been some fifteen years older than me; she was not married but later on I came to know she was living with a man, a quite well-known writer, whom I never met. She was also a cousin of Stefan Zweig. She was mysterious to me because she never said very much about herself or her life even much later when she came to see me in London. My mother never thought very highly of her because she did not live what might be called a bourgeois life. And this, of course, made me more interested in her. She was the only adult with whom I could as a child have an intellectual conversation. She had studied, she had what-I-never-knew. And there were various men in her life, not at the same time, of whom she did not talk.

She was for many years a kind of exemplar for me. I wanted to be like her; when I was about fifteen or sixteen Gretel was what I wanted to become one day. I could not tell this to my mother. And she was the only older person in the whole family whom I accepted, apart from father and mother. I wanted to know more about Gretel, but nobody knew or nobody was telling me. But she was terribly important. She was very a good-looking, beautifully dressed woman. Uncomplicated but at the same time completely secretive to me, still a little girl; whatever the difference was between us, it was always big enough for her not to talk to me about her

life. I was “Little Ruth”. But I want to mention her, because she, with my friend Mariana Frölich (or “Maus” as she was affectionately known to us), were the only people in my life who were completely out of my normal surroundings and who I wanted to be like. I must admit there weren’t a great number of alternatives as I didn’t have that many friends at the time. My mother would not allow me to visit other girls at their homes or have them come to visit me.

I do remember that an enormous difference existed between me at school and me at home. At home I was a proper daughter. I was never asked to do anything in the house, but I was properly educated. I became conscious from a very young age of my intelligence and capacity to do things, and that I could set a goal and achieve it. I will admit that my life-long stubbornness is connected to this. And the main thing of my life at that time was the piano; my teacher was a Frau Goldschmidt who gave me lessons in the afternoons after school and extra lessons if there was to be a concert. She assured me that, even if I forgot what to play, my fingers would know. So I quickly lost the stage-fright I might have had at the beginning and gave concerts. I was a type of “miracle-child” on the piano and played music of some difficulty at nine and ten, like Mozart’s sonatas. And I was exhibited in a way as a great future pianist. As a matter of fact, there was a very famous man of that time, the Austrian pianist Artur Schnabel, who came to see my parents about me. He told them what a great pianist I was going to be, but the only person who knew I would never be a great pianist was myself. As a child I was very intellectual and my playing was a coldly cerebral exercise and one weakness I had was that I did not know how to improvise. I had visions of having just about enough talent to give lessons to little children and nothing better. But I came to know one thing by being conscious of this fact, that I could make myself do whatever I wanted to do. So I gave several concerts but the central point of the experience was that

it was a lesson for the rest of my life, that if I decided to do something, I could do it even if it were to cost me a lot of effort or even boredom.

By the age of fourteen I was convinced I was not made to be a pianist. One day in this beautiful music-room, specially arranged for me with the piano, the round gold chair and the similarly gold-painted table, I left it. I closed the piano and informed my assembled family, sitting in the family room, that I would not open the piano any more for ten years. And everybody laughed and they said, "Oh, yes!" But I said, "I mean it!" And I kept my word. And today I am really happy I did because, as a consequence of this decision, I did other things; above all I started to read with much greater seriousness.

But first of all, I did something which does not resemble the piano at all: I learned to fence. I was fencing with *fleurets* (or foils). This came about because one day, when we were in Norderney which is a small town on the North Sea coast of Germany, I got to know a woman called Helene Mayer who I discovered had been an Olympic fencing champion at the age of seventeen. I had a kind of crush on her and I decided that was what I would do in life. So I learned how to fence, quickly becoming quite good at it and winning a number of matches. I even became quite well-known in fencing circles and continued practicing it later in life as a way of earning money. It was not always welcomed by the people who knew me. I remember one day when I was sixteen walking home with my two foils and a mask, and meeting an acquaintance who insisted I would have no chance of getting married if I continued to go about so heavily armed.

By February 1933 great change had occurred in the world and my parents had a reason, a political reason, to leave Wiesbaden – Hitler was elected to power. I recall a photo of him appearing on our classroom walls and my brother Henri expressing the opinion that the man and not just the photo

should be hanged. The following day my father was invited to meet the school director who told him in a friendly manner that he and his family should leave Germany as the remark had been reported. So we left and in fact I was quite happy to leave. But just before we left, I had an experience that has remained very important in my life. I had a girlfriend nicknamed "Mouse" who was in my class for many years and who I always found very special. She was half-English through her father. And I had a very interesting friendship with her based principally on the fact that for the first time in my life I experienced wonderful talks about books. My own father had a big library but I was not invited to read any of the books of the library; that was for "later" when I would be grown-up. But my friend's father had another enormous library and we shared one book after another from that library. I had my first experience of freedom at that house. Her English father was a so-called man of the world and he liked to make fun of religion a little bit. It was something I had never heard in my life, fun being made of something religious or somebody else's religion. He took to calling me the German word for "root", *wurzelchen*, in an affectionate way. He put the first seeds of disquiet into me to think that there are other ways to look at it. The first time I went to that house, I saw a way of living that won me over completely: a type of freedom of act and thought that has always remained with me.

One day my friend Maus invited me to their house and I went with my brothers' nanny, because I was always being protected together with my brothers. Our young servant left me at the door and when she came back for me a mere two hours later I was a different teenager. It was a large, beautiful house. We rang the bell and a uniformed maid opened the door. I was most surprised that Maus was not there. But the servant told me that they were in the garden. And so I, who lived in a very nice town apartment, saw this big garden and just walked in by myself, feeling quite lost because my mother had always told me that the custom of a host was to meet guests

at the door and to accompany them. And there I saw a quite new life. There were many young girls like me and many boys, and they were all mingling together dressed in informal clothes. Something like “sex” hadn’t come into my mind yet. There were people playing tennis and some swimming, and other people chatting. Not only were the gardens with the tennis court reflecting a freedom I had not known could exist, but the household contained a subtle beauty that contrasted with the austere furniture and paintings of my parents’ home. Even the atmosphere itself was one of freedom – for the first time the very term “beauty” became a reality and a promise.

The tolling of a big gong called us to tea and this “tea” involved a beautifully laid table arranged very much, as I found out later, in “the English way”. Two maids were serving us tea, cakes and biscuits, and all sorts of things. And then came the big shock of my life up to then. From the garden one could see a room, which was obviously a boy’s room. Above one of the beds against the wall there was a painting of a naked girl. And in terms of my education, a naked girl was still something one could not even think of; you could not even imagine that. How could anyone paint that?! And I stared at it. Then my friend Maus told me that one of her brothers had done it. And I said, “How does your father or mother allow a naked girl to be painted on the wall?!” And she laughed and said, “Poor girl! You really have had such a closed education! You will see things like that in my house, a lot of them. And that’s perfectly all right. There’s nothing wrong with that.” That may well have been the last impression I had from Wiesbaden, because we were to leave very shortly afterwards. It was a memory that was to haunt me for quite some time when I came to our new country, Luxembourg.

Moving to Luxembourg sounded very exciting to me: to go somewhere else, to experience new things. But very quickly after we arrived there, we were staying at a really cheap hotel. We had left the beautiful squares of Wiesbaden with its lovely church, and our good friends, and had arrived at a new place with its peculiar German and what were to our minds its weak schools. I looked at my father and mother and I said, "This is a very ugly place!" And my father answered me, "From now on, we are going to have so much money." It didn't really ring a bell but neither did it give me a shock. Being the kind of girl I was I thought, "Oh! We are going to be poorer. Well, let's see how it is to be like that." And in this way it was not a total catastrophe. We had not as much as before but we took a house in Luxembourg on rue de la Semois near the Sauer River. It was a house I learned to love for the reason I will explain. It was a house with many rooms and bathrooms, and a garden in front and another behind, which went all the way down to the river. Under the garage there was something extraordinary. It must have been a warehouse of some sort; it was a very large room with three or four big windows overlooking the riverside garden. And it was completely cemented: the floor, the wall, the roof. This was followed by a smaller room, also cemented, with a window onto the river. When I saw that I immediately said, "This is my house! Here I will live!" And I did. I had a fencing practice area put into the last room. I selected from our furniture one very simple table, one equally unadorned chair, a little bookcase and an electric heater. And there I spent many, many hours, because in the big room I started giving fencing lessons – very highly paid fencing lessons. What was most important from my years of learning and then teaching fencing was I suppose the alertness that must always be present while one is practicing this sport. I became a well-known sight walking around the streets with my mask and foils. And in the same small room I would sit appearing to read, in accordance with my mother's wish that we should always be active, but all the while thinking for hours and hours. This was my tiny and primitive empire to help me search for physical

improvement and better living, my entry as well to the world of verbal perfection that would replace the art of music and piano-playing.

However, very soon I found out that the high school in Luxembourg was greatly inferior to the school I had been going to at Wiesbaden. And so I enquired in Trier in Germany, which was a one-hour train journey from Luxembourg. There was a *liceo* which was supposed to be of a very high quality. That meant that I had to have some money daily to take the train to Trier and to come back, and also to face dangers, at that time, to go over the frontier. And I did it for some eight months and as it happened I did learn an enormous amount. My father would wake me up at five with a sponge of cold water and at six I took the train. And at three o'clock I was back in Luxembourg because the school was only in the morning. I did my homework on the train.

And I had each day to go through the very difficult task of passing through the frontier. Anything I brought with me would be looked at so I tried never to carry anything which was forbidden when entering or leaving Germany. The moment I came back home there was food. And I gave my fencing lessons. These same lessons made it possible for me to go to Trier and to buy all the books I wished for. So the curious thing is that I never did find out what poverty really meant; somehow I kept myself completely isolated from that condition. I started having a life completely for myself because of my fencing lessons and other pastimes. Admittedly there was no luxury and there were not too many clothes but it was perfect. I had my own life and that was important to me, content to be a fencing person and also to study. The reality was I did not really want to know people in Luxembourg. I will admit very readily that I liked my own company a lot of the time. I felt that I was walking in a constant state of being, the compact centre of a white opaque light; no-one of course knew that I thought this but I felt protected. I felt that I only had to form this, my own destiny, and that I should

not put a foot wrong. I felt neither limited nor scared – I was there to bring my father's mission further. But to where, I did not know. Later, when I began to live with my future husband, this light tried to embrace him as well and it found with him first resistance and then refusal. However, it was replaced by a union that I considered sacred – and continues to be so – where my strength was for a long time simply coming through him. Somehow, strange, as this may sound, he replaced that white light to become I wanted to lead me all the way.

However, one day, perhaps eight months or a little more after our arrival, when I came to the frontier going back, I got a stamp on my passport saying “no further access to Germany”. And that was that – if I attempted to return to the school in all likelihood I would be arrested. It was to be the end of my formal schooling until I started my programme in philosophy in London in 1950. There were to be three years of Latin and Greek with tutors and very little mathematics. But I had decided – I must have been sixteen at that time – that I would educate myself, that there was no reason why you need a teacher, what with so many books and intelligent people who could help now and again. I would sit in my room at a rough table, on a straight chair beside the small electric heater, often with a blanket around my knees. I read the classics in my father's library, books in German and French, and began to study Italian and later to read its literature (Dante's *Divine Comedy* gave me a species of pure joy), which was to lead me to spend my late adolescence surreptitiously with my boyfriend in Ischia in Mussolini's Italy. I also started some lessons with two old French ladies, very poor, without even a bathroom in their house. I learned all sorts of things with them, perfecting my French and Italian. And again I paid it out of my fencing classes. If I needed more income, I gave more classes. At that time there were a lot of fencing championships, though I won only one. When they were about to give me a handsome trophy, I said, “No! I'd rather have money.” And they gave it to me. There were other ways to earn

money. A new opportunity arose in the media. One day I met a man named Benson who was a representative of the British Broadcasting Corporation in Luxembourg. He was a man much older than me, perhaps between thirty and forty. He told me that I was an interesting person and I should talk sometimes on radio. And so I did.

One hot day I went swimming outdoors. I saw a young man and I thought he was very good-looking. I remember my mother as a young woman returning from the United States and her seeing the worn European footwear after such a long time and thinking how extraordinary the boots of the people in Europe were, only to find that the owner of these same boots was the boyfriend she had been forced by her parents to leave behind in Europe, later to be my father. I too on this occasion looked down but in this case to see the very impressive legs of my own future husband. I looked at him and he looked at me, and that was all: that same man, I was to marry much later. I remember in particular his blue eyes and determined and gentle face. In the Europe of the 1930s snobbery was still a major force but it didn't matter at all to me that he came from a far lower social class than ours. My parents even at one stage were to forbid me to see him but we kept in touch mainly through letters which often were mostly made up of quotes without the inverted commas. I found out that a painter acquaintance of mine, the constructivist Boris Kleint, knew him. So one Sunday morning we went out walking in the main plaza, where young people met each other, some travelling in one direction, others in the opposite. I saw Kleint with the young man. Boris introduced us. He did not have his fine mature looks yet. We talked that day and then on other days. My parents in the meantime had taken a tutor for my brothers, an experiment that did not turn out very happily as he had to be dismissed after groping my brothers sexually. But before this happened the young man, called Gordian Troeller, came to our house to take classes with the instructor and so we started studying together.

There now begins a very interesting chapter in my life. It is very difficult to explain why this is so and how it occurred, but to explain matters briefly my parents were not that poor any more. My father had connections with people, although in fact he was not officially supposed to work in Luxembourg, and little by little he didn't exactly do wonderfully but very much better. I had already won a number of prizes for my Italian and so at one moment I decided with my money to go for a short period to the great beauty that is Venice in order to improve my fluency.

At the place where I stayed there was a madam who sat at the top of the table. And I will never forget when we got our hot spaghetti to begin eating. I took my knife and fork and cut the spaghetti. My mother would have been ashamed that somebody corrected the way I was eating but that is exactly what the lady did. My own mother was very proud of our household, everything was very formal even in Luxembourg when we were very poor. But in any case I cut my spaghetti. And the madam came to me and informed me, "Tomorrow you are eating with me alone!" And then she explained to me that there was not greater offence in Italy than cutting spaghetti. The logic was clear: if you buy spaghetti, the longer it is, the more expensive it is. And therefore I really had offended not only her household but the whole of Italy with my action. With her I learned to take spaghetti on my fork. And I must say, today when I eat spaghetti I am thinking of the shame I had brought to the pension cutting spaghetti.

By the time I came back my Italian had become very good. And then I left again for Italy because I was going to give some classes. Today it's not too clear in my mind any more how this came about. But what makes it important for me is that I left with my future husband. Neither he nor I had any money. The odd thing is I am still trying to think what we did – for some of that time I gave French lessons to some kids. But we stayed for quite a

number of months and went to the Monte Carlo casino. We had invented a system by which we would win, but of course we never did.

Eventually we ended up in Ischia. Ischia is a very pretty island next to Capri. But it was then a very primitive place, unlike Capri which already had many big hotels. We lived at the top of a house where they made wine, surrounded by many vineyards. We had no money – we now and then gave a class – but we did not have any debts either. Everybody loved us. Everybody spoiled us with this and that until my younger brother arrived. And he lived with us for some months. We wrote all sorts of things: a play that does not exist anymore and a lot of diaries that do. Now we must not forget that this was Mussolini's Fascist Italy. We did not know anything about it or at least we were pretending not to know anything about it. We lived there half-naked because nobody could see our terrace. We had a woman who used to cook our sardines. I remember that at that time sardines cost one lira a dozen. We lived on sardines and on the local grapes. And we were happy, as was my brother. He chased after many nice girls in the village. I also recall very well the small colony of German writers who had settled at the nearby fishing village of Positano on the Amalfi coast, there to escape the National Socialists. These were the rough surroundings by which I evolved a subtle approach to what today I would call spirituality: the existence of pure love and the pursuit of a pure life surrounded by beauty. I had not yet fully experienced this but, through the completeness of my belief in its existence, I expected it inevitably in the future. Ignoring completely the political situation in Italy and Europe, we would sit on a roof eating our decrepit and cheap sardines, drinking wine while talking to the musicians and painters who lived there.

But one day, I think it was the end of 1937, we looked at each other and we said, "This is it, there is a war coming. Chamberlain has just gone to see Hitler. And he is giving in to his demands. They're all preparing for war.

We are going back.” Just like that, all three of us. One small inconvenience was that we had of course no money for the train back. So we wrote home asking for some money for the train journey. And we got it.

By the beginning of 1938 I was back home. My parents had moved: they were no longer living in the same house and had taken a rather elegant apartment in the middle of Luxembourg. They were alone and did not really do much. They had become very much wealthier, much more comfortable. One brother and I lived with them, while the other was studying in Brussels. And nobody did anything and this was strange and tense because the month of August 1939 had come and Luxembourg was very much threatened by the imminent war. And to make matters more complex, my parents decided not to agree with my friendship, or more than friendship, with Gordian. I was not allowed to see him. Of course I still saw him daily when I went out but it was a terrible strain. The strain of the war to come, of my parents not really doing anything, my not really doing anything; my brothers’ not doing anything – all of us just waiting for the war. The important thing was every week to renew the “iron ration”, in other words the reserve of water and rice and other essentials in case there were to be a conflict. And by these means we would have enough food at least for two weeks. And even then the stockpile had to be renewed all the time so it would not become stale, and we acquired the habit of looking for apples and potatoes that had started to rot and, if not removed, would infect the others.

What was I doing during this very tense time? I did not read or hardly. My brother went from place to place on his bicycle in Luxembourg all the time. My father went out to have a beer. My mother did not do much either. There was a maid who cooked. There was one advantage that there were now no longer any *frauleins* so we children had much more liberty and I would spend ages at the window overlooking the park beside our home and just

dream fantastic thoughts of an earthly heroic paradise. The supply of food was perfectly all right as there was no war yet. And like that we lived for about eighteen months, from the beginning of 1938 until the second of September, 1939. Then we had war. But before that there was little or nothing of actual war, merely the perennial danger of it. Finland was occupied but nobody in Luxembourg cared about Finland. Then Poland was cut into two according to the accords of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Agreement, one half taken by the Soviet Union, the other by Germany.

War was declared the moment the Germans walked into Poland on the second of September because Chamberlain had told Hitler that if he entered Poland that this meant in effect a declaration of hostilities. And so it was. But again nothing happened. And we became staler and staler. The whole town of Luxembourg was waiting, almost whispering "Come on, start!" because it was almost *insupportable*. And we had to stand it, this waiting. You could not easily get out of Luxembourg. You could go to Belgium but to get into France was not anything like as easy.

Then suddenly certain serious actions were taken. My brother had a girlfriend, about whom my parents pretended not to know, a girl called Edmée. She was in direct contact with the family of the Grand Duke. And on the night of the 10th of May 1940 our telephone rang at about three o'clock. And it was Edmée who said very drily to me that the Grand Duchess and some of her family had just left by plane to London and that the German paratroopers were dropping all over Luxembourg. My brother was very quick; he had already prepared a kind of escape plan. So he took it and he said, "Bye, people!," jumped on his bicycle and left.

It was now time for me to take action as well. I took the telephone and rang Gordian. I said, "How long will it take you to be here with the bicycle?" He said, "Well, about twenty minutes." And I stood in front of my parents and I

told them, "I am sorry. God bless you. But I am leaving with the person I have chosen." And my parents just could not say anything. They blessed me and I went down to where Gordian was waiting. Men's bicycles have a crossbar and he pedaled with me on this crossbar for about twenty kilometres all the way to Eschen, where there is a direct frontier crossing with France. And when we came to the frontier, there was a young man, a German as it turned out, standing there with his parachute still literally entangled in his machinegun. Gordian had taken the bicycle on his shoulder and he signaled towards the west, "Our farm is over there. Can we just get there?" With that the young German said, "Of course." And over there was France, which he did not know. He was a very nice young man and he did not have an idea; he had just been parachuted into our little country. He still had the accoutrements of the parachute all around him, entangled in his machinegun.

So we went to France. But there is nothing in that little part of France, so we could not stay there. It was like a stretch of sand, and then – the hill going up, with lots of grass and trees, and we got ourselves through this barren land. Gordian took his handkerchief out of his pocket and we saw some French soldiers up ahead of us. It was only two or three hundred meters but there was no other way. There was just the grass with very little cover. It took us two hours to get there. The French soldiers did not like that and they were shooting over our heads. On the theme of fear: I remember as a child the fear I had of fear itself, something I think I finally lost when Gordian and I progressed for two hours those three hundred metres to cross the firing line from Luxemburg to France. For me this loss was to create a deeper relationship with the deity or rather a more subtle one in which God does not punish with a thunderbolt but punished with a fear of punishment – effectively the difference between violence and the threat of violence. But we got there, hiding behind the trees. As it turned out they were very nice, these French soldiers. "Ah! Finally it has started!"

“You got here!” And they were very jolly though they certainly were not so jolly the next day. And they said, “The barracks are over there, but you’ll have to keep your head down to get there.” We managed to do this. There were more big barracks and lots of soldiers and they said again with unexpected gaiety, “Oh, hi, Luxembourgers!”

So we stayed there. I had hardly anything with me, just a very nice pink knitted dress on. In the evening (something I’ll never forget), I went to wash my underwear in cold water. There was a soldier standing next to me and he said, “You obviously have never washed your own clothes before.” And I told him it was the first time. And he said, “Your fingers are nearly bleeding already with this little thing. Come on, give me this stuff! I know how to wash clothes.” It was something that made a deep impression: this big soldier washing my underwear. And then, suddenly, in the middle of our chat, an alarm sounded and an explosion was heard at some distance. And I said, “Oh! Why is there this alarm? Whatever was hit is very far away.” And the soldier said to me, “You run *now*, you two. Because this one was too far, the next one will be too near. And the third one will strike the barrack building. So you get out now.” And I just grabbed my wet underwear and we left walking into France.

We slept somewhere but it was May so it was nice weather. We saw some houses. We were trying not to get accommodation at these houses as they might have thought we were enemies. We just walked. Then there was a train station and, stupid us, we stayed there waiting for the train to come and naturally there was no train coming. And so, sleeping outside and then making our way on the dusty road, we went until we came into a small town and from there things became much more difficult. Because, as is well known, the Germans took France within a few days. They did not invade through the Maginot Line but on the contrary they came into France by Luxembourg and Belgium. There was some fighting going on in the north

of France. And then came Dunkirk. Dunkirk had British and French troops who were driven back, too, and there were thousands of people dead each day. Fortunately the British came with all these boats and saved very many people. But going back on the boats, of course, they were attacked by the *Luftwaffe*, and many children, young people and soldiers died there.

We ourselves were going south. We finally got to a town where there was a train service. And for some reason we got separated there: simply, for some reason we never understood, we were separated. There I had what was for me a very interesting adventure. People were in good humour. They were all travelling south. I was in a railway wagon with all these people and no Gordian. He was somewhere else. Suddenly the train which we were in was put on a siding and they said it would remain there until the line was free for us to go further. But none of us had eaten – everybody was very hungry. In front of the line where they put us I could see (I then saw well) a little town and houses, maybe three miles away. And I just got out of the train. Since I was such a sporty girl, with my fencing and swimming and such like, I ran to the town. And in the town the first thing I saw was a kind of basket with baguettes. And I went and I took all the baguettes with me. And the people back at the siding were shouting after me. And I got back on the train. I tell the story because it's very important in my life. Because I literally ran all the way back; I was not even out of breath because I was a really good sports-girl. And everybody was shouting at me, "Bread! Bread! Bread!" And I said, giving it to one man, "Share it fairly". And when my turn came for some food, I said "no." "Aren't you hungry?!" And I said, "Yes, but it's stolen bread." And I did not eat it. I have thought about this fact very often: "It's stolen bread" and I did not eat it.

A day or two later, travelling south by train, we came to a big farm where people were picking strawberries. They saw the train full of people and they

told us they would feed us if we would harvest strawberries because that way we could get money for food. And during all that time there were warplanes flying over us and we did not know if they would bombard us. And yet we all started to work. I will never forget how tiring that was. I was a strong girl, accustomed to doing strenuous things, but I could not really pick strawberries because it involves arching your back towards the ground all the time. And nowadays each time I eat strawberries I think that somebody must have had to pick them painfully bending down.

In any case, we got further south. At one point they established a kind of camp for people and I was asked if I wanted to help. I agreed with enthusiasm. That was the south of France, very close to the Spanish frontier. The first thing I did was to separate the only two buckets. And so I said, "One bucket – for water. And one bucket – for *pipi*." I was only about one day there when I suddenly heard my boyfriend's voice. He had managed to track me down the whole way. As chance would have it there was a wall between the two of us, and being the athletic type I then was, I climbed the wall. And there he was. Our plan at the time was to continue to Portugal and somehow make our way to Great Britain to join the Free French force.

It then took us about two months to get over the frontier to Spain. We did manage on one occasion to enter Spain but we were sent back. This involved going over a high mountain and that in itself was an adventure because I was afraid of a big eagle soaring above us in menacing circles. And he wanted to attack me or at least I was afraid that he would attack me. When we finally made it into Spain we were immediately put into prison. And the jail itself was a very peculiar place for me: I was put in with some twenty prostitutes. But that turned out to be a good thing because the prostitutes were from the little village and their families brought them food because the prison authorities did not give meals. I met Gordian about

every four hours when we went to the loo. Eventually we were sent back to the French side of the border. We then spent some time walking through the south of France attempting to find a way to get over to Spain, and from there, hopefully, to Portugal. It was during this period that we came to Marcel, a big and very ugly town, and there we suddenly had to settle as finally we had no money to buy food. People might give you something to eat – people who had something to eat, they shared it.

We had tried already in three or four different places to get married; our difficulty was that we were never able to stay a minimum of ten days. In France in order to get married you have to have *le bond*, which means that for ten days your details have to be put on the door of the *mairie* in case anybody has anything against your getting married. We somehow never could remain in one single place for ten days. But in Marseilles on the 25th of July 1940 we finally managed it. There the judge declared that we needed two witnesses. We counted all our money and we saw we had enough for two coffees. And so we accosted two men: “Would you like to come this afternoon with us to be our witness? And we’ll buy you a cup of coffee afterwards.” And we did find two volunteers after asking many. We went into this enormous room where the registry was located, all grey without any lights because of the war, and there we sat. And the fittingly grey judge went on and on, reading all the rules and regulations, indeed so much so that Gordian, who was sitting on the other side of the table from the judge, was already asleep when he finally finished. And then suddenly the customary question was made: “And would you like to take this lady as your wife?” He did not say anything. I had to push him with my elbow. “Oh, oui! Oui!” We went out and we bought the two men their coffee. Before the ceremony itself we had just enough money to buy a little margarita flower which I put in my hair. I still have a photograph and I do not even know who took that picture, but we had a wedding picture, with me, that flower and a little dress. Now we were married.

We tried again and finally we succeeded in going over the frontier. And there we were arrested again. This time we stayed in the prison for a little less than two weeks, and again the prostitutes looked after me. To cap it all I remember Gordian got a bad infection in his mouth. One day quite out of the blue they gave us some clothes; quite normal clothes but a godsend because by then we looked absolutely terrible. When we were released we went to a train station. And a man, a Spaniard with civilian clothes, ordered us onto the train; and the train then went from the frontier first to Madrid and from Madrid to the Portuguese border. The man was eating sandwiches all the way; the trip took two days, during which we had nothing to eat, just staring at his sandwiches. He did not say a word to us; he was some sort of policeman but without a uniform but wearing what I can only describe as a low bureaucratic suit.

We arrived at the Portuguese frontier, absolutely famished and exhausted, and our well-fed policeman said, "Good bye!", and then we went to Portugal. We were without any entry papers – no visa, nothing – and had no Portuguese. We both had good Spanish and Italian, so we could say something. But Portuguese – no idea! Luckily there are always kind people and some people gave us something to eat. I don't recall now how we got from the frontier to Lisbon. But in Lisbon then there were lots of refugees from France and Belgium, and even from Luxembourg. We were directed to a place where many people were standing outside. And we realised that they were French and Belgian, and we asked, "Why are you standing outside here?" And they said, "Oh, there are two places in all Portugal where they can find somebody to look after you, so that you don't die of hunger." That is why there were all these people there. But why outside? "Oh! It's because the key is missing," they said. So we were all standing there and waiting. I watched people passing on the street and they were saying "shabay, shabay". But we had no idea what this "shabay" could be.

Finally a policeman arrived and said something in Portuguese. I said “shabay, shabay” not knowing what it meant. “Ah!” he said and he went away and came back with a key. So everybody thought that I knew Portuguese, which of course I did not.

Then at last we went into the house and a little later a very well-behaved gentleman came who asked us if we wished to go to Coimbra almost in the centre of the country. I had no idea where that place was but I thought that it'd be better to accept straight away. He gave me a ticket and when I asked him for something to eat before our departure, he replied that we'd get food in Coimbra. I thought it was next door! It turned out to be a four-hour train journey. A very curious physical impediment had coincided with our arrival to Lisbon: my legs had partially stopped functioning as a result of some sort of psychosomatic reaction to our good fortune in making it to the safety of Portugal. We stayed briefly in Coimbra and were then sent along with other refugees to a fishing village. There the fishermen were very poor and interestingly they were Quakers. The Quakers had a fantastic house near the beach and finding that all of us were more or less well-educated people, they put us with these fishing people and invited us to come every day to their house and eat with them, which we did. It was here that Gordian heard that an English journalist by the name of Sefton Delmer was in Lisbon and writing articles about the situation in Portugal. And so we went to a very elegant hotel in Lisbon to speak to this reporter. We knocked on his bedroom door and a deep male voice could be heard inviting us to enter. In the best gentlemanly tradition my husband invited me to enter first, whereupon I was confronted by a tall, fat and naked man gingerly examining the thick carpet with his foot looking for a stud for his shirt collar.

The English correspondent was in many ways (together with many others of course) a very important influence on our lives. He looked at Gordian and said, “You can write, can't you?” And Gordian said, “Of course, but...”

“Of course you can write,” said the man, “and you are going to write for me because I am leaving tomorrow for England.” That was the beginning of our writing career in Portugal and it would carry on for the four years we were there. Gordian became the correspondent in Portugal for the *Daily Express*. Delmer very quickly sent us money. I couldn’t write because my English was very bad while Gordian’s English was better but to be honest it was not that good either at that time. However, for the first time in many months we became comfortable: we bought clothes, we took an apartment, and later on we had an even more beautiful apartment.

A short time after this we met a woman called Suzanne Chantal. She was a typical good-mannered though not high-class Frenchwoman. Very intelligent but very differently intelligent from us. She had been writing for newspapers; she had been with cinema people. She was to give me enough information about Portugal – its history and art – that I became quite a connoisseur of my new home, though never eventually a specialist or a lover of the country. She later came to write two books about us, *Dieu Ne Dort Pas* and *La Chaine y la Trame*. In her work I am there as a potentiality, a young elegant debutante with great dreams and hostess of beautiful dinners, but one who also towards the end starts on the road of proper independence. Her story was that she had met a Portuguese on a trip to South Africa, had then fallen in love but could not marry him yet because she was married to an Englishman. This was wartime and to secure a divorce and get married was not a simple undertaking. I myself found him to be rather dictatorial. Portugal had at that time a strongman but not one as bad as any of the others. In my life, Suzanne would become very important because she taught me to read novels – great, important novels. She was the first person who pronounced the name André Malraux to me. André Malraux was the father of two boys and the mother was Suzanne’s best friend, Josette Clotis (I occasionally got the impression that she loved Josette more than her own José). She encouraged me to read

Malraux's books which afterwards had a very great importance in my life. She made me read modern French literature, which was already existentialist in style and emphasis. And I could not believe it: I had been reading all the classics from Russia, from England, from everywhere. But I hadn't read modern novels. This new commitment occupied my life completely for almost two years.

Gordian was writing and writing, and getting more and more involved with the refugees who came to Portugal, and also with the people who wanted to be shipped on to England in order to serve in the British Army or more often the Free French Army. After about a year and a half or two years we both became involved with the Dutch Embassy because the custom was that the Luxembourgian representative was Belgium and, if there was no Belgian representation, the responsible diplomat was then the Dutch representative. This vital activity became dominant and from that moment onwards we did not write many articles any more. Gordian and myself did something which became very important and that is we established a life-line from Luxembourg to Portugal. That meant that a lot of volunteers parachuted into France – so-called “Vichy France” – to places where you could take people from one jail to another. Gordian established this life-line with the help of the Dutch because Luxembourg was not merely occupied but had been annexed, in a similar way to Austria, which meant that it was now a part of Germany. The consequence of this was that our young boys were supposed to go into the German army and fight against the Russians. So the life-line became a reality. Gordian's idea was absolutely sensational: to move people from prison to prison. In every prison in Spain there was somebody who could be bribed. So our people would go with prison-wagons from jail to jail until they reached Portugal. Personally the good thing about the whole affair was that my two brothers also arrived like that. They came from France to Portugal, where they were arrested and had to spend three weeks or so in prison. And then we got them out; Henri

and Walter were to live outside Lisbon in Ericeira, their life one of creative artists without the art and, though they disturbed me with their dissolute lifestyle, I was attracted by it. This entire organisation was geared to placing the same young men on a British convoy that passed twice a month close to Portuguese territorial waters. In this way we got people from Luxembourg to Portugal and then, if they wanted to, they were taken on a small fishing boat to the convoy. And then they left for De Gaulle's Free French Army or the British Army.

We had one very nasty experience that affected me terribly. One young man employed at the Dutch embassy, with whom we were quite friendly, turned out to be a traitor. Some of the boats transporting the soldiers to the convoy exploded. Exposed by a sailor friend, the man was arrested and sent to England as a prisoner and, I heard later, was subsequently executed. It's not because I was especially friendly with him; I wasn't, I knew him, but the very idea that somebody who looks like a nice person could be a traitor to his own country and willfully kill decent men like that really got me down terribly. It has made me think very seriously about the ethics of people executing another human being, if there really existed circumstances in which a man had judicially the right to take the life of another man.

At the domestic level, our circumstances had much improved. We had got a very nice place because we had to meet lots of people and we had to have conferences at our home. A very capable decorator and theatre set designer, Lucien Donnat, had refashioned our home in a style that mixed the best of Portuguese taste with our less flamboyant Nordic preferences; I remember clearly his veto of the inclusion of a piano and a writing desk among the furniture as they would be wrong for the tone of his creation. Then the war was coming to an end, fortunately on the right side. We left Portugal in December 1944 and stayed a few days in Franco's Spain under

great danger on our way to Paris. We left behind our flat with its furniture and books, and it was to be rented, but eventually most of the furniture was thrown out and the books were destroyed by a leak in the attic where they had been stored.

Suzanne had been talking to me very much about André Malraux, I listened to Suzanne reading the letters she got from Malraux's partner Josette, and I read all his books. Philosophically I was beginning to understand the origins and developments of existentialism and its importance to contemporary thinking. Indeed, Kierkegaard, Jaspers and others were people who were mentioned to me and whom I read in the great deal of free time I had in those few years in Portugal. The whole question of existence preceding essence was already present in mind as I had become interested in the "soul", not the religious concept of it but the immutable *me* that nobody could take away from me, that would entirely depend on my beliefs and acceptance and goodwill, and mainly on my acts and refusals to act.

In the meantime, when Paris was liberated, Suzanne got in touch with Josette and said that her good friend would be coming. She asked if André wanted to see us and even asked me to take many things for them, like coffee. Sadly Josette was killed shortly afterwards when she slipped boarding a train. Suzanne had a maid, a Belgian woman, who was married to a Frenchman and together they had a little restaurant. And she got in touch with these people and they received us. *Liberación* had already taken place and it was now February 1945. We arrived by train with all our luggage and with the things to feed and clothe people: coffee, a fur coat, shoes, Portuguese knickknacks no-one really wanted, even jewelry. I knew also by then that my parents were in Paris; they had spent most of the war years looking after an unofficial old-age home in southern France and moved the aged inhabitants from place to place when necessary. They had

lost everything back in Luxemburg, especially when in late 1944 the Germans counterattacked the Allied push in the Low Countries and Luxemburg was destroyed in the fighting. The boys, my brothers, had stayed in Portugal, but all four were to be reunited and would soon travel to the United States. We ourselves were immediately instructed which places to go to. We stayed in a very small apartment of Raymond and Jeanne, the maid and her husband; they slept in the restaurant. And we began to frequent places where the writers congregated, Sartre and others.

Part 3 – 1940s: Post-War in Paris

And so it happened that one evening, about a week after we arrived, I was in one of the restaurants in St. Germain des Prés in a type of trembling anticipation before meeting this great writer, when a very tall officer came in. I was waiting for Gordian. Both intellectually and spiritually I had been preparing for some time to meet this man of great courage and high convictions. And I looked at that officer and I said, "Oh, André? I'm Ruth." And he said, "Of course you are Ruth! I did not know how to find you." Then he asked, "Where is Gordian?" "Oh, he will be coming any second," I replied. That started a fantastic friendship. He said, "Where are you sleeping?" And I said, "In Jeanne and Raymond's tiny apartment." It was really only one room and I don't think any kitchen, and with one very big bed. And it was terribly cold. And he said, "I don't have anywhere to sleep. I'm going to sleep with you." And so we left together. But he did have a man, a driver, as he was working at the Ministry for Information. We drove to the maid's studio. There was a big mattress on the bed, so we put this on the floor, and between the mattress and the bed you could not even put a foot, the floor-space was that limited. And like that we lived for about two or three weeks with André. He talked seriously to me at night and, in some ways, the path of my life was decided through those conversations. He saw in me what I wished so much to become and even spoke to my husband about my worth. During the day he was at work somewhere and in the evening we ate together. And then when it was very cold we went down to the *métro* because it was warm down there. So started a deep friendship that was to last until 1968 when my husband and I took exception to some of the comments and decisions that Malraux now took as De Gaulle's minister of culture.

We had some money saved and we found a place to live. It was the most extraordinary place located on the rue de Courcelles in the seventeenth

arrondissement. When we came in we saw all the armour of different knights. The place was enormous. But we could not find anything that would suit us. It was just gigantic and rather beautiful in a very strange way. During the first night we slept there, in a very elegant bedroom overlooking the street, people rang the doorbell very noisily. At first we did not answer. Later there was much more noise and we heard people downstairs laughing, some of them drunk. So Gordian looked out from the balcony and the people below asked, "Why do you let us wait so long?!" To which Gordian answered, "Well, we are the new lodgers." "What 'new lodgers'?!" This is a casino! There is no law that there shouldn't be a casino!" They made an incredible noise until the police came. And the police explained to us that it had been a clandestine casino. Many other people came other nights. And Gordian had to go to Luxembourg because he had to see his parents as he had heard that his brother had died due to a lack of medicines to help him recover from an operation on his brain, a loss that affected Gordian very deeply. Before he left he asked if I would be fine during his absence and I said, "Of course, I will be all right!" But I was not really all right because every night I had to fight with the people coming to the former casino.

As I said, it was a time when I had some money and I was able to dine well at restaurants supplied abundantly by the black market. This was a city now without censorship, in which there was no longer fear of confiscation, deportation, imprisonment or death. I enjoyed the simple things like a colourful window suddenly reflected in the moisture of a puddle. I was in Paris and there was l'Opéra which had just started to present masterworks again. So I started to think, "I am going to become a lady!" And I was a lady for two years. I got beautiful clothes and hats. I lived nearly all the time alone because Gordian then started to find his way in what he was going to do as a journalist and documentary-maker. Every evening when I would come home from the opera or some other entertainment, I opened the

visors of the armour to be sure that there weren't men inside them. However, the great thing was that I saw a lot of André Malraux. And we became very great friends. By that time I had read all his books and I discussed them with him. His conversation greatly influenced me. The impatience I have with small talk comes straight from him – quite rudely he would remark “*Trêve de frivolités!*” to put a stop to gossipers in a room – and it still strikes me as the original sin of human discourse. But André was very tall and had very long legs, and I am not tall at all, so when André showed me Paris that meant that André walked and I ran. I know Paris very well but I first came to know it well in a hurry.

I owe the person I am to three men: my father, an extraordinary man who would occasionally invite destitute people to share our table at dinnertime and secretly donate envelopes of coins to neighbours going through a period of poverty, with his children acting as postmen of this charity; my husband, another extraordinary person; and André Malraux. (I think I should also add another man who I was to meet through the Amnesty International director Eduardo Mariño many years later in April 1973, the Mexican ecclesiastic Samuel Ruiz, a man with whom I had deep discussions about spirituality and the book of Genesis, but his profound impact on me came after the formative years of my youth and early adulthood.) These three people I owe what I am professionally and in other ways. André was terribly important in my life, especially because there was something happening in his life which as young and as stupid as I was I could help him overcome. And that was he had just lost his woman, a writer herself, Josette Clotis, though they never married (and in 1961 he was to lose in a car accident the two sons he had with her). Then he had lost his half-brother Roland, who was a prisoner of war of the Germans. When they realised that they were losing they had put the prisoners into boats and put German flags on each craft. The Allies fell for the trap and he died like that from an Allied bomb attack at night. I was there when the news arrived of

what had happened. There were some cigars in the house of his sister-in-law, the concert-pianist Marie-Madeleine Lioux. When he started offering the cigars it was his way of saying that her husband – his brother – would never be back. They had a little boy, his brother and she, and he was to marry that same sister-in-law three years later. As far as I know, that same boy would be the only close relative of Malraux to survive him.

I was during those two years beautifully dressed; the couturier people brought out the most stunning things at that time. And then Suzanne had a child with her Portuguese boyfriend. It was at a time when cases of a child born to an unmarried mother were heavily criticised. I myself found it very amusing. Officially Suzanne's daughter, of whom I am a godmother, was born from an "unknown mother". You can do that only if a man stands by, takes her place and says "I am the father". Suzanne could not get divorced during the war. And had she had the baby under her name, the baby would have had the name of the first husband. So she was an "unknown mother". Only later on, when she got divorced, did the child formally have a mother. This was quite common in the immediate post-war years.

During the years 1945 and 1946 Gordian and I decided to have a look as journalists at Germany; he himself was writing a book on the subject. My cycle of diaries, which continue to the present day, start during this period, in French during the first years and then later in English. We both bought ourselves an American military uniform in the flea market of Paris and arranged permits and requisitions that allowed us to be billeted in military installations. We next bought a sturdy car and went off to Germany, where we stayed for six months, and then later to Austria and other ruined countries. We were to witness and record what we saw for publication in Denmark, the Netherlands and Britain. It was a journey that left a profound mark on us. There is a very detailed diary which I wrote at that time. It is about destroyed Germany, Germany without bridges, Germany without

food. Their songs about marching forward even over the bodies of those who had fallen ... and now their utter defeat. I sometimes tell my students about Germany after World War II, and they are always fascinated to hear because I have seen it. I have taken photos but I don't know if many have survived; certainly I only have very few of them. One of the lighter experiences I had was of the Russian soldiers who threw away watches they thought didn't work anymore because they didn't know they had to be wound. But hostility, the main mood was hostility. Not giving in. It was really still a Nazi state for at least the first year after hostilities ended. It was not at all humble, not at all in a remorseful mood, little sense that "we followed Hitler and what is happening to us we deserve it." The people themselves had been thrown into a world of defeat, demolition and death, but more than that – of foreign uniforms, foreign languages, no great leader to tell them about the right path and the wrong, regular supplies of food only from the occupying force, no flags to follow, no charming songs, hunger not just for food but the controlled existence that had lasted twelve years. I will always compliment the Americans on achieving the most humane occupation of a defeated country.

But their recovery would happen very quickly, in my opinion particularly after Adenauer's monetary reforms in the late 1940s, such that the average West German was living better than at any time in the country's history within eight or ten years after the fighting. But before this it was a nation in a desperate state, where we saw a black US soldier paying for the services of a blonde German woman with some cookies and the cost of a new blouse was five Lucky Strike cigarettes. At that time there was no clear news yet about the concentration camps. They did not defend themselves of the charge of the six million Jews that had been killed because that was not generally known yet. That came out really only later. Victory is always a questionable affair and to be victorious is not necessarily a great thing for a human being, perhaps unless, as Eugene O'Neill says, it engages us in

a new adventure in which failure is a possibility. And then what about the defeat of something one had willingly or been made to believe in and that had become an unquestionable part of oneself? But the impossible had occurred, the master-plan was erroneous, the enemy had won and had taken over – those who don't know, who don't count, are not part of our world. These were some of my impressions in Germany. We then went to Austria where we took the opportunity to attend the opera but our uniforms were not very suitable in the freezing auditorium and contrasted with the furs of the other spectators; we ended up being asked to leave during the intermission because of our attire. We had also hoped to meet Hermann von Keyserling, the anti-militarist philosopher and internationalist, and managed to have one or two short conversations with him at Innsbruck before he passed away in April 1946.

We then continued on to Italy where I chiefly recall revisiting the colony of German intellectuals and artists near Capri and what most impressed me was their desire to return to their native country having protected what they felt was an authentic version of German culture from the contamination of Nazism. I was also impressed by the comment of many Italians that they hadn't lost the war. From there we went to Sweden, Denmark and Norway. Norway was very impressive because in my opinion the locals had been treated the worst by the Germans. In the Steinberg book *The Moon is Down* you can read about it. And it was also in Norway that we were nearly eaten by a pack of three wolves, who surrounded our small car and pushed it in an attempt to extract us from the interior while we manoeuvred ourselves from one position to another to try to counterbalance them.

We had a great desire for normality after this war-inspired European tour. But normality as we wanted it could not just be invented: Countries were making great efforts to heal the severe wounds the war had inflicted on them. We returned to France and wondered where our home would be or

if we would ever have a home. We settled for some months in Paris where – through our friends Suzanne and José – we first met Simon de Beauvoir and her sister Hélène, and then through them we got to know Jean-Paul Sartre, who did not impress me very much except for his classes at the Sorbonne, for which, in order to be able to find a space when he was talking at six in the afternoon, one had to arrive at six in the morning and occupy a coveted place. But it was very much worth the effort, not only to be at Sartre's class in the evening, but earlier during the day, when one had the opportunity to listen from the same seat all sorts of lectures from physics to mathematics, to literature, to language classes. After all that and then to take the evening class, one felt at six it was a quite inspiring environment; because one got the impression of the vastness of knowledge, of the vastness of what one should really be learning, and paradoxically what one could never learn. Sartre himself appeared at the appointed hour, no smile, no grace but all the same a fascinating performance, speaking of a philosophy to live and grow by – altogether an unforgettable experience. He was impressive though his squinting and constant movements of the eyes made one think that he was not talking or listening to one, which indeed may have been the case. It is from that time that I conceived the thought that whatever we can be learning as human beings is only a minimal part of what there is to be known. But I also came to recognise something else – an impression that has stayed with me all my life – what can be called the unknowable, something that cannot be acquired through acquiring more knowledge but rather through a completely different kind of knowledge. This in a way has dogged me throughout my life that, whatever I acquire, there is still an immensity of things that exist but about which we do not know. The odd thing is usually we as human beings don't even identify the existence of the unknown and the unknowable.

At the time my main acquaintanceship was with Gabriel Marcel, the philosopher who was an existentialist and Catholic convert. Through him I

met a large number of existentialists and other people I would describe as more minor writers and smaller thinkers. And existentialism became a part of me. I had been reading quite a number of existentialist books, but what it really meant for me is that life is choice: in fact that *life* itself is nothing but *choice*. We are not cups, we are not tea-pots, we are not a statue, but we have possibilities. And this is really what has been guiding me through all my life: that whatever happens to me is because I've taken the right or the wrong choice. Or the wrong choice which turned about to be the right choice after all, or indeed the other way around. This idea of man having almost complete freedom of possibility to carry out their life came to me at that time, in the summer of 1946.

Suzanne and José had rented a beautiful old house with a large garden in Dompierre, a small town between Paris and Versailles; and there they tried to re-establish a salon, a place where intellectuals and politicians could meet and discuss current and future events and ideas. Here we met the cream of what was then the intellectual life of Paris: resistance leaders of the recent war, writers like Sartre, Simon de Beauvoir, her painter sister, Marcel (who had only recently converted to Catholicism) and a great number of what at that time was really the basis of French thought and literature. I took part in my own small way in many discussions. It seems to me that Marcel was one of the people who dominated the discussions, in spite of his modest way of speaking. I remember one time visiting his apartment in Paris and his telling me in an embarrassed way that it would be difficult to use the toilet as there were so many books that even the bathroom was over-run with them. He had a great impact on my way of seeing the world through his idea of the distinction between "to have" and "to be".

This was something which went so deeply into my thinking that even today, meeting people, the idea crops up quickly in my mind: “Is he someone who is interested in possessing or in being?” Marcel’s concept of “being” influenced me at the time after I read *Être et avoir* ; and the discussions by Plato and Aristotle of how being would exist and whether the opposite of being is nothingness were also a great influence on me. Sartre of course attached much importance to nothingness, but from that moment on I was wondering if nothingness can exist. Because even Heidegger, as I found out later, had difficulty or was unable to really give a foundation to something we could call nothingness, because at the end of the day we are only be able to express the existence of nothingness by saying “existence”. It is in the Sufi tradition that there is this incredible mythical great God which is Nothingness. On the contrary, Nothingness according to my philosophical – not spiritual – thinking cannot exist; it was simply put by Parmenides, “You cannot say that nothingness is.” Because if there *is* nothing, the word “is” is not possible. Therefore Heidegger in Germany would go on to create a new word for the existence of nothingness, something like “Nothingness nothings”. But even that does not help. Even today I try to argue the existence of being as its only existence; which means of course that there is no dualism, which means no devil, which means a kind of nail in some Christian and Islamic teaching. It is from the meetings with this man and many others, some of whose names are no longer clear in my mind, that I established the foundation of my interest in metaphysics.

When I was living in Paris in early 1945, it was announced that trains would come from the concentration camps in Poland with survivors, of which there were very few. I was doing at that time quite a lot of journalistic work, so I decided to do something which was terribly difficult for me and that was to go to these trains and to see the survivors as they arrived. There were hundreds of people standing around at the station, waiting to see whether

somebody from their family would step from a carriage. So for two or three weeks I went every day. The experience was something profoundly terrifying: the people waiting and the few passengers who would come out of the carriages, absolute skeletons, not really knowing what was happening to them. And with each of them there was a kind of a nurse or an American military police officer... And the families standing there and calling out, "Is it him? Is it my brother?" I was just completely exhausted merely from watching this spectacle. But I did go every day, as long as the people were coming. As part of my work as a reporter, I was also told that I could possibly see Goebbels in his cell but this was never to happen.

My last experience of the second great war of the century took place some years later in a forest in an out-of-the-way part of Austria. My son, the nanny and I had gone to the sort of hotel where Austrians sought isolation for their honeymoon not too far from home. My son was convalescing from a bout of whooping-cough. I went out walking one day in this dark, primitive forest and met a man in German uniform, tall and infinitely polite speaking perfect educated German. We talked about musical works, Goethe, Luther, Nietzsche, Schiller and ... freedom. On the second afternoon he asked for something that he said he hadn't seen in a very long time: meat. Over the course of ten days we met to have our conversation and transfer a small parcel of food. My first experience of a German soldier was at the border of Luxembourg with France in September 1939 and my final one was in the silence of that Austrian mountain four years after the Second World War ended.

Part 4: Late 1940s – Spain and Italy

We were asked by a Dutch newspaper to go to Spain. By this stage we spoke Spanish quite well. The invitation was to be journalists and to see what was happening with the Franco regime. Franco's nation was this rather grotesque fascist creation that still contained an ancient and deep Catholic culture, the remains of eight hundred years of Muslim rule, and limited modern influences. We knew very well that for us Franco's Spain was a dangerous place, even though we had permission from their ministry of foreign affairs. It was politically inconvenient for us but we accepted anyway – after all, we had a great desire to stay in place for a while though we certainly didn't plan to remain there. Gordian was involved deeply not only in what was happening politically in Spain, in Madrid mainly, but in what was happening underneath the surface. And there we got quite involved, he more than I, in what later became the work of Amnesty International. In practice that meant helping the families of people who were political prisoners, with me even walking out of the prisons with them. This could be a relatively simple process. The Spaniards had a liking for young women so I would just walk into prison and walk out with an inmate. And Gordian took people to the frontier with France. We divided our time almost equally between doing journalistic work and helping however we could the families of prisoners. But that wasn't to last forever, as Gordian got arrested.

In the meantime, one day at the Festival of Cannes in 1946, where I had travelled with Suzanne, she started saying, "You are funny, you don't eat your breakfast anymore." I said, "I don't feel like it." And she said, "Are you sure you are not pregnant?" And I said, "Oh! That would be wonderful!" I had wanted to be pregnant for some time. She said, "You'd better go to the doctor here." It was Cannes, I was wearing my bikini and was very thin. I made an appointment with a doctor and then proceeded to forget about it.

And Suzanne reminded me to run to my appointment. So I went to the doctor and asked to know if I was pregnant. He checked me and he said, "You *are* pregnant." I hung my arms around his neck and I cried, "Oh! That is fantastic!" He looked at me and said, "I thought the next question would be 'Get rid of it!'" to which I replied, "Oh no! That's wonderful!" And I said to Suzanne, "I must get a good moment to tell Gordian." We met for some reason in Holland during a period of horrible weather. As it was still shortly after war-time, airports were not reconstructed properly yet. It was raining and we could not get in, we waited outside for the plane. Suddenly I thought, "This is the moment to tell him!" And I said, "Gordian! Are you cold?" "Yes." Quickly I said, "Gordian! We are expecting a baby!" "*What?!*" And that was how news of my son was announced. We went back to Spain where I passed almost the full term of my pregnancy. No more walking out with prisoners from the jail; instead, living in a very beautiful house, receiving many people, employing what my mother had taught me from all those great dinners. We got to know many people – it was our job in a way.

For the first eight months of my pregnancy I had a peculiar Madrid life, which consisted not only of the very unusual, as I said "walking out of a prison with prisoners", but also of attending very luxurious parties. My house was a place where I had a weekly elegant dinner in which there were countesses and other noble people, generals and some politicians. I enjoyed it very much and even had pleasure preparing everything with the cook. But I made sure that as few people as possible were to know that I was pregnant. Some older ladies found out and proceeded to give me rather old-fashioned advice, but rather fantastically I felt that I was consciously forming the baby inside myself with the qualities and features I appreciated. So I planned to go through my nine months with the minimum of interference. I purchased the kind of clothes which do not show too much. And when I was eight months' pregnant I decided to join my mother in New York and to have the baby there in April 1947.

As matters turned out I was not to have the baby in New York. The plane trip from Madrid to Lisbon was fine. In Lisbon we boarded a TWA plane which almost immediately after take-off had difficulties and naturally I got rather nervous, but mainly because I think I was the only one who realised that we were going up the river Tagus and down again, and then up again, and that we were not really going anywhere. When I asked the stewardess what was going on, she told me we were in trouble and we would have to land on the “tummy” of the aircraft. A technician opened up the floor next to my seat and explained he was getting rid of the fuel as the landing gear wasn’t working and he had to reduce the risk of fire. And so we landed on the hard metallic belly of the plane. And nothing happened. The only thing that had happened was that I got highly nervous, which meant we had to spend the night in a rather posh hotel at the airport. In the hotel itself myself and another pregnant woman were put together, an encounter that was to have important repercussions in my future life; the lady, an American named Marjorie, was the wife of the Mexican economist and academic Victor Urquidí about whom I will be saying something a little bit later.

I felt strange and since I did not know about how to deliver a baby, I remembered that our former chauffeur, Fernando, had a sister who was a midwife. So I rang Fernando and invited him to come along with his sister. They came and the sister gave me the obvious news that I was in labour. I gave her one look, picked up the telephone at what was the middle of the night, and phoned the American Embassy and said, “My name is Ruth Troeller and I need to take the next plane to the United States.” They instructed me to take a taxi straight away to the airport and they would place me on the next plane. At this, the lady who was sharing my hotel room said, “Oh! Couldn’t I come with you?” And I just said, “Why not?” So we both went to the airport and took the next TWA flight to New York.

But don't forget that it was 1947, still a time when there were no jet planes. It would take quite some time to get to New York. In the middle of the flight I called a stewardess and I said, "Could I please speak to the captain?" The captain came and I told him, "Look, I just lost my waters. The baby won't be too long in arriving." "Oh!" said this jolly American with a big pot-belly. "OK, I have five children and I have been at each confinement. Between you and me we'll manage everything." A place was found for me to lie down. I was in a very good mood until the cabin-crew told me that they didn't have any water anymore and I was terribly thirsty. So they gave me orange juice. And the orange juice, I am afraid, does not work very well and I vomited it up. Then the captain appeared again and told me we were going to land in Gander, Newfoundland for me to have the baby there. Displaying my then geographical ignorance I said, "Well, where's Newfoundland?" "It's somewhere belonging to Canada." In that way we came to land in Gander, Newfoundland. A young man came into the plane who said, "Are you the lady who is having a baby? You know, don't be too happy because I have never done a confinement." At that moment I got worried.

I was taken from the airport to the adjoining Banting Memorial Hospital, where my baby was born. I woke up to a woman washing the floor on her knees and she told me I had a "cute" little boy and the nurse also told me that I had a "cute" new baby, but I didn't understand the word they both used and, unable to see the child, I imagined it had two heads or six fingers on each hand. However, in reality the doctor had so little experience that my poor son even up to the present has red marks on his back made by the forceps used in his delivery. A TWA stewardess was staying with me and helped in everything though having no skills in this type of situation, her help was limited. I stayed in this place for about two or three weeks. Why? Because the US Consulate in Saint John's, the capital of Newfoundland, decided that the baby needed a passport to enter New

York. And it took them several weeks to finally deliver a passport with the required visa. Dozens of planes a day which came down and then left again, and I was just waiting around with my newborn baby. Finally we left for New York.

And there an enormous crowd was waiting for us with a large sign which was in all the newspapers, "Stork Races Plane". But unfortunately it was not a terribly good experience because the baby was handed around from journalist to journalist, and as luck would have it, he caught a virus which it took him about two years to get rid of. I was finally in New York staying with my parents who had settled there. The baby showed no signs of improvement so my mother and I stole him out of the hospital and went to a French doctor who saved his life with carrot juice. We stayed there for about three months and I must admit I never grew to like the city; we then came back to England for a little time and met with Gordian's father, a school-teacher, and then returned to Spain.

Once back in Spain, about five months after the boy and I had arrived, Gordian was suddenly arrested and spent seventeen interminable days in prison. What had happened in fact was that he gave himself up because he was afraid for me and the baby. He had been taking some people back to France. He had telephoned me earlier the same day and I said things are fine. And a little later suddenly the house was full of police. The house itself contained a big staircase and I had a black velvet dressing-gown with white collar. I walked down in as elegant a way as I could muster and I said, "What are you doing here?" "We're waiting for your husband to come back." What they did not say was "to arrest him."

Later Gordian rang me and I told him that the house was full of police, even on the roof. And he advised me that he would be there the following day at twelve noon as he wished to tell those working with him to hide themselves.

But I told him I would meet him at a certain place at seven in the morning. "But how will you get out of the house?" he said. And I did manage it. But first I went and slept. A Swiss nanny was with our young baby. The next morning – the house was still full of police – I went with the cook, named Dora, and I asked her if I could have her handkerchief and jacket. There was a huge back entrance. So I went walking out through the back entrance. I met Gordian and we decided that the only alternative was for him to give himself up. But to do it *his* way. So we came back in the car, both of us together, with all the police still at our home. And Gordian told them, "Just you people wait. I will take a bath and change my clothes. And I will go myself to *gobernación*." And he had a bath, he even had an hour of rest and with me we took out our car to go to *gobernación*. Then they arrested him. As things worked out he would be incarcerated for two weeks.

I immediately got in touch with the Dutch embassy, which tried to get him liberated but could not. He got food every day in prison prepared by the cook at our house. Somebody wrote me a letter, though I never found out who, stating, "the only way for you to keep in correspondence with your husband is to take a lot of violets to him." And I thought, "Violets?!" But I did as I was told and bought a lot of violets. They let me see him and I brought him the flowers. And the moment Gordian saw these violets he said, "You clever one! Now we can correspond." And I said, "How?" And he said: "Violet juice writes like ink but is not very visible." And from that moment onwards we corresponded with violets. I brought him violets every day. And he wrote lots of messages which went back with the dirty plates. He wrote all sorts of things, even love letters, with violets.

Through the intercession of the Dutch embassy, it became an enormous scandal in Holland. Many newspapers throughout Europe had headlines like "Troeller arrested, imprisoned in Madrid." We received lots of letters addressed to the Dutch embassy offering to do something. People were

even accusing the Dutch government of not having done something immediately. But in reality they did. And one day they informed me that the very next day my husband would be leaving on a Dutch airlines flight from the airport. But I could not talk to him that day. So I, with my baby in my arms, went to the airport. And he came there, apparently not guarded but walking with a lot of people who were personnel from the prison, and boarded the Dutch plane specially sent by their royal family. He said his good-byes and the plane left. There was a hero's welcome for him in Holland and hundreds of journalists were there to write about him; and it was during this triumphant arrival that he met the woman who would be his travelling companion and other love.

So there he was at liberty. But I and the baby were in Spain for another two or three months until everything could be arranged. But as I had experienced, a young woman who smiles at and charms men in official positions can do a lot of duplicitous things. We were also to find out afterwards that we had our own spy – the chauffeur who had worked for us for quite a long period. In Spain at that time there were checkpoints everywhere to show your papers and this way people knew where you were headed. I had false documents so my departure from Spain was not to be easy. I decided that we would not go straight from Madrid to the frontier but go the circuitous way through almost the whole of Spain, so as not to reveal where we were going; even the Swiss nanny would not know anything about what was happening. My driver, the baby, the nanny and I started off. Our car was not a new car. We took two or three days getting the required permissions here and there, paying off people as necessary, and we went through the whole of Spain to get up to the frontier with France. But as I said it was an old car. We got to the frontier, with the chauffeur driving. However, once I paid the chauffeur he left, so our group contained a nanny, a baby and me. We had arrived to a bridge that one could clearly see was half in Spain and half in France. While I was still with the customs

officers, who were all very respectful in the company of a young lady and a baby, I could see my husband on the other side of the bridge, in France. With all the papers in order, a nanny with the baby in the back of the car, me in front driving uphill, I put the car in first gear, and the first gear breaks. It was not possible to carry on in second gear. Seeing this, my husband went to his half of the bridge and shouted over, "Send me the nanny with the baby!" So nanny went across walking with the baby. And there I was, a beautiful young girl, kind of flirting, saying, "Would you mind pushing me?" They did it all the way to the bridge and then part of the way across it. I had had to rent a trailer as we had so many things and we wheeled the car over the bridge, with the trailer following behind. We finally crossed over in the car that no longer functioned, with the trailer holding all our belongings. But it was France at last and there we stayed for some days. The car was abandoned and we bought a new one. And then we went to Rome to work as foreign correspondents for Dutch and Danish publications, continuing the work we had started in war-time Portugal and post-war Germany.

There is not too much to be said about our Italian journey. Gordian had become officially the great international journalist and I the little journalist for a weekly. Rome was a great political experience: we met Enrico De Nicola, the then Head of State and later President, and many leaders of the opposition parties. And for the first time I became really deeply interested in the way politics shape the lives of citizens, even if they do or do not themselves actively intervene in the political process. But I'd also like to put some perspective on what was happening in our lives. While Gordian was moving in very high circles, politically speaking, and very comfortable to be there sustained by feelings of his own political strengths, I on the other hand felt weak in such powerful company and very neglected in terms of our relationship. During these meetings in political circles in Rome we met Wayland Young and his wife Elizabeth. Wayland was a son of Lord Kennet (the finance expert and former British minister of health

Hilton Young) and would later play an important role in my life. It was mostly through him that we met opposition leaders and even on one occasion the former king Umberto II for a night in northern Italy full of talk about politics, literature and spirituality; and with his help we also finally acquired an English nanny, who as fortune would have it was to stay with us for six years. In some ways, through her I came to settle for a year in England.

At the time when the relationship between my husband and I was not going well, we had taken a house and farm in Monte Mario, which is now within the boundaries of Rome but then was not. Our child Gordian was not much more than two years old. We had my husband's mother visit us for a month. There were a lot of dogs in the house and one of them was diagnosed with rabies. We went through a terrible time of worry as the boy got infantile paralysis in his arm as a result apparently of being in the garden. We conjectured that the dog had probably scraped the skin of the baby's arm. My husband had been bitten by the dog and had to have injections in his tummy. We then had to leave Monte Mario. Our son was to be sick until the age of nine. He caught every illness that was going around. But after nine he was perfectly all right and fortunately he is a very healthy man now. It was then we moved to the actual centre of Rome. And there things did not work out too well when I found out that I was going to have another child.

We had taken that small farm in the area of Monte Mario to escape the bad air in nearby Rome that was affecting our son's health and after two years there I was pregnant again. But this time there was another problem as I started a rather difficult pregnancy and I was constantly sick for the first three months. Eventually after these three months the doctors decided the situation was hopeless and that I had to have an abortion. I had lost so much weight and just could not continue like that. I was very upset, terribly

upset. They put me into a hospital of a Protestant group of nuns. The Mother Superior came into my room with a furious look saying, "Ah! These society ladies! To arrange an abortion because they don't want to have a baby!" I started crying and she looked at me and said, "Don't cry! This is ridiculous! It's you who does not want a baby!" I said, "Yes, I do want this baby." And she replied, "All right then. I have the means by which you can have the baby. All the problem is that you are allergic to the child inside you. And that can be put right very easily, but it will hurt." I said, "Well, it's dangerous for me and the baby?" "No" was her clear reply. And then for an hour they put a needle into my buttock and every minute a drop of salt water entered my body. The pain was such that I screamed. After the hour the same Mother Superior came with an enormous tray and I said, "Oh, take that away! I can't eat! I vomit immediately." But she promised me I wouldn't. She put me into bed, gave me the first proper food I had had for three months which I could eat and did not immediately get rid of. And so my daughter, Ines, was born in Nice.

The whole situation was worsened by the fact that, in the middle of the pregnancy, my husband had come to ask for a separation after having met by accident in Rome the woman he had known briefly in Holland a short time before. We had already agreed before this to live apart for three months, so I accepted that he had the right; my own misery by contrast was not dissipated by this logical acceptance. There are circumstances that I have not described very often to others, and which I do now with some trepidation, and they concern my husband asking to leave me when I was pregnant for seven months with my son. The interesting point about my reaction is that I took it stoically. In my diaries I wrote about this and there is not one reproach against him. The point is that I continued loving him till the end – but really loving him. Afterwards there were many men in my life but it never came to anything real because it was him whom I loved. I suppose the key to understanding this situation relates to my character, in

that no matter what happens against me I manage to always see the other person's side. We had spent quite a rough time travelling and the state of affairs became complicated by the fact that I wanted very much to start to study. And I recognised very clearly that this was not possible with the type of life he led, which meant constantly going here and there. It was a mess. So from Dompierre, where I met all these philosophers, we decided to go for a week to a small hotel in the countryside in France, which was mainly known for great eating and we both loved good food very much. We were to be there for a week. There I finally felt that I would never become anything and that I would always be a kind of dependent on him personally. Yet curiously, at the same time, with all that fantastic food and the love-making and so on, we were very happy.

Towards the end I said to him, "Let's separate for three months." I've always done this kind of thing. My thinking on this occasion was that I would have the chance in that time to try to really become a student. And then in three months we would meet again and decide if we wanted to stay together or not. He cried. In the end I cried too, very much. But I said that we have to keep to that calendar and he relented. We then went back to Rome where he worked and, as a matter of coincidence, I became pregnant with my daughter. So that when I was expecting, I said, "Well, we can't do that now." And that is when I came back from Rome, vomiting all the time; and I was even thinking about an abortion, which he agreed might be a good thing. But I refused and the child was eventually born with the help of the senior nun after many problems.

In any case, our relationship was no longer just made up of us two. When he had flown to Holland after prison in Spain and had that enormous reception, he met there a Frenchwoman who was a most important writer in her own right with several books to her name. She came and made her special interview with him, and said he was wonderful. There was nothing

at that juncture between them. But then he met her in the streets of Rome and they saw each other and became lovers. And this was not kept as a secret: we talked about everything to each other. In that sense we had a fantastic relationship. But what then I did not know was that it was to develop further. One day they went together to eat oysters and he got typhoid. I was in San Remo and he was in Rome. And she looked after him. He then came when I was seven months' pregnant to say that both he and she would go together to Persia to produce an article and a big reportage. I knew who she was though I had never met her. People described her to me as very beautiful and from a great French family, a writer and photographer.

I think I should talk about my relationship with my husband. It is very difficult because it is so hard for people understand what is *ununderstandable*. At the same time I am not a fool and have never been what used to be termed an "easy woman" with many lovers while loving my husband at the same time. To explain how this could work for him and for me ... it's not easy to do it. In the whole of the diary of that time I am only blaming myself and I must admit even today rightly so in many ways. In the end I had become quite softer: a fantastic house and servants, and baby Gordian. I was reading an enormous amount and ordering all the right kind of things. I was writing a bit but not very much. This more fully explains why I had proposed the separation of three months. This was in August 1949. I felt that I would never achieve anything and I wanted to go to London and become something. When all that happened I felt it was exactly right, that he was with the better woman – he confessed to me he had a new love, named Marie-Claude Lafarge, in February 1950 – and that in a way forced me afterwards to do something with myself. The diary of that year is a whole series of reproaches against myself, even the parts covering the three months of voluntary separation. Nevertheless, I had the new baby in April and after that my husband left again. And after the baby I got hepatitis and

I was sent into hospital. My husband was by now off with Marie-Claude in Persia. And nanny was with a tiny baby of a month or so of age and pretty much the only money I had were postal orders in my name which of course she couldn't cash. When I woke up from my two-week coma, there was a note from my nanny saying, "I did not take any money. I don't know if you are going to get out of the coma. The only thing I could think about is going to England to my mother." And she did. When I finally got out of hospital, I weighed thirty-nine kilos and had to convalesce in a big house that we had rented, looked after by a maid, before leaving for London three months later. In Paris the train stopped in one station and Suzanne, who lived there, wanted to fetch me at the train to take me to the other station, which was going to London. It is a sign of the very reduced physical state I was in that she did not recognise me. But we did manage to transfer to the other train. Then I had some trouble in London to find the village where my children were. And then I started to study ... and really to study.

A month and a half after my husband and I separated, I was back in a hospital in San Remo as I had now gone down with hepatitis as a result of being given what was effectively an overdose of the new and only half-tested drug, penicillin. I was quite unconscious for some days. And during that time nanny, now quite alone, getting frightened and with no funds, took off for England with both of my children, leaving her mother's address outside London on my hospital table, someone who "unfortunately", she wrote, did not have a telephone. When I recovered from my coma, I found my husband gone for reasons of work to Persia with his new love, my babies in England, and myself, quite helpless, in a hospital bed in San Remo. It took almost two months for me to recover and finally take the train to London in September 1950.

Part 5 – 1950s: Studies in Switzerland and London

In London I was able to recover my babies, found a nice furnished house, and started to do something that I had promised André Malraux – to study. I had no bachelors degree, so I could not apply directly to university to do graduate work. But in London I discovered a so-called “ancient exam” in the university. So I went to a special kind of cramming school for a few months of classes, passed my exams of French, German, mathematics and Latin, but failed my English language test. However, I so impressed the examiner with my fluency gained in only three months that I passed the subject. I was then confronted with the entrance exam to various universities. I applied to Oxford where, after taking an exam and being admitted, I had a fascinating interview with Iris Murdoch, the well-known Anglo-Irish writer and teacher of philosophy. However, I turned down the offer of an Oxford place essentially because I realised how difficult it was going to be to move to an Oxford college without my nanny and two children living with me. However, since I had also been accepted by Bedford College for Women. Secure with funding coming from my husband and parents, and occasional payments as a correspondent (an activity I came to despise somewhat for not being “real” writing), I accepted their invitation to study philosophy there starting in January 1951.

A short time before this, in 1949, I had paid a brief visit to London to see a friend, Wayland Young, my husband and I had met in the company of the Italian head of state in Rome, in his beautiful though not very large house in Bayswater. I recall England at this time as a dark country with an inadequate supply of electricity, long queues for essential goods and destroyed buildings even in the countryside – even today the feeling I have of that first visit to London is one of a frozen darkness. I was to stay with Wayland and his wife for a time. It was there that my ignorance was brought

to the fore; my absolute ignorance of what intellectual life really was. I had not yet gone to university but I was pretending to myself that I had read more or less everything that had to be read. Admittedly it had given me something of a background, including poetry; I also imagined that from my youth onwards I knew a great deal about music, “my” Mozart, “my” Beethoven, “my” whoever inside out. And there I was kind of thrown into the most intellectual place and a great venue of art. Nearly every evening there were people, real poets, publishing books of poetry, whose names I knew. I met Dylan Thomas and spent many hours in deep conversation about politics and economics with Wayland’s politician father, Lord Kennet. There I discovered how unbelievably ignorant I was. It became most clear when at one moment something rather strange was played on the gramophone, and I asked Elizabeth, Wayland’s wife (who by the way was just as educated as he was), “What’s that?” and she said to me, “Ruth! This is Mozart!” The Mozart I knew up to then had somehow nothing to do with what I was listening to. And from that day I decided I really had to do something about my lack of education.

I had come to London to find a nanny because the Swiss nanny we had was not good, certainly not suitable for our kind of house. And the English nanny we had in Madrid had swallowed an open safety pin and I had to leave her there to be cured, which eventually she was. The difficulty that presented itself in the operation was that, being a tall woman, it required a great effort for the magnet which she had also to swallow to reach her stomach for the pin to attach itself to it. So I finally did find a nanny who was to stay with us for six years. At one point during these early years in England my husband Gordian came back and we went with Wayland for a walking holiday in Wales. I am not sure if I conceived my daughter there or, what is more likely, in the place where we decided to separate for three months. But what I am sure of was the effect on me of my discovery in

London that I knew nothing, and that I was more certain than ever that I wanted to be free and to study.

I entered Bedford College only to find that there was at that time no philosophy department. So as it turned out from January to April 1951 I studied philosophy at its sister institution, University College. My enthusiasm for philosophy very quickly diminished because the fashion in Anglo-American circles in the mid-1950s placed little emphasis on the history of philosophy – the philosophy I, in my innocence, had expected to learn – and much more on logical positivism. Our main teacher was A. J. Ayer, a high priest of the field. My disappointment was immense and I clearly recall my last tearful comment when I finally had had enough of his teaching and stormed out of the basement classroom: “This is not philosophy!” And I thought for the first time in my life that the world was not accepting the enthusiasm with which I, at the age of thirty-eight, brought to making myself an intellectual, and somehow to become a teacher, a writer and a person dedicated to making the world a better place.

For the Easter holiday of 1951 I wished to spend this short time with my husband in Italy. I went with the children and nanny to San Remo; and when the two weeks had finished, while the children stayed on in San Remo, I started the return journey alone to London. But passing through Basel, Switzerland, I had to leave the train with a high temperature. I went straight to a very small, immaculately clean hotel in front of the station. I was diagnosed with angina. There I stayed for some two weeks since the doctor did not let me leave. But this was not too hard since I do read German and the hotel people were able to buy one book after another for me. One day, however, I had no book and, bored, started of all things to read the telephone book. And when I came to the letter “J”, there at the first line I saw the name “Carl Jaspers.” I picked up the telephone and dialed

and Mrs. Jaspers answered the call. I said that I was a philosophy student in London and that I was most disappointed with my studies. Was it possible, maybe, at some time to see her great husband? Maybe he could give some words of advice what to do. And she answered, "Well, if you come immediately, that's all right. Because tomorrow morning we are going for a month's holiday." At that time I had very long hair and it was not in good shape. So, to make myself presentable, I put a scarf over my head, asked for a taxi, and to the amazement of the hotel people walked out from the hotel and went to the tiny house of Prof. and Mrs. Jaspers.

Mrs. Jaspers, a small woman, had already had a courageous life. Prof. Jaspers was most impressive: tall, still a very good-looking man with a white mane and always a smile on his face. He asked me very kindly to come into his study. I spent the next four hours with him to my immense delight. He delighted me speaking of what philosophy really could be – a very special *encanto*. At the end I said to him, "Do you think you could accept me as your student?" And he said, "Yes. I liked all the answers you gave me and your interest. I will be happy to take you as a student. Be here on the 15th of October." That was in April. I went back to my hotel, booked my train ticket and, with high temperature or not, went to London, at once phoning my nanny in San Remo to instruct her to stay there and not to come back to London. I packed all our things into my car and took some days to drive, still with a debilitating temperature, from London to Basel.

I was there alone as the nanny was still in San Remo. There we stayed for the next two or so years. I became not only Carl Jaspers' student but one of what he called his "disciples" together with Hanna Arendt, later very famous in the United States as a political philosopher and originator of the word "totalitarianism"; I didn't know it at the time but the great man himself declared later on that I was one of his two true disciples of among the approximately fifty students he was teaching. I also started driving twice a

week to Freiburg in Germany, over the frontier (a university I was later to teach at, at the same time as at the University of Mainz), and there took classes with Martin Heidegger and Eric Wolf, a teacher of philosophy of religion and philosophy of law whom I then preferred very much over Heidegger and from whom, I think as far as my own education is concerned, I learned more deeply, growing to know what law really means to human beings and how without law we would in many ways still be savages. The philosophy of religion is something which even today is of the greatest importance to me, since I continue to give it at my institute where it remains perhaps my own principal programme as a teacher. It involves addressing the question not only of belief in one religion but to look at each of the major religions of the world, and find out what they have to add to a worldwide understanding of what religion and also spirituality means for a human being, without which he can hardly be called a human being.

At the same time from Basel I went once a week to Zurich where Karl Barth, the famous religious teacher, was teaching at the university. He was a man whose strict way of seeing religion clashed completely with the viewpoint of Eric Wolf. But for me it was an incredible adventure to go from the one to the other in the same week. So during those years at Basel I was taking instruction from Carl Jaspers, Martin Heidegger, Eric Wolf and Karl Barth, and also from Barth's brother Heinrich who was yet another man completely different in his way of thinking and who really taught me the history of philosophy. It is thanks to him that today I am acquainted with even the minor philosophers and what they had to add to our wisdom and our questioning of philosophy. They all together taught me to ask the *question*: that each time, for every problem in every situation, there was one main issue; to ask that one main question meant to put oneself into question. That is what has remained with me throughout my life and is a central element in my teaching and writing. I recall with some amusement

my experiences with these great teachers: Heidegger throwing me out of a seminar because I had mentioned the name of Karl Popper, Barth objecting to my wearing make-up at seven in the morning, and Eric Wolf annoyed at my deficiencies in the Greek language.

Later, one of my great interests while I was living, teaching and working in England was my yearly visit to Switzerland to take part in the Eranos intellectual discussions, starting in 1965 and ending in 1968. Eranos was created by the religious historian Rudolf Otto, the spiritualist Olga Froebe-Kapteyn, Jung and others in 1933; it began as a meeting to which Jung invited young people whom he thought had something to add to philosophy, psychology and spirituality. The meetings always took place over the course of one week. After two years of attendance I was invited to become a member of Eranos, which I felt was a great honour. After being awarded this membership, I went to the Eranos building situated near a lake for a few weeks, when I had to finish some writings of mine, to enjoy the quietness there and the company of erudite people. It was a very simple house: the rooms just had a bed, a small table, a chair and a hook to place your clothes on. The Greek word *Eranos* refers to a banquet to which the guests bring contributions of food – what one might term a no-host dinner. In practice this meant that what were served there were talks by important people often from the Jung Institute in Zurich, who would then read their thoughts and conclusions of the previous year. The meeting was followed by discussions, in which I participated. And finally the contributions were published afterwards in a large book. The Eranos get-together for me was a great event every year because of the honour to be invited to engage in discussions in English, French, German and Italian with a great number of really prestigious Jungian psychologists, philosophers and the cream of continental thinkers. When anyone telephoned and asked for me and then wanted to know where I was, my daughter would say, “She is cleansing her soul at Eranos.” I was to go there for about six or seven years.

But let me return to my days of study at Basel. There was one particular very memorable thing that happened to me there. The university had a small old building on Market Square in Basel with very thick walls, and at one of the windows there was a place where Nietzsche used to think and write. And I, a mere student, asked and was given permission to do my reading at that window, with a simple chair, with me sitting there and feeling absolutely wonderful. It was really very important for me. I sat there for many hours reading and writing during the time I was studying with Jaspers. How did Jaspers strike me as a philosopher? It took me some time to get accustomed to his quite elaborate way of talking about philosophy and also his appreciation of the old philosophers. While I had been very lucky in taking a course of history of philosophy while still in England given by Professor Stanley Victor Keeling, and also another given in Basel by Heinrich Barth, the way Jaspers explained earlier philosophers was quite different. He expected one actually to know about their lives and about the kind of philosophy these great thinkers were interested in. But as I said he had his own special kind of way of appreciating them (as one can see in his enormous work *The Great Philosophers*). His comments and analyses were of course those of a real philosopher and not somebody who merely recounts the history of philosophy.

I remember above all three figures he would often mention who especially impressed me. One was Socrates the Man; not so much Socrates the Philosopher because that Socrates we only know in the writings of Plato, which explains why Jaspers called him the "Platonic Socrates". So the former we could perhaps call "Jaspers' Socrates". The second figure was Confucius, whom he inspired me to like because I used not to like him as much as Laozi; I had always been on the side of Laozi over Confucius. But Jaspers was excellent talking about Confucius. And the third was Jesus,

but as a Man not Jesus Christ; Jesus placed in a kind of context, the Man, the philosopher Jesus. He explained very carefully that Jesus never made a comment that did not come from the Old Testament; what he did was he gave it a new impetus, a new context, a new meaning to most of it. And he spoke of Jesus the Man who, after the trial officiated by Pilate, is certainly afraid and changes places every night so as not to be taken. His views left a strong impression on me. I must say I have very often been using these three in my descriptions of Jaspers and his thinking in my own classes. He laid special emphasis on them because in many ways they transformed the world. Some years ago I gave a number of lectures called "Books that Changed the World" and it is curious to think that these world-changers never wrote anything. Perhaps what they needed was a writer and teacher like Jaspers to help them do that.

I would occasionally see Jaspers privately and during these visits he told me the story of his life. He was the ninth son of a German banker and general, and his eight brothers were all sent to military schools, but he was born sick so they did not expect him to live long. The father never looked at him; indeed Jaspers thought he hated him. But exactly because the father did not want anything to do with him, the mother was able to put him into a more academic school, not the military one, and thus he was able to study medicine. From medicine he passed to psychology and, from there, to philosophy. When he told me this story, he would generally say, "I'm telling you two different stories. One involves my father and my brothers and my sickness, the other the opportunities this same sickness gave me." He went on to marry a Jewish lady. But when Hitler came to power, the first thing he was told was that he would have to divorce her so that she could be taken to a concentration camp. So he arranged with some friends for an empty coffin to be buried. And she lived throughout the whole war in an attic, without being able to move around, with limited food and all the other discomforts. And it was she whom I had met the first time I came to their

house. Jaspers himself was a great man. Sadly I was not to see him after I left Basel. I am very proud that I have his signatures on many things. I actually have notes of his lectures, written in such small handwriting that I can hardly read them anymore, and these I donated to Stanford University so they won't get lost. They are very precious to me and, I hope, will be so to the people who want to look at them.

What I learned in Basel, Freiburg and Zurich gave me the basis of what I would learn in my life later on. Nothing later would teach me so much about what life is about; what our aspirations, our possibilities as human beings are, not exactly to become what Nietzsche termed the "over-man" but rather to take a journey towards the "over-man". That means simply to be able to stand on our own two feet. It is difficult to do that and perhaps physically we can't; but I came to understand that intellectually and spiritually we can, and that it involves making our journey not just biologically – from birth to death – but also existentially in the sense of existing from the future to the past, employing our long-term thinking, our long-term preparing of ourselves for today. I became convinced that we are not living existentially from the past to the future but rather from each little future, from the tomorrow to the today.

This was a different world: after the war, the planet was smiling again, it had plans for a better future, for a democratic existence, where people could express not only their opinions but even achieve them in real life. There would again be a place for art, the sciences, philosophy and religion to bloom. There would be no more prisoners of war or torture, no more A-bombs exploded over civilian houses in Japan; there would be a time for each individual to develop his or her hopes, for children to look towards a world in which they could create and teach a role which would be worthwhile for God. Long walks with André Malraux had showed me a world which I had not known, a world where politics were transformed into

reality, where sacrifice was sometimes needed in order to create a greater world, where men and women could look towards the sky and not fear an explosive device falling on their head. With him I saw a Paris which I would never otherwise have known, but also because of him Gordian and I saw that the past in China, in Japan, Germany and the Soviet Union had been the making of their people; how they had succeeded in degrading people to an animal existence and how man was no longer a feeling, empathetic being, but on the contrary was lacking what the Bhagavad Gita calls the *jñāna* inside him, the disposition to receive a higher spirituality.

Malraux wrote a series of books, all of which I would eventually read, but through this personal contact with him, he gave me a direction as to what I should study and what to contribute to the world even during the time I would be studying and then afterwards. On one occasion he met me at the railway station and I descended from the *wagon-lit* with one of his books; seeing this, he asked me if I was re-reading this study because I agreed with him and I responded that in fact I was identifying all the parts I did not agree with and about which I intended to argue with him. He gave me the feeling, which has never left me, that living was not a gift, that we have to earn it through our contribution to a better world, a world that certainly had not existed during the World War, embracing a condition in which each person could realise his own dreams of a better world. This great personal revelation occurred during the time I was walking with Malraux, a man who later on would become a very fine Minister of Culture under Charles de Gaulle.

I remember one episode very clearly and it is one I have mentioned very briefly already. We were invited to a tea-party with him in his sister-in-law's elegant Parisian suburban home. The experience made an even deeper impression on me, of belief not only in this man but in Gordian, my husband, and my relation to him. It was a beautiful afternoon. At one

moment Malraux was greeting one guest after another and offering a cigar to the men, presented in a beautiful box. Quite suddenly and to my enormous surprise his sister-in-law stood up and then fainted. I asked Malraux what had happened and he confessed that by offering these cigars to the guests he had been signalling to her that her husband had died. Her husband, a French soldier and prisoner of the Germans, was placed by them on a boat with a German flag and the boat was immediately bombarded by the American Army, who naturally understood that it was carrying enemy soldiers. So his favorite brother had died by American bombs, one last deception of the Germans. Malraux's life was indeed tragic and this tragedy had been foretold to him by a Buddhist nun while he was excavating in Laos; she had cursed him saying "may you die the last of all those you love." At that time he paid little attention to the curse but in fact, all through his life, anybody who had been near him died unexpectedly, from his father and brother to the woman he loved and with whom he had two sons; later the same two sons would be killed together in a car accident; and lastly a woman he loved later in life, Louise de Vilmorin, also predeceased him.

By 1954 my son was six and had to go to primary school. And it was impossible to send him to school in Basel since, though he spoke perfect English and French at that time, he had no German and certainly no Swiss Deutsch. So I left with the children and the English nanny for Geneva in order to install him there in the international school, the Casa du Portugal. The fact that Suzanne and José also lived there – José was the head of the school my son would enter – and I was also able to continue some of my studies through means of correspondence, meant that we were very happily to stay there for six years. Geneva also had two institutions that attracted me as places to study. One was obviously the University of Geneva and the other, the Graduate Institute of International Studies. Since the special subject in my philosophical studies was medieval

philosophy, and at the University of Geneva there was nobody to teach Saint Thomas Aquinas, I got in touch with a Dominican priest and asked him if he would be able to come to the University of Geneva and give me a serious philosophical course on the great priest-philosopher. He was delighted to do so, if there were at least two students. I invited my friend George Curzon who reluctantly agreed (though eventually he didn't actually attend).

But when afterwards I proposed it to the director of the University of Geneva, there was a big surprise: I was told that no Catholic priest had entered the university since the days of Calvin. I insisted, explaining that it was about time in the twentieth century to allow a Catholic priest to come in. He certainly was not going to convert students but would just give me that class officially. In the end, I succeeded with the authorities. But when finally the Dominican priest appeared at the gates of the University and had to walk the fifty metres to our building, the whole route was filled with students standing around with serious faces, and the director as well as myself were quite perturbed until the priest finally reached the building. The director explained to the protesters that the university had sufficient centuries as a Protestant institute to survive this incursion from the old enemy religion. It was in a way a very worrying but at the same funny situation, since the Dominican priest would not under normal circumstances produce much fear among a group of young people, being small, fat, with his habit reaching to the ground and producing a comic noise as he walked. All the same he slowly proceeded as if he were conquering the place. The lectures turned out to be wonderful; I will never forget them. I was the only student and we started each class with a sort of respectful formality with his "Madame!" followed by my "Monsieur!" The most interesting part came at the end, when I was invited to ask questions, which I did. In answer to the final question the priest generally said, "For that you need faith."

The other interesting part of my studies at the University of Geneva involved an Egyptian diplomat. I had got acquainted with the tenth-century Islamic scientist and philosopher Al-Farabi (or Alfarabius as he's sometimes known in the West) and he had impressed me quite a lot as a mystic and Sufi, and I wanted to write a paper about him. But there was a rule in Geneva which did not allow me to write papers unless I knew the language of the person I was talking about. So officially I had to learn Arabic. The university this time asked an Egyptian diplomat from the United Nations in Geneva to give me classes. My teacher of Arabic was a most elegant but unsmiling young man; he taught me Arabic for two terms. At the final exam, I was able to write something of that most beautiful language and that something was the sentence, "Where is the restaurant?" This is all the Arabic I ever learned but anyhow I had fulfilled the requirements of the university.

A very interesting institution came into my life at about this time: the Graduate Institute of International Studies was quite a discovery for me, a place where I was first a student and then a teacher for a short time. Forget the word "graduate" as it was mainly devoted at that time to undergraduate teaching. And there I took a *licence* programme called "International Studies" that consisted of three parts: international economics, international law and international history. Two of these became very important for me: on the one hand, international economics, which I later studied at the London School of Economics; and the other, which I must confess I have mostly forgotten, was International Law. But the latter course had an excellent teacher and I acquainted myself with how countries could be born and how they could cease to exist. I especially liked the writings of the Anglo-German Lassa Oppenheim. All sorts of cases of international law; how, for instance, arbitration was different from the proceedings of an international court. One anecdote I well recall. There

was a story of a hunter, a Frenchman, who was hunting for rabbits on a small island in the English Channel. And there one day he found a dead man. He took the dead man in his boat and went back to France. When the story became known, England objected to the fact that a French court was judging the case, maintaining that the island was not French but English. The case was taken finally to the International Court of Arbitration at the Hague in the Netherlands. After years of discussions, the Court came out with the answer that the island was neither English nor French but Dutch. And at that moment, of course, both England and France objected to the fact, and explained that the Court itself could only arbitrate between the one and the other, and could not introduce a third country. This type of conundrum of international politics impressed me very much and for a time I was wondering if after my BA I would study international law. As matters developed I did not proceed down that road but I still keep a great interest in it. I eventually took an exam at the Graduate Institute, which was more or less a BA, but I have never made much use of it.

In 1957 I finally went back to England to take my BA exams externally together with some five thousand students from current or past British colonies and oversea territories. I passed it rather well. And suddenly Bedford College for Women, which had been out of my life for six years, claimed me as one of its students and this was good for me because in England it is always better to have internal accreditation for one's degree rather than an external one.

In the meantime I continued to live and study in Geneva, with my focus on philosophy. I was now ready to search for a teaching position in philosophy and so I applied to the University of London. And from twenty people who applied, I managed to be placed among the final two and I heard later that I was even supported by the head of the department; but the other candidate, being a man, succeeded in getting the post, a prejudice and

final decision that greatly disappointed me. At the same time, I noticed that nearly all my friends who had studied economics and not philosophy were getting posts as professors of economics at different colleges and universities. I thus decided it made sense to take a masters in economics, starting in the autumn of 1960 and finishing in the middle of July 1962. I saw Professor Richard Sayers who gave me a book on international economics on a particular Friday and told me, "Have a look at it and see me on Monday." So when I saw him on Monday he said, "Now, have you looked at it?" and I replied, "I read it. I thought it was nothing but commonsense." And he said, "You are accepted for the masters course!" So I took the programme while at the same time taking a philosophy masters at the London School of Economics, which I never finished because I disliked both the course in general and specifically the teaching of the principal lecturer (a perennial problem for me in the UK). I owe Prof. Sayers a great deal, as he was later to supervise my doctoral thesis on monetary mechanisms in international economics and indeed his work on the groundbreaking 1959 Radcliffe Report on bank lending encouraged me to enter that field for my doctoral studies a little later. He even invited me on many occasions to accompany him on visits to the City of London where his advice was in great demand and this entire experience eliminated any regret I might have felt at that time about leaving the study of philosophy to address the niceties of finance.

My life in the 1950s could be characterised by my trying to make an educated woman out of myself; and I think, by the end of that decade, when I had moved to England, I was well on the way. In 1957, the year my father died of cancer, I took my first degree, in philosophy; then my masters degree in economics and then after that my PhD also in economics. I lived with my children. They were very successful in a French *lycée*, located not far from where we were living in Kensington, London. The children did well and I loved them dearly. I tried to make everything the best I could, while I

was also working. Sometimes that was not very easy because I not only worked at the university, commuting four days a week to Guildford, but was also travelling a good deal. Once I started I was earning nicely as a university lecturer and an occasional consultant. But other people did not really understand my life.

I had quite a number of friends, some of them very close, who could not understand my relationship with my husband Gordian. He in the meantime was in Asia and Africa, making what perhaps became the world's most important films about developing countries up to that time. I admit some responsibility for starting him in this career of documentary film-making. Just after the war I bought a camera in the Paris flea market and he made a three-minute film about the same market that went on to win a prize. He had become "a household name" – everybody knew him. But his success was actually greatest in Germany where, apart from making these extraordinary films, he wrote at least three times a year a fifteen- to twenty-five-page article for *Der Spiegel*, the German high-brow weekly magazine. He wrote a number of books and made over two dozen films for UNICEF, which had an enormous success. His most successful book was called *Women of this World*, with many fascinating photographs. But he was not in England, and he was not with his wife or children. Was he alone? No. He had been since that airport homecoming in 1948 with Marie Claude de Farge and they had developed a mainly working association, because she was a very intelligent, highly cultured, very beautiful young woman, from a very interesting French family. Little by little they formed a group of people who went with them to the countries where their help was needed, where the things were very bad. And they were exceedingly successful. But for him, as well as for me, the really basic thing had been not our marriage but our love for each other. So he came about three times a year for about a month and a half each time, to stay with me and the family; and it was a

great time, though he would often come tired after having been seated on a horse sometimes for three days without food.

His films were also shown by the BBC in London. There were some adventures when they were sent to London because I had to get them and hide them. Very often the people who were the rulers of countries where he was filming would try to get hold of them. And the films had to be fetched by the BBC, with police in front and police behind. On one occasion they nearly succeeded in stealing this material. I had been very carefully hiding the films and some intruders turned the whole apartment upside down, but they did not find them.

My son did not turn out like his father; he does not possess the same character as his father and there are very few similarities between them. I can't describe him very well. He is a fine human being. He is not an adventurer at all. But my grandson, his son, I think will be very much like my husband was because he has the same kind of interest in people. Though my own son is not really so interested in other people, is quiet and not talkative, but he is on the other hand forceful. My daughter by contrast was very much like my husband. She had that charm; not her father's intelligence or rather not as much. She was a dancer. She was not interested in the bourgeois life. A very beautiful woman. When she entered the room nobody would see her coming, but afterwards she would be suddenly the centre of everything, just like my husband.

My husband was a charmer; very serious, incredibly intelligent, less book-intelligent than general intelligent and a completely free-thinker. A person with no feelings for the bourgeois life, no feelings of what it would be to have children. But he was responsible and would send money even when it was not necessary. He was a "hard" figure telling his audience the truths about the poorest countries and the rights of women, brave and conscious

of the spiritual needs of those around him, while at the same time being emotionally very limited with an inability to sustain warm relationships and quite frightened by bodily illness. Lacking in sentimentalism, he would look at what he found wrong or lacking in a way that was bereft of psychological implications yet replete with sociological ones. He was loved by everybody and he had very strong political enemies too. But he could discuss anything with anybody and win the discussion. He started a foundation with about seventy films and how this was done tells a story that is typical of him. He started his foundation in Luxembourg. The films are still selling, though he died in 2003. But one thing he had not done was to say where the income should go! So the Institution becomes richer and richer. I don't know what finally will happen to the work itself. But that is utterly characteristic of him; he had never any feel for money. He was earning it in large amounts but he was also spending it grandly.

There was nothing regular about anything. But he was a really great man. Personally he had no interest in pursuing a bourgeois life either, he was never at home and children did not interest him. Much later in life he formed a quite close relationship with his daughter but that was many years afterwards. In the meantime, there were many friends of mine who thought that he was not a nice man because he did not seem to be really interested in his own family, even in me. Loving me, "Oh, my darling!", and then he would be gone. However, for me it was in many ways all right after a time; it took me some years. Why was this the case? I had my work, which I loved; I was writing, I was teaching. I was with my children. I did more and became more well-known, was on demand to come and give lectures and talks; and appreciated for who I am, for my intellectual capacity. It was quite all right. But on the other hand, of course, I had no man and therefore I had a number of men. And one or two lasted quite a few years, but not one was ever terribly interesting as persons. Sex was one thing and to love the person was quite another. It was fine. All of these men were much younger

than I; I had never been interested in older men. So there were other men, as my dairies record, but the only man I loved was Gordian, my husband. I still love him. All my women friends hated him and even thought he was the most jealous person. But he was not; it was just his nature. I have worn a platinum ring with a superbly beautiful natural pearl very day for over seventy years, a gift he had given me as a sign of his love, and although this love changed over many decades, it helped me to believe in love as a precious gift from God and as a token of spiritual quest and belief in the destiny of our decisions. Recently I committed to give the slightly shrunk ring to my granddaughter. My husband remained the chief witness of my life in the sense that everything I did or refused was judged in my mind according to what I thought he would approve of – if I contradicted this, I felt I was cheating.

He was politically very engaged. He did wonderful work, very important work that I feel helped millions to liberate themselves, to finish with colonialism. And women came with that. The woman with whom he lived died quite some time ago of asthma, while they were talking on the phone – she was in Paris, he in Africa. For me he was just an ideal from every point of view. But he was not there; then again God is not here either. My friends would talk badly about him and tell me, “He should be here!” My husband did not believe in anything. When he was about to pass away he said, “I have had a wonderful life, I hope that I have been doing a lot of good for humanity, and now this is the end.” No interest at all. My son is turning out the same; my daughter only when she was very ill – she had cancer for two years before she died – did she start to think a little bit about what may be beyond. She did not really recognise what she would be leaving. For me that is different. I do know, I do believe very much in the “Beyond” but my belief in it is done not in a religious but a spiritual way.

And that is what I believe: that all the positive things I have been thinking, learning, writing, teaching – they can't just disappear, they cannot merely be lost. I don't believe in reincarnation. I wish to say something precisely about this topic and what it means for me. To clarify this: I do believe that what we acquire spiritually, not intellectually, can't get lost. There is no place or time for "Thought". Thought is a miraculous thing. How is it that we suddenly have a thought? Where does it come from? Where does it go to? This kind of thing we continue to talk about at the think-tank at my Institute. It's great; I think it is very important, especially for a person of my age. The "Afterwards" is really something which I can only believe in a very profound way as something that cannot get lost. That it is like Sufi's "Big Elastic" that is folded into ourselves when we are born and that goes back into the Universal Elastic. And therefore there would be a tiny piece returned to this collective Elastic afterwards from the deceased individual; it could form a beautiful part of the Elastic or it might be dark and rotten. We do have an influence on the world of eternity, though this word is mostly badly employed: eternity is now, it is every instant and not some time in the future.

It must have happened before we left Wiesbaden, that is before I was fifteen; somebody told me that one should understand the universal life in a way like an elastic; like a massive, all-encompassing elastic, infinitely large. When a baby is born a piece of the elastic is put into him but without losing the connection with the whole elastic. This great unified "Elastic" stays in us all our life. Essentially it is then a question of how you treat this elastic. If you treat it well, that tiny piece which had been in you, it would go back to the general elastic and would be either beautifully embroidered or neglected, falling into pieces. That interpretation made an incredible impression on me, even till today: this connection with the eternal elastic, something that would be there forever. It has remained in me always. It shows how elastic is, always pulled more and going into somebody else's soul. The idea is: how far we can contribute to the goodness or the

badness of the world. Because if everybody is bad and we let it go rotten, the elastic will not exist any longer.

I have often spoken about this subject. At one point in 1998 I gave a series of talks on Radio Universidad in Mexico over the course of three months. One of the topics I spoke about was spirituality. One day I was told that I would be joined by a Puerto Rican lady, who was a spiritual head of the Sufis in Mexico. I was very interested. On the day of the interview I was already there when I saw a woman with a Saharan suit, with curly blonde hair, quite tall, speaking British English. She said, "Ah you are Ruth! Nice to meet you." "It's very nice to meet you whoever-you-are, but I am waiting for the spiritual leader of the Sufis here. And it is already time she arrived." And she said, "Well, that's me!" We had no time to talk as we had to start our discussion in the studio. After that I said, "I can't understand, you look like an Englishwoman". She replied, "I am English." "But what about Puerto Rico?!" "Well, my parents were in Puerto Rico, my father was a diplomat. And I was born in Puerto Rico." Then I asked her was she actually Sufi. "I was Catholic," she told me. "And then I went to study in New York. There I met somebody who was Sufi and we got married. We are divorced now. And I have become a spiritual leader in Mexico." I was to see her very often afterwards, a beautiful woman.

In our think-tank we talk about this kind of question. There are a few people with us whom I regard as really great people. One of them is a very ardent Catholic, another one does not believe in anything, and another is half-Jewish and half-Protestant, and yet another who says he adheres to a new concept, that of "negative entropy", a new religion in the USA. Its thinking goes along the following lines: since it is only human beings who can get rid of entropy by making order and disorder, therefore the human being is to be glorified. I find it at the same time funny and – why not! There are apparently something like 280 different Protestant sects in the USA, so why

not have the 281st? But there is a central point that makes it different: it is the human being, the only one, who creates order in the universe; and the act of making order in the universe is a negative entropy. Therefore you can twist it in order to become a religion. I don't know if they adore the human being, or what they do, but I am rather amused by it.

I don't like the term "religion" or more precisely anything that is a *finished* religion with fixed rules like "this is a commandment", "this is right and this is wrong" or "you go to heaven and you go to hell" – all that makes absolutely no sense to me. We know nothing about all that; we have no idea about heaven or hell, we are supposedly run by a personalised God. As they said in ancient Greece, "If donkeys could draw, they would draw their god with a donkey's head," and it is what we are doing: we have a certain look and we expect God to look like us, which is a blasphemy. So I think a lot about spirituality. I like **Kenn** who has written about seventy books about psychology and philosophy, and he says that we always finish with a certain amount of spirituality. I think he is right: whatever questions we are asking, we are asking ourselves. As Heidegger says, "When I am asking a question I put myself into the question." I put myself into a question and I can fill this with a certain amount of spirituality which must exist. We are not like donkeys. My own brother, in his last months of life, confided to me that he prayed very often and, though I doubt spirituality depends on prayer, it may mean to live a life that is described by the prayer. I am convinced that we can do more than just receive spirituality, that we can in fact contribute to it.

In our think-tank we talk a lot about consciousness. It is an unfortunate weakness of the languages that in neither French nor Spanish is there a proper distinction between "consciousness" and "conscious". We address something called "Global Consciousness"; it is a theme that I proposed to go very much into myself. We are studying it though we do not have a clear

idea what it could mean; perhaps it involves a deeper consciousness. In this connection Jean-Paul Sartre thought that every morning when we wake up we have a new consciousness but I am sure that we do not. So what is it really? Lately there are people who write about consciousness as a physical thing; and I agree, consciousness is also something physical. I can be conscious that I am looking at you; but that is not the consciousness we are talking about.

There is one thing I would like to mention on this point. Very recently I was invited to give a talk at what was called the 'International Conference on Existential Psychology'. This is a good example of my negative opinions. I am not so keen on psychology anymore, mainly psychotherapy. Jung was right on many points, such as his idea of individuation, which is not the same as individualism. Individuation means that we have to work on ourselves to become an exceptionally great individual; it also means that the only person who can really help us when we are in trouble or not is ourselves. So in November of 2008 I gave a conference on dignity. The idea of dignity has come to me through Malraux; all his work could be understood as involving human dignity and the need for man to become dignified, to be proud of himself – never to do something, if possible, which is undignified.

I thought that the talk was very interesting. There were about 250 people present, mainly psychotherapists, and the success was absolutely overwhelming. One of the participants stood up and posed the question, "So, we can all phase out the therapeutic approach?!" I said, "No, you can teach the people in your therapy that the only people that can help them are themselves. And instead of telling you all their dirty stories, all their infidelities or husbands' infidelities, or this or that, to rather not focus on them but to look in themselves and try to develop what they can be, not pride but dignity they can build for themselves. And then they'll find that

they can do it, really work on themselves.” I returned for the next part of this discussion the following November. This time they did something which I very much welcomed: they put me in a debate between psychotherapy and philosophy together. I am very happy at that type of large quorum, with many people, where I think one can be looking for the basis of all this, dignity itself.

There is a very interesting book (whose title really comes from Malraux *Les Noyers de l'Altenburg*), *To Deny Our Nothingness*, by the great psychotherapist and biographer of Martin Buber, Maurice Friedman, who received the permission of Malraux to use the phrase and it deals precisely with this subject. Victor Frankl, a neurologist and psychiatrist whose thinking was deeply affected by his experiences treating the despair of inmates of Theresienstadt concentration camp in what was Czechoslovakia, wrote on the same subject: “Those who believe in themselves do not die.” That is all that has to be said, in itself it is perfect! There is so much we can do with our own dignity, but not the false kind involving statements like “I am the greatest” and “I am the most beautiful”; a dignity by which I cannot do certain things because it could be below my dignity as a human being. And that is what, in philosophy, I believe in.

There are certain things in the spiritual life which make people completely non-existent, related to the expression “my fault!” – it does not make sense! Look at somebody who was a good Christian, Paul Tillich, who used to say that there are three existential anxieties: meaninglessness, the fear of finitude, and the anxiety of culpability involving not to have done enough in one’s life. And that last one I do suffer from! I did not write the books I should have written; I have not done all the teaching I should have done, all the convincing I should have been doing, all the effort to get people to become dignified human beings. All that I should have done and never did. Tillich says in his book *The Courage to Be*, a book published in 1952 that I

read several decades ago and which has been very important to me, that there are two general kinds of anxieties. One anxiety is pathological and this one is easy to cure. You only have to take some pills or some psychoanalysis, or something similar. And then there is an existential anxiety and that has three parts. One is the anxiety because of the finitude of life, meaning that eventually it will finish. That one I don't think I have though recently it is present now and again but still never very strongly. The second one is the anxiety that life is really meaningless. That I have never had, never at any point in my life because I have realised that every moment in life has an incredible significance for me. And then comes the one which I do suffer from and that is the anxiety of culpability: culpability not in a normal Christian sense involving guilt or sin, but a culpability in the sense that I have not done enough. I am deeply aware, for example, that I have not written the books I should have written. And that feeling, since I am old, now combines with the anxiety of not having enough time, of finitude in a sense, that there will not be enough time. My conclusion is that I could have done much more.

When he died in 2003 my husband was able to say in all truthfulness that he had had a wonderful life and had done all the great things he wanted to do. And he really had and now his life had come to its close. When I talked about what I was doing, he would ask me why I would do things only for six people, for one person or for ten people when he was doing something for millions. I always responded to this comment, "Because obviously of my character – I give lots of big talks to two hundred people." But even on this limited scale of these two hundred people, you don't even know who they are, while when you have two or three, or six, you are really with them. You live with them for two hours. This has been important for me.

Part 6 – London in the 1960s: Academic and Traveller

In 1960 I decided to leave Geneva because my son Gordian was by now thirteen years old and I had come to the conclusion that the schools in Geneva were not as good as I wanted him to have. My children had turned out to be very musical and I needed to find the right encouragement for them. So we settled for the next nineteen years in London. The children joined the French *liceo* and continued their music lessons, mainly of piano with a quite well-known Hungarian pianist, Carola Rabinovici, a woman whose Romanian husband worked in the European Intelligence Section of the BBC during the war. I bought a large and very beautiful apartment on Kensington Square; and once I had finally completed my masters in economics, I was taken on as a lecturer at what is today the University of Surrey.

I had been in London once before for eight months but it was the first time I went there to study over a long period. There were great friends living there who both my husband and I shared. A couple I came to know very well were Wayland Young and his wife Elizabeth. They had their six children by then, five girls and one boy, and a beautiful house in London across Hyde Park from where we lived. I first made their acquaintance when I went and stayed with them during my search for an English nanny, a rare species that is never easy to find. And there I had an experience which partly came about because of the separation from my husband. The Youngs always had poets and musicians in their home as guests; they were members of what might be simplistically classed as high-aristocratic England. But though I had been studying music and literature when I was young and thought I knew something about them, I was just amazed by the people who were there and I felt like a nonentity. This was partly due to feeling rather self-conscious of my limited English at the time and thus remaining a little in the background. But very shortly afterwards what I really

felt, and I think I was right to do so, was that I was a self-made person, who had not really had that kind of upbringing, that kind of time. And there for the first time ever, much more than with Sartre and the others, there was an alliance there, a grouping that was just incredible. Every evening there were four or five very simple people who also just happened to be great poets or great musicians, and I not only admired them but I felt absolutely humble. And I feeling that small, I realised I had the ability and the opportunity to reach that level. This was the final revelation of the series of decisions that followed our agreement to separate for three months.

My recruitment by the Battersea College of Technology (from 1966 the University of Surrey) was not without complications. A young woman, who had helped me beforehand on my writings and correspondence, let it be known that I could not teach those classes in industrial economics that Dr. Lord, the head of the economics department, had wanted me to teach since I did not have the appropriate qualifications. I myself made it plain that was a teacher of either monetary or international economics and knew little about the industrial side of things. In England a lecturer once appointed cannot be dismissed except for a civil offence, so the question arose about what to do with me. The decision had to be taken by the Vice-Chancellor, who interviewed me for quite some time; he suddenly said to me, "What would you like to do about the situation? You are appointed. And you cannot teach these courses through a fault of your secretary who just applied for you to teach these courses. What are we going to do?" And I said, "I would like to set up a sub-department in international economics." He looked at me and asked, "Could you do that?" I said, "Of course I can do that!" And then he said, "I can't give you any extra money for that, just your salary. Can you start it without money?" And I answered that I could. No extra financing was forthcoming but I did start. My family was conscripted to assist me: my children helped me by making copies and completing other small chores. If I look back now at what was done, I still

wonder how I did establish this sub-department in international economics which still exists and is prospering even today. One essential undertaking was to create a student body for the new project. I contacted various organisations from the Commonwealth and all sorts of international organisations part of whose job it was to send students to the UK, and the fees they paid were our principal means of support. I got colleagues who volunteered to help out as teachers. And all of this was carried out at the beginning of my university career. I became very important there and was head of that sub-department – eventually with a small team of up to four colleagues, including for ten years a very able assistant called John Lepper, undertaking the typical work of teaching, administration and fundraising – from the year I entered, 1962, until 1979. I was soon promoted to senior lecturer and became an external examiner for about half-a-dozen universities in Great Britain and Ireland, rising in the case of the National University of Ireland to be chief examiner in international economics. I devoted myself more to monetary rather than international economics, as a matter of my own preference and the influence of Prof. Sayers. My life there was generally rather pleasant. One of the few times I got into trouble was when I was invited to join the association of lesbians at the institute; I graciously turned down the offer and my action resulted in the organiser shouting “Coward!” in my face. My own preferences made any other course of action impossible.

In the meantime the University of Maryland somehow got to hear of me and asked me whether I would be ready to teach some university courses in philosophy and possibly later in economics. The university had started courses at different campuses in the UK for American military personnel, principally veterans coming back from the war in Vietnam who were not psychologically ready to join their families in the United States. There were three or four very large campuses in England at the time. I started and continued for several years to go generally two evenings a week, far out of

London to a venue near Cambridge to teach these men. My classes dealt with matters of philosophy and were generally well attended. However, on one occasion I conducted a survey asking the anonymous respondents why they had chosen to take this subject; in 95% of the cases their explanation was that there was no room in the courses of psychology. Some of the men were very badly damaged psychologically, even to the point of committing suicide, and many would scream in the middle of a perfectly unemotional class. One man even shot himself during one of my classes, but the military police were ready to intervene and removed him very quickly, and signaled me to continue as if nothing had happened. What I learned in the American soldier camps was humility in the face of great psychic suffering; when this type of suffering is really deep, no 'here and now' psychological method can do much about it. However, I did attempt to alleviate this suffering by speaking of ethics and spirituality as well as the benefits of learning useful skills and of education. And yet I continued to wonder whether morality could enter the mind of a man who had gone through hell. What the experience demonstrated to me was the fragility of human endurance and the inhuman potentialities people have in spite of education and culture. And so naturally I pondered the usefulness of what I was speaking about in each class. I am astonished to think that I kept up my classes with the Maryland people all the way to the end of spring 1974.

I soon also taught classes of psychology. I had not really been a student of psychology up to then but there was a great need to talk to these men. Another episode involved a woman officer who every now and then would cry in class or have to be removed for psychological care. It was impossible not to get involved in the study of the human mind and emotions under conditions like this. It was a very trying time for me, but I think I learned more at that time about human beings, their problems, than at any other time. I also taught other soldiers who were in a more balanced state. I gave classes of economics of a practical kind to those servicemen who intended,

once they were allowed to rejoin their families, to open a business or go into some commercial or professional pursuit. I do not regret in any way those many late evenings spent in the military campuses because it gave me some knowledge of a type of human suffering which cannot be expressed; it also was a lesson to me how in the end we are all subject to circumstances that may have fortunate or destructive effects on us.

All the same, though my teaching career continued smoothly, it was not enough for me. Apart from the Maryland University Program, I began to enter the world of politics. My husband had been present in 1957 at the signing of the Rome Treaty which began the European Economic Community and from which, after making so much trouble, the United Kingdom was left out. One very important Englishman had even said to Gordian, "The bus will not leave without us," meaning that there would be no final agreement without the participation of the UK. This was not to be so, of course, and the UK would only join on the first day of 1973. Between those two dates, I was very active giving speeches supporting the entry of my new adoptive country. This meant that I devoted some effort to get a deeper knowledge about what the economic community was standing for in order to give talks in a whole range of societies and gatherings about how it was in England's interest to join the Common Market. Apart from this I developed a strong association with Amnesty International, with which my husband Gordian was also deeply involved. By this time he was writing reports mainly for the German weekly *Der Spiegel* about many African and Asian countries, places where again he often offered his help to political prisoners and their families. I myself could mainly give only intellectual support since I was resident at that time in London and unable to travel so easily.

In the winter of 1965, as a result of a talk at the Foreign Affairs Committee in London between my husband and the Frenchman Pierre-Paul

Schweitzer, at that time Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund in Washington, he became a guest at our home on a few occasions during his visits to London. Interestingly Dr. Schweitzer was a nephew of Albert Schweitzer and a survivor of the Buchenwald concentration camp. Our relationship developed and he even invited me to come to an IMF meeting in August 1966 as his personal guest. I had not been to the United States since the birth of my son, about nineteen years before, and the political side of me as well as my economic and personal selves were pleased with this invitation. In Washington I met a great number of personalities and one of the incidents at the meetings I attended, which I remember with pleasure, was the invitation of President Johnson to visit the White House in October 1966. I was standing in line to greet the president. It was taking a long time and by the time I finally was to shake the president's hand and, having spoken with somebody in the line in French, the moment he shook hands with me I nervously exclaimed, "Monsieur le Président." He smiled and a little later, while a few hundred people were standing and having drinks, the president came towards me and said, "You don't like Americans, do you?" I looked at him and said, "Not the Americans, but the administration." And what was his reaction then? Nothing, he just smiled and left me. I was an *enfant terrible*! I still am ... I was to stay on in the United States meeting economists and giving talks at different universities on international monetary subjects for the following three weeks, principally at the behest of the economist Robert Mundell. Another meeting of the IMF held in Rio de Janeiro in 1969, to which I attended as an observer, created the unit of account called "Special Drawing Rights", effectively an asset held in foreign exchange reserves. I found all these activities quite fascinating.

I had already done quite a bit of travelling during my six years in Geneva. It took up a great deal of my time and energy, and reduced the periods I spent with my family. However, I remember very clearly a scene when I

came home at five in the afternoon from a longish trip and found my children just coming out of the bath. They must have been about two and five; such a lovely smell, they were popping around naked, in the old fourteenth-century castle we rented. And I was so deeply delighted to see them that I took the telephone off the hook and promised not to make or answer another call for two weeks. One thing I do know is that this also had its benefits in terms of domestic finances. I had started going to more places and giving talks about economic subjects from that time in Switzerland, and the number of commitments and journeys I undertook greatly increased once I started living in London from 1960. I went for many reasons but I never travelled for the purpose of purely personal tourism. That is probably why in 1979 I said to the University of Surrey that I was leaving. I was absent during sabbatical periods and as the years passed and particularly in the 1970s, spent more and more time away even during regular teaching sessions, taking advantage of the weeks owed to me which I hadn't used during my sabbaticals. I had taken full advantage of their flexibility and patience with me by then: I had my sabbatical years but I do seem to remember taking one sabbatical year earlier than the period when it should have been taken later on – and this “later on” never came about because I had left the university by then.

London was a busy part of my life but at the same time it was not a very thoughtful time. I made myself a scholar; I was reading a lot and I was teaching. It was also a time of being with my children and also some trouble with them; trouble with my daughter when she became sixteen and going out at night, the usual activities of a teenager. Then in 1968 there was the student revolution and I went to Paris to the barricades with the filmmaker Simon Hartog. We have not talked about 1968 and the Student Revolution in France. I was a part of it, I was among the protesters. At one stage the treatment of the students by the police was so unnerving that I ran in utter horror to Notre Dame Cathedral, falling on my knees in front of the black

virgin by the main entrance. Then, as if this wasn't enough, when my friend Simon Hartog (making a documentary for the BBC current affairs programme "Panorama") and I returned to an English port in our – let us say – very recognisable white car with black convertible roof, it was stopped by the police and meticulously taken apart – only for another car with the same characteristics to drive off a recently arrived ferry, whereupon we made a strong case that they had in fact dismantled the wrong car. That same year I even participated in answering serious protests at Surrey, when they were unhappy that the large student body was getting a union building smaller by comparison to the staff facility. I was chosen on the logic that, being the youngest of the senior academics, I would be more acceptable as an arbitrator.

As I said there were a lot of political things. I participated in trying to bring Great Britain into the Common Market. And there were related matters, for instance at one time Turkey offered me a lot of money to write a hundred-page report for them on why they should be allowed to join the European Community, something that I refused to do. This motivates me to speak about a recurring practice that I have abided by throughout my life. I think, and I hope I am right, that I have never done anything for money about which I was not completely sure, that (as in this case) I was agreeing to politically. This story about the Turkish application to join the Common Market is a good example of this ethic. I will be honest and say that Turkey is the country I dislike most. I have been there and I never really grew to like the people of Turkey; even today I am against the idea of Turkey coming into the European Union. I feel that Turkey is not a part of Europe. I neither like their history nor their convictions; I don't like their pretence to be European, which they definitely are not. If you talk about Russia – Russia is European, even though you have another writing system and other differences; it perhaps has to do with Christianity. It has always been said that Europe exists because of Greek philosophy and Christianity, and

I do feel that very strongly. And Turkey certainly is not a product of this tradition. Admittedly of course it is an opinion that is personal to me.

I worked for many years for the OECD (the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development), situated in Paris. I was still a full-time senior lecturer at the University of Surrey and I had been working with them since I came to England, at a time when there were difficulties related to Britain's possible entry into the European Economic Community (or more fondly called the Common Market). I was in what I could call intimate contact with the European Commission, a body I liked because it was truly supranational in the sense that delegates didn't consult with their home constituents (unlike say the Council of Ministers) – for a short period of three months I was even to be the Luxembourg representative on the Commission. I was one of the people who wanted very much for them to get in, something that wasn't to happen until Heath's government negotiated their accession in 1973. What is often not remembered is that in December 1969 the EEC almost ceased to exist. The Germans had revalued their currency while the French more or less at the same time had devalued theirs, and these two circumstances and the bickering made a big hole in the middle of the EEC. No employee in Brussels was certain whether there would be a job awaiting him or her after the Christmas holidays; many people had come to think, by just before Christmas, that the institution would not overcome this. I was at that time in Brussels. Two ideas were presented. One, which we called "the monetary solution", was a proposal by the Luxembourg Prime Minister, Pierre Werner. At his invitation, I worked with him on a monetary proposal that we thought responded to the fact that the 1957 Treaty of Rome founding the EEC had no clear monetary policy; we hoped that this proposal would effectively rescue the EEC. Working with Prime Minister Werner, I was very involved in that Luxembourg Compromise that was reached at the end of January 1970. Mr. Werner had composed a document by which the EEC should

immediately have one currency; the proposal argued that the mere fact of having one currency would arrange the rest. I myself was very persuaded of this. Another solution was called “the economic solution”. The latter option was to prevail: it focused on having more institutions and investing more serious work in agriculture and so on.

My twenty years in England have to be put into two not very clearly separated parts. The first one was the period when I took all my degrees, the first years of my job at Surrey University, and the time when I worked for the University of Maryland with the American people who had returned from Vietnam. I was writing a number of papers (which were published) having a lot to do with the attempted integration of the United Kingdom into the EEC; and a BBC employee and I initiated in the spring of 1966 what became a very prestigious television series addressing real-world happenings of business and finance, *The Money Programme*. And as a consequence of this, I was invited by people from the *Economist* newspaper to write a series of country reports. It was also during this time that I was working with Amnesty International at the behest of a very close friend from Colombia, Eduardo Mariño, who had been a student at our university and was one of the directors of Amnesty. I made some trips for Amnesty and wrote papers for them that were also printed. Then I got interested in co-operation between countries and went to congresses dealing with this topic. In fact foreign travel was a major part of my life in this epoch.

Part 7 – Late 1960s to the 1980s: Travels in Strange Places

By the end of the 1960s I was travelling a great deal. My own mentality about going to places was quite flexible and ascetic in its own way: I have always thought that the essential things when travelling were money, a passport and a warm coat. I recall very clearly my first flight: it took place in the early 1940s in Portugal in an acrobatic plane and for a long time afterwards I was under the impression that all flying was like that. My daughter used to say if somebody called asking for me urgently that the best way to find me was on a plane. She was perfectly right. This travelling was due to commitments particularly in Venezuela but also in places like Japan, Egypt and Hong Kong, not to mention dozens of other countries. Plane trips can be long and tedious but some produced moments of hilarity. I remember for instance being in mid-Atlantic when the pilot of a PanAm flight announced at precisely midnight on the public address system that the company had ceased to exist but that he had decided to do us the great favour of continuing the journey to New York.

One very long trip I made (by myself as always) was to Greece, a nation I had wished to know since a very young age. When I was a child I had a teacher at school who was a great enthusiast of Greek history and its philosophy. It was one term of schooling in which he managed to give me something which has lasted right up to the present: a complete devotion and enthusiasm for Greek culture, for Greek history, for Greek philosophy. He gave me a feeling that our occidental education depends on two things: Greek philosophy and Christianity. These two are the basis of our culture. The sad thing was that in the next semester I had another teacher who taught about Rome and Roman culture. And he was impossible, terrible! He bored all of us! Even today I have a love for the Greeks and no interest at all in Roman culture.

As a matter of fact, I had a discussion with my grandson about that. He was sixteen at the time and had an enthusiasm for Rome. He informed me, "Grandma! Caesar brought Greek culture into Rome!" And so on. I was delighted to have a grandson who was so interested, but I then thought of the accident: if I had had the same teacher for Rome as I had for Greece, I suppose I would now have some enthusiasm for Rome too. Even if one is not deeply into the myth of the gods of the Greeks, the Pantheon, all those things that influenced the Romans, they are still very interesting – indeed, I would think more interesting than the early Christians (such as Saint Clement of Alexandria). During the first three centuries of the modern era, while Christianity had not yet been centrally organised, everyone was doing their own thing – until that is it became the official religion of Rome. But that epoch did produce groups and people I like, the Gnostics for example, and Plotinus who is one of my two or three favorite philosophers.

But to return to my trip. Greece was somehow partly a disappointment because the Acropolis was so neglected when I went there; people were putting their rubbish there, the columns were dark with grime. The Greeks themselves were unfriendly and seemed to be after my money at every moment. I went to see works of the ancient Greeks and of Greek Orthodox Christianity. I came away disappointed at many of the figures of the Greek Christ, with his eyes piercing you: Christ the Forgiver, the Christ as a person who loved people and wanted them to have an eternal future – there were nothing of that. The Greek people were very commercial, especially with someone who does not speak their language. Athens was wonderful, but the details in the buildings and streets were neglected. My Greece was the Greece I was taught, so I wanted to go through the streets, thinking that Plato was walking through them.

Then I went to Crete: to Knossos and the ancient palace where I saw a lot of Minoan culture, about which we know very little. All sorts of legends are

associated with it because we don't know how it was suddenly destroyed. Volcano? Earthquake? But I did walk through the streets and thought of the women there, for Egyptian and Minoan women were the only women in antiquity, as far as I know, who were really free women. In Knossos on the few pictures we have, the women are naked down to the belt, with their breasts displayed and all very slim. They were even bullfighters. It is the only ancient culture where we are certain that women had at least the same rights as men. It was even suggested that it was a matriarchate there, that the women were making laws and all that. This would be historically very interesting because Minoan culture takes place at the same time as the Dark Ages in Greece, the time of Agamemnon and Miletus, perhaps 1000 B.C. At that time, as depicted in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, Thebes was ruled by a woman, a queen who then becomes the mother of Oedipus. And it is only when Oedipus, who was brought up by a shepherd, becomes a man is there a change from matriarchate to patriarchate. So the whole story of Oedipus, in my view, has nothing to do with what Freud made out of it but is really the story of the end of the matriarchate. And we think that Miletus, the son of Apollo and the Cretan Areia, is more or less a contemporary. It could well be that there was a matriarchate but then the whole thing was destroyed anyhow. Perhaps the myth of the Minotaur, and Theseus killing him but also abandoning Ariadne in favour of her sister Phaedra, brings the two things together: the Minotaur eating virgins, desiring to terminate the matriarchate.

The Lilith story in Jewish mythology also points towards that. There are also the different explanations of the creation of Adam: in the biblical account supposedly God creates him similar to his image; He takes earth and makes out of this earth a man and a woman, and then breathes into him to form the soul. If you look at the Sumerian version, though it is different, it has something similar. What I see lacking in the Bible is a full story of the creation of the world. There are certain elements in all religions

that are just about always there. The only element in the Bible of a creation story is the Flood: the idea that God had created the world, and then saw that it was bad and destroyed it. What is missing in the Bible is a Woman – a feeding one, the Mother, as distinct from the Father, an androgen. In it at the beginning Man is created. And the story associated with Eve is that, since the beginning, the woman is a sinner. Contrast this with Plotinus, who gives us in the third century this wonderful picture of God, the Nous, the Psyche, which is something that is feminine. With unformed matter *she* creates the world; and then she sees that it cannot survive without a free will. And she gives them free will, without regard to the Nous, the Mind. However, with the creation of free will she also created evil because free will can only exist if there is Good and Bad. So she – a woman! – created evil without realising what she had created.

The Hindu story is much better, one that Nietzsche picked up later: the eternal re-birth. It is the actualization of the world, which exists with the Atman, the Brahman; and then of the end of the world that is in reality not “the end of the world” but the world that becomes potential. “Potency” means that it has all the possibilities inside, but it is not actual; as Aristotle said, “God is a pure actuality.” He is quite right. The idea of God refers to a pure actuality. But then, according to Bhagavad Gita or the “Song of God” in Sanskrit, it is no more Atman or Brahman but Shiva, and Shiva made the potentiality disappear. Even Christ was announcing that within his lifetime that one world ends and the other one starts – the World has no ending as such. And then it was Saint John who talked about Apocalypse, the destroying of the world. The message is quite clear: if the world had a beginning, it would have to come to an end. But it is very much more understandable that the world becomes actual and then it becomes passive. And over and over again. All this does not have much to do superficially with my life, except that I am very interested in that kind of subject and it has greatly affected my thinking.

In Greece I really understood lots of things. When I came off the plane, I was joined by a very courteous young man who spoke English. I told him that I was going to Knossos and he said he would go with me. To make this story brief, over the following two or three days I was with him. It did not become a love affair as such but he accompanied me and he knew a lot. He was an employee of the airport and he had seen me from the control tower. I was the only woman who came alone on the plane and thought it was great to have someone who knew it all. Since I was reading about Millets, I was very enthusiastic to be there; he in his turn was very interested that a woman coming from England knew about Arianna and Theseus. So he was very enthusiastic about it too. In the meantime Knossos was reminding me of all that I just mentioned: the regime of the woman, the possibility of the matriarchate. There are comparatively few things that have been found. It was a culture all by itself. It had little to do with mainland Greece and with Egypt. It was just there and we know hardly anything about it. But the few things we do know suggest such oddities as women bullfighters. Sometimes I feel I want to go there again.

I had also wished to know the Greece of the novelist Nikos Kazantzakis (who had passed away in 1957). I had been an enthusiast of his writings. The first book of his I read was *Zorba the Greek*, which in itself is a philosophy of life. Zorba lives, does what he can and wants; the English "Buddhist" on the other hand observes, living a quite meditative life. His other book I love is *Christ Re-crucified*. He is a quite fascinating writer who coincidentally wrote about the difference between China and Japan. The important thing in my life now is spirituality but not because I suddenly have become religious. I make a big difference between religion and spirituality (and in our weekly think-tank meetings we often talk very much about that). Kazantzakis was a turning-point of my spirituality. I read his *Zorba* very early in my life and I was torn between the two of them, so I decided to be

Zorba for half of the year and the English Buddhist for the other half. It meant practicing the philosophy of life inspired by Nietzsche, which says that you have to live, it is your activity. We were not created to live in a cave, and read, or say "It's my fault!" It's *life* itself. And by quite a big margin I sided with Zorba; then came a time when I was very much with the other man, though I have never become a Buddhist myself. I very much like the Hinduism of Bhagavad-Gita. Pure Hinduism attracts me very much, as much as Sufism; and Sufism itself is one of the things I most enjoy talking about to my students.

Some of the famed places I visited were not as enchanting as I had envisaged. I was very disappointed with Olympia; I went to Sparta, which from the teaching I got I had liked to hate; and unfortunately I did not like Athens too much either, which I used to love until I saw it. Actually I went to Greece twice. The first time I wanted to see only antiques and the second time I wanted to see Greece Orthodox Christianity and its art. But the second time I cut it short simply because I was disappointed and I went to Egypt. I gave in to the temptation of a cheap flight from Athens to Alexandria, then a sleepy town about which Lawrence Durrell wrote a trilogy.

During the 1960s and 1970s I undertook quite a number of long trips as a guest at conferences and carried out other activities which took place in different parts of the world. One of them was in New Delhi. I had never been to India and I was very much looking forward to it. I took a plane from London and, arriving in New Delhi, I had quite an experience because during those times they had a very strange system of exchange control. I arrived into New Delhi airport having stopped in other parts of Asia and so I had a number of currencies with me, in all some five or six different kinds. When we arrived at six in the morning at New Delhi, the customs man asked me if I had any foreign exchange. And I did, I had a lot of different

foreign exchange, some worth hardly anything and some with a larger value. So he suggested that I should write each of them down and state how much they were worth. It then turned out that I would have to show the same amounts in foreign coin when I would leave India. In desperation I said to him, "Why don't you do that?" and he did.

In the meantime my luggage arrived on the carousel; I took the bags and waited for somebody to help me. A man came over with a trolley and said to me, "Do you have any alcohol you have to declare?" I said that I had no alcoholic beverages and nothing to declare. And he said, "Well, in India you can buy the alcohol here, where it costs hardly anything." I said that I don't need anything since I don't drink, whereupon he replied, "Would you mind if I buy it for myself in your name?" I asked, "Do you mean for yourself?" And he said, "Yes, but I need your passport." So I gave him my passport. At that moment two young boys came and said, "You can't carry all this luggage you have with you!" I agreed and asked them to help me. And they both took my luggage and disappeared.

So there at 6.30 in the morning I was sitting in New Delhi airport, dispossessed of my passport, with no money anymore and no luggage. I spent the next two hours, maybe until 8.30, sitting all by myself in the by then empty airport. I was so tired that I just sat there on a bench, somehow I did not care really, overpowered by a great desire to sleep. Suddenly the customs man came, the same man who had my money and instructed me to sign a paper, and I got all my money back. A little later the man who had gone with my passport returned with a large trolley loaded with boxes of liqueurs which he had bought in my name using my passport. I told him that I didn't have my luggage anymore and he pointed to two suitcases in a far-off corner. So in my first two hours in India I had lost and then recovered all my bags, money and passport, and had helped one man buy a vast amount of booze. Such was my entry into New Delhi. Another

humorous experience with customs officers happened one time when I left Brazil and arrived on a stopover into Panama. I declared I was entering the country with fish; rather insulted, the office said that his nation was full of fish and why was I entering with even more of them. Even his boss was summoned to help in resolving the matter. What I had in fact were fossil remains that I was bringing back to my collection in London but the conundrum still required five hours of explanation for everyone to be satisfied.

I went to the conference the next day after a good sleep. I went beforehand to a car agency and got myself a hired car, a Volkswagen Beetle in point of fact. They asked me if I wanted a driver or not, and I responded that I would drive. But half an hour later I was back at the agency with no car because I had run into an elephant. The elephant did not mind at all; it had looked down at me contemptuously but the whole front of the car was smashed in. I knew the car was insured and I got a replacement car with a driver. However, this driver drove me mad because of his conversational habits. He spoke English quite well but each time I talked to him, sitting in the back of the car, he turned around and talked to me, while continuing to drive on a road he had now turned his back on. We drove to the Taj Mahal one day. On the way there, there were women who were having their babies on the road and other people who were dying; it was quite a revelation to say the least. People lying all over the road but we somehow got to the Taj Mahal. The moment I got to my hotel (I stayed there for two nights) I asked for the telephone of the car agent again and I said, "Would you please send me another driver, because this driver I am not going to drive back with." Fortunately they complied.

The Taj Mahal did not really impress me very much, definitely not. I had been told to go in the evening because I would thus see the stones of the Taj Mahal shining. I thought its reputation was greatly exaggerated, though

it must be conceded that its history is interesting. But what I liked very much was the Red Fort; there I was very impressed. From New Delhi I made many excursions: for instance, I went to a nearby temple complex where they have the wonderful statues of gods making love to the other gods, male gods with female gods. And though I had been resisting to buy things in the streets in New Delhi, at the Taj Mahal I bought myself something which I still have and still enjoy and this is what they call a black star diamond. This is a black stone in which you see a cross. It's very beautiful. So I bought a large, round one, and when I came back to England I had it mounted properly and I still have it.

The second time I went to India was to go to a place among the fields behind the city of Bombay where purportedly they passed vegetables through some type of nuclear process which would conserve them. People in England wanted to know how that was done as the same produce would be exported there. So I had been given the tickets to go to India and investigate the process and any possible dangers. I was in Bombay in a very elegant hotel. I had a general agreement with hosts when I went to conferences or did this kind of thing; I always said, "My week working for you is four days, and the other three days I go and look around." In this case I had accepted the invitation to go to Bombay and then Indonesia. I had been looking at the places I wanted to visit around Bombay, but the one that really stood out was Elephanta or Gharapuri Island located in the harbour itself and the Hindu and Buddhist caves there. My agenda was to go to Indonesia the next day, so I tried very hard to go in the morning to the place of the vegetable experiment in the hills around Bombay and then to take a boat to Elephanta Island. I was all dressed up warm to go to investigate the vegetable fields when I got a telephone call warning me that I could not go because there was a red alarm, something about the nuclear level, and that I could only visit two or three days later. At this I changed

into a little summer dress and tried to get to the ferry which went to Elephanta Island.

The ferry was leaving just as I arrived and the people at the ticket office told me there was no dinghy to take me to the ferry; however, I could get a boat to take me to Elephanta Island and this would only cost ten dollars. As I searched for a boat or crew on the great Gateway to India Square, two red-faced, somewhat camp Australian men, rather old and not very sympathetic, warned me, "Don't do that! You know, this is India. That's dangerous if you take a boat by yourself." And while for a moment they had persuaded me, I decided to make my own way for my usual stubborn and self-challenging reasons. There then came a boat for about two hundred people, as big as the ferry that had left. I couldn't believe that I was paying so little for such a massive vessel. The suspiciously titled captain, who looked like some kind of street beggar, came to me and said, "Oh, darling! Do come and sit with me!" I reacted with what my daughter used to call my 'Queen Mary Attitude' and told I would sit where I wanted. There were nine little men in the boat, who were going with me on the two-hour journey to Elephanta Island. When we were just about at the midway point, the boat stopped. The captain explained that it was an old boat and had to be repaired. This took three hours but it was done. Nobody bothered me; I was perfectly relaxed lying on one of the benches in the sun. After three hours it had become dark, but I knew I would not have another chance to go to the Elephanta Island. So I insisted we continue and when we arrived there was nobody around and it was dark. I remarked to the Captain, "There must be people who guard this place." And he started clapping his hands and there appeared quite a lot of people. I knew that the famous Cave of Elephanta Island was at the top of the mountain, so I said, "Can I get two people who can carry me there and a chair?" This was agreed on. I was feeling grateful and bought Coca-Cola for everybody because we suddenly came upon a beverages stand.

Two strong men carried the chair up the mountain with me grandly sitting on. We arrived to the dazzle of some very big spotlights. This was one of the greatest experiences I had ever had. There is a cave there with the most incredible sculptures of Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma, and Shiva again. With the spotlights and the howling of the wolves outside it was just incredible. In the meantime many children came up to me and I went into the adjoining room where there was an enormous penis in stone (*Yoni*); all the little boys were kneeling around and praying for their penis to grow big, with little lights surrounding them. For me this was an incredible experience. After about two hours they carried me down on my chair and once more I gave Coca-Cola to everybody. The captain said the boat was fit for the journey again. I went onto the boat, lay on a bench with my purse under my head and slept perfectly happily. When we were about three quarters through the return voyage, I suddenly heard shouts of "English miss! English miss!" and saw only powerful lamps. So I stood up and cried, "What's going on?!" Then a voice in English said, "English miss! You have been kidnapped. This is the Indian Navy. Come over with us. We are saving you!" And I shouted back, "I have *not* been kidnapped! Leave me alone! I don't need the Indian Navy." In the meantime, all nine of these thin and short men were kneeling in front of me, "Please! We have not done anything!" I assured them, "You have done nothing! You are perfectly all right!" The voices from the naval vessel insisted that the contrary was true: "English miss! You have been kidnapped. We are sent by the admiral of the Indian Navy". I was shouting back, "I am not going on to any other boat. I am perfectly all right here. Leave me alone! I am tired!" But they continued screaming. And the little men all around me moaned that they would be put in prison and even killed. I told them they had done nothing wrong and I would explain this to the authorities.

When we arrived back to the quay, the square was full of people, thousands of them. When they saw me they began screaming, "Here she is! The Indian Navy saved her!" And the mayor of Bombay received me in the name of the President! With the little men clinging all around my legs, I hardly could walk. And then they solemnly played the Indian national anthem and the English one. In the midst of all this I protested, "I am not a Miss and I am not English!" But they did not hear me, too busy listening to a big speech about the bravery of the Indian Navy. I said only one thing: "I will not sign anything unless these nine men have guarantees." I took out my purse and in front of the thousands of people I gave each one of them some money for all they had done for me. My actions did not go down well. "No! They have been trying to kidnap you!" I said, "I will only sign a paper that they have behaved perfectly and there has not been any kidnapping." Then right on cue the national anthem of Great Britain was played. I explained again that I was not English. But the next morning all the newspapers had headlines like "English Miss Saved by Indian Navy" and I was informed later by my son in England that the story had even appeared in the newspapers there. That night I telephoned my children to say that if they were to hear anything about my being held hostage, that it was not true, I was entirely safe the whole time, and I had never been saved by Indian Navy. After all this misunderstanding and excitement on the high seas, I left the next day for Indonesia.

I took a plane for my first trip to Indonesia and landed in Jakarta. I had been sent there by OPEC to investigate the developing oil industry there. There I also went to see the 504 Buddhas in the ninth-century Borobudur Temple Complex, a place I had always wished to witness some day. The complex is about five hundred metres in one direction and about five or seven hundred in another. It's a wonder, something incredible, with statues upon statues all in the air. It was the first place I was going to on arriving to Indonesia. I hired a man with a horse to take me there. When I got there, I

paid my entrance fee and started walking around; and all the time, about half a metre behind to one side of me, there was a man who appeared to be a kind of uniformed employee. Each time I stopped and looked at something, he halted in perfect unison. Finally I turned around and I asked him why he was following me all the time. "Orders," he explained. It disturbed me terribly. There was nobody else other than this man, just me. At some point I saw somebody who looked more responsible so I said to this man, "Why does that man follow me?!" And he said, "He's a security-man!" I turned to the first man: "Look! Here is my passport and I paid my entrance. What do you think?" And he responded, "You will know at the upper floor."

And so I continued looking at the statues and panels with the man obediently following behind me. And when I came to the upper floor I noticed a statue without a head; I looked at it and at that moment the man in charge came to me again and said, "Do you see?!" "See what? The statue does not have a head" And he said, "Yes. And this head was stolen three weeks ago. And it is one of the most famous Buddha heads. Somebody hacked it off and of course nobody knows where it is." To this I replied, "Well, I am terribly sorry for the head. But it was not me!" And then he described what had happened, that a woman who was similar in age and appearance to me was the chief suspect. In any case, my experience of Borobudur was not affected by this intimate security measure for the complex is absolutely wonderful. When I came down from the upper floors of Borobudur it was almost dark. And around Borobudur there were some very small houses without windows, with some steps leading up to them. The man with the horse told me that these were Buddhist temples.

By this time it was getting dark and though there was little light, it was not yet so dark and so I went into one of them. It was a place a little bit bigger than the regular room of a western home, with benches, but what

dominated its interior was an enormous Buddha. I came upstairs and looked at the Buddha, fell to my knees and entered a trance, something which has never happened to me neither before nor after. I was on the highest step. I never knew how long I was in this trance but suddenly I heard the horseman telling me that it was now night and we had to get back. I just had one last look at the Buddha and went downstairs. It was an incredible experience in a way I know nothing about. I don't know what happened during the trance but I did fall into a totally passive state in the presence of this Buddha. Borobudur was an incredible experience and then that quiet Buddha, almost in the dark, somehow or other did something to me. I felt it very deeply and have never forgotten it. And when I try to recall, I can almost reproduce the feeling I had just before falling into a trance. The excursion to Bali produced quite a different reaction; it did not impress me at all, some nice beaches, hotels that were far too expensive. Very nice but it had nothing to give me.

Many years later I was sent from Venezuela to Indonesia. This was towards the end of the 1970s when the Indonesian minister of energy had given the order to flare the gas at the oil-well, a wasteful and highly polluting practice. Previously it had been decided by OPEC that no country belonging to the organisation was allowed to do this, which effectively means that it has to be refined, thus taking out what you don't need. But a consequence of the process is that an enormous amount of oil is lost. More primitive countries (if I can be permitted to say this), and in this case Indonesia, were flaring the oil by setting it on fire and just burning it. And the news had come that the Indonesian energy ministry was not following the new rules of OPEC. They asked me if I could go since I was going to Japan in any case. So I was received officially by the Minister in Jakarta. But when I started to talk about flaring oil he was adamant: "Sorry! As long as I am the minister of energy, we'll flare the oil!" I asked him why this was so and he made a very complicated explanation of how he intended to make money out of it. In

short, it appeared that personal enrichment was the central element in his thinking. He was to be there for only five years and he planned that during this period he would make himself the richest citizen in his country ... and for that reason nobody would stop him flaring oil. He laughed off my arguments and I in turn turned down his invitation to continue the conversation over dinner. Oddly, I never came to understand exactly how he was making money out of it.

During my trips to Indonesia I learned that it consisted of 17,500 islands, out of which more than a half do not even have a formal name; and again perhaps half of all the islands had few or no inhabitants. I visited the biggest island, Sumatra, many times later on. I went there the first time in 1973-74 as an envoy of the recently created Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), a very interesting entity. During this epoch not only did OPEC exist but also OAPEC which stands for the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries. The world had been neatly separated into the First World composed of the USA, the United Kingdom and its allies; the Second World, which was the USSR and its vassal nations and friends; and the Third World, the poor world, dependent on the sale of their own raw materials or the assistance of one of the rich powers. And then there was what could be called the Fourth World, which was the poor Arab countries with no oil, quite large a number, and these were helped by OAPEC. And then there was a large quantity of countries that were helped by nobody and Canada had decided to help these friendless states through a new body called the CIDA. I was teaching in Canada in 1973 and was approached with an invitation to help CIDA without being paid, and I agreed and this had led to quite a number of projects. This was how I came to be asked to go to Sumatra for them.

From the point of view of CIDA, Indonesia was one of the Fifth World Countries, meaning effectively that nobody was helping them in their

development. When I went my first impression was of the massive, debilitating poverty. It was terribly hot and I, as was my habit most of the time, wore jeans and a short-sleeved blouse, though having some sleeve meant that you weren't half-naked according to the local sensibilities. However, a lady came and shouted something in a very excited manner; a lot of ladies came running in response to the interesting hysterics. I did not understand anything there, I had no idea what was happening. And I asked a man who was translating for me, "What's the matter with my arms?" The reason why the lady was shouting was that she thought I had a terrible disease because I was so white and had lost my colour. They are almost black there and she was scared of my whiteness. This had caused terrible excitement and even the man who was translating looked with horror at my arms and insisted that I had to go to the doctor. I would imagine that nowadays television has made them accustomed to people with a skin colour different to their own.

CIDA used money to install simple machines in the poorest countries, ones which were simple to work like sewing-machines or a bread-making machine. The calculation of the Canadian Government was not purely based on charity, as they figured that in several years time, when they would be wealthy, they would buy their machines from Canada. And it worked and CIDA was a success in both ways, helping the destitute to improve their lives and then creating commercial demands in the long term. I finally managed to go to two or three countries on their behalf, of course never actually being paid but they covered travel and other expenses. I was always interested in people paying for my trips because that allowed me to go abroad and know the country; and as I always said, "I work four days for you, so the next three I am free." I did manage to visit its neighbour Thailand on various occasions. My opinion of the country is low because I don't like Thailand food; it is like Mexican food. The only two national

cuisines I don't like are those of Mexico and Thailand (indeed, though I have already been a long time in Mexico, I never eat Mexican food).

I went quite often to Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s because of my work. These were turbulent times for the region. I recall one episode in April 1974 when I went to Buenos Aires to give a conference on oil but was packed off to the airport because of a demonstration outside my hotel (nothing to do with me by the way). I had to avoid Chile, Paraguay and Argentina because of the reputation of my husband as a documentary-maker. On another occasion we made an unexpected stop in Santiago in Chile, on a trip from Brazil to Mexico. I refused to leave the plane and stayed seated for two hours; I was starving when finally we arrived to Mexico as everyone except me had eaten during the short stopover. I even entered Paraguay on one occasion but this was with false papers as my activity involved playing a small part in trying to end the Stroessner *régime*. While staying in Washington with a woman friend, who was a journalist, one day she told me she wasn't able to go the following day to a meeting of a Bolivian lady called Emma, who at the time was trying to get two million dollars from some rich American ladies to build a small town for very poor people in the highlands above Bolivia's capital, La Paz. Following my friend's remark, "It might be quite interesting," I immediately volunteered. It turned out to be special experience. The first person I met was a very nice Belgian man, who as it happened was a cousin of the Belgian Queen and as such directly related to the Luxembourgian Royal House. I told him that I thought there would only be women present but he confessed he was the husband of the hostess, Emma, and the head of one of the potential recipients, a cancer institute, for which the fundraising was organised. Lots of ladies in pink organza, all middle-aged and very fat, came in and sat down. And then Emma, not at all grey or well-proportioned, made a big speech about how poor the people were in the city of El Alto and in the Altiplano highlands above La Paz, and that she had the intention to build a

hundred houses there, each with bathrooms and a kitchen, and that she needed two million dollars to accomplish this.

So I was listening to that talk with amazement because as far as I saw the circumstances, it was complete madness to want to build a hundred houses in Altiplano when there were hundreds of thousands of people living there, eating tortillas seasoned with soil to stop the hunger pains in their stomach. But I did not say anything. At the end she got what she asked for; in fact she got even more than that. And I said to her husband, as I have an easier time talking to men than to women (which partly explains my silence at the end of that event) that I thought what his wife was proposing was completely wrongheaded. I then politely asked him to pass on the invitation to her to dine that night with me at some elegant place so that I had the opportunity to gently persuade her to change her mind. And he replied that he agreed with me, that he had tried unsuccessfully to talk sense to her and that he would make the arrangements. So I invited her to the Jockey Club and, during a very tense dinner (partly due to my consumption of large amounts of food to fill the time before her late arrival), I tried to explain to her that within the first three days of its construction, the whole house would be knocked down, with the kitchen and the bathroom; that huge numbers of people were living at a degree of poverty that could not be resolved by a small project of housing, and that she should rather be thinking of doing something beneficial for the many thousands of men, women and children living there. She was not sure but resolved the question by inviting me to Bolivia to help in establishing a plan.

I agreed to that because, just as luck would have it, I was on my way to do some work, something quite different, in Latin America. And then she mentioned who our companion would be: the daughter of the Grand Duke of Luxembourg, Marie Astrid, who was at that time on a visit to Washington. Her grand social position, however, hid a talent that could be useful for our

journey: she was a qualified nurse specialising in tropical medicine. We each were to go our own way and meet up in La Paz in Bolivia. When my plane arrived there and the doors were opened, I started to have the most incredible pains in my arms and legs as a reaction to the extreme height (yet another example of the sensitivity of my blood pressure). It was immediately identified what the problem was and I was informed that I would be taken down on a Red Cross plane to a lower altitude. La Paz is at 3,600 metres above sea level and perhaps if I had come there by car, little by little, it would have been all right. So they took me to Cochabamba, which is about a kilometre lower in height, a small colonial town a little like San Cristobal de las Casas in Chiapas. I informed the other two women where I now was and they were to come later to Cochabamba. In Cochabamba there were some religious people who came to me. They told me that about twenty kilometres away there was a village, the poorest in the whole region, and that there the people were growing potatoes but they had very little water to boil them. There had been a number of attempts to bring water to them from a place that was perhaps ten kilometres away but these hadn't been successful.

The life expectancy was eighteen years because, we were told, when potatoes are boiled in very little water and this is followed by other potatoes in the same water, and then again and again with other potatoes, some kind of poison accumulates in the water which little by little kills you. Fortunately I had secured money from the United Nations to spend on what I would judge to be the right kind of things. And I asked the churchman to bring me to the village, a very plain place with no square at all. And I saw in the corner a little but very dirty pond with some flowers around it. They told me that it had been there for the previous fifty years, always with a little water but so dirty that it couldn't be used for drinking purposes. I reported that I had been told it hadn't rained for twenty years and they rather nervously told me that was the case. There were lots of boys who were

speaking their dialect and one particular little boy was quite apart from them, running up and down, up and down, shouting something. I asked them what the child was saying and was told, "Oh! He is mad. Nobody needs to listen to him." But he continued. And I had to say, "I need to know what this boy is saying." It then turned out he was saying that on the mountains there were three springs and all the other boys were saying there was nothing on the mountains and it was not true. I insisted that we go and check, though it would be very difficult walking on blocks of stone and not a proper road.

And when I was half-way up the mountain I took some money from my pocket and said to the boys who were going with me (interestingly the men had not volunteered to take the trip), "Have you ever heard the word Coca-Cola?" And they said, "Oh, yes! Coca-Cola!" Then I said, "Ok, in your village there doesn't seem to be any shop. Is there a shop somewhere you can go and buy it?" And they said, "Oh, yes!" Then I instructed them, "You are going to buy *for me* three big bottles of Coca-Cola. And you are going to bring these to me." And they rushed off and about half an hour later they came with the three bottles. I said, "Now you can drink it all because I do not want a Coca-Cola. What I want are the three bottles." And when we came up the mountain quite near the top we found the three springs. And I put water from one spring in one bottle of Coca-Cola, and then more in the other, and so on. And then we went down. It was much more difficult to go down than to go up. I talked to the churchman. I gave him money that I had from the United Nations, and we agreed that two of the springs were going to be used for irrigation, to try to make something grow, and one for human consumption.

I tell this story because, when many months later I came back to New York to the United Nations, they made a big fuss about me. There was a very enthusiastic meeting with some twenty or thirty people, in which I had to

tell my story and everybody clapped. Not much later at the same gathering a little old man came to me and said, "Would you have time for a cup of coffee with me?" So I had a coffee with him and he confided to me:

Uh! What you did it is wonderful, absolutely wonderful! But you did not have to go up the mountain, there is no water up the mountain. The water was below the pond. And you did not have to give the money to have all that water come down. I did not say anything because I think you were very brave. But think: how does the water go up the mountain?! The water does not come from the mountain. The water comes from the pond... But I will not tell anybody.

But it was my great achievement to bring water to the thirsty, if you like.

Finally Emma and the Grand Duke's daughter arrived in Cochabamba and from there we went to a place called Trinidad, also in Bolivia. Why did we go to that town? Because Emma knew a Belgian priest there who had a leper colony outside Trinidad at a place deep in the forest. And the young duchess had medicine because she was at the same time head of the Luxembourgian Red Cross. This medicine could not cure leprosy but rather it prevented it from advancing. So we travelled from Trinidad to take the plane to that small "island", to the colony of lepers in the middle of the marshes.

When we came to Trinidad we could not find a hotel because there was an important conference. Luckily in the end we succeeded in getting one large room, which had some beds in it though in all but name it was the warehouse of a hotel. In the meantime Emma's task was to get in touch with the priest. It turned out that there was no way to fly to that tiny island. We had to go across a bridge but I had slipped into some dirty water and,

even though it was not very deep, I had not previously been vaccinated against tetanus and had to go to the hospital and get one an injection. I took one of the little open taxis to the hospital. There were lots of woman having babies there, shouting, and it was one of the most terrible things I have ever witnessed. A girl then came with a needle to give me the tetanus vaccine. When I saw it I asked whether it was a new needle. She shook her head and told me it had been used for at least thirty or forty injections. I took a taxi again and went and bought a new needle in the local pharmacy, came back and she gave me the injection. But when I came back to the hotel, I realised that I had lost my wallet. And my wallet had an enormous amount of cash because it contained the United Nations money. This was a great worry as I knew I would have to pay in places where they don't know anything but money. I was absolutely desperate. And Emma said, "You will not get that wallet back." And then we passed a horrible half hour with Emma screaming from outside in the street "Rateros! Thieves!" and all of that. She insisted that by these means we would recover the lost wallet. And we did. At the fourth or fifth house, we went up the stairs with her still shouting "Rateros! Rateros!", and the door opened and a very polite, simply dressed older lady gave me my wallet. And she said, "I found it last night when we arrived in the taxi. I haven't opened it. I was going to take it tomorrow morning to the police." But by now Emma was unstoppable and continued shouting, "To the police?! You would never have taken it to the police! Ratera! Ratera!" I said: "For heaven's sake, please be quiet! This is my wallet." "Ah, probably there is nothing in it anymore!" But every penny was there, absolutely everything was in it.

Then Emma stayed there, and my little princess, a very composed eighteen-year-old, and I took a small plane to this "island". We had agreed beforehand that her aristocratic rank would be more humble than it actually was, allotting her the title of baroness. There the priest received us, very welcoming and thankful for our help: "You are coming to bring some relieve

to the leprous.” We talked to him and he said, “Tomorrow morning we are taking a small boat and we are going to go to a sort of farm and from there we’ll have to walk to the leper colony.” The next day we took a little old boat on the river; all of a sudden the outboard engine fell into the water ... and my little princess jumped in and swam after it. The boatman, priest and I started to cry “Piranhas! Piranhas!” However, very quickly she was successful in finding the small engine but the episode gave me enough time to imagine myself arriving back to Luxembourg to apologise for the fact that the daughter of the monarch had been eaten by piranhas in Bolivia.

When we came to the so-called farm, we discovered it to be a large building for animals with lots of dogs. The locals immediately killed an ox or cow and boiled it in an enormous pot. And when it came to be eaten, as I was the oldest lady present, I was given the eyes of the bull. Fortunately, underneath it was not really a table but a series of planks placed together and below that non-table there were dogs. So from time to time I had a severe attack of sneezing and managed the eye-ball out of my mouth. Even before we arrived the Belgian priest had started shivering – he had a malaria attack and so we had to leave him in that little farm. The poor man had had malaria numerous times and, with a very high fever, they put him in a corner. Though it would now be impossible for him to go with us, he reassured us that the route was dead straight. But what is straight in the jungle?! But we two decided to follow his instructions and to find the leper colony on our own.

I am a lover of great food and even simple dietary pleasures are most welcome. I very often take grapefruit with me on these occasions mainly because it feels juicy, it has sugar and refreshes you, and so on. Starting out I had two or three grapefruits with me, which was very fortunate as we managed to get lost almost immediately. At the time we did not know if we

were lost or not, we were just going straight. And an Indian came, a real Indian with feathers and everything. We were not afraid. We both put on a kindly smile and, since we knew the name of the farm, we said it and he took us back to the farm. We never got to the leper refuge. It was a terrible challenge to get the priest into the little boat with his very high fever. And we went back to the village, where they had tills and made pottery, which the priest had shown them to make. Then the pilot turned up and asked us to leave with him as there was going to be bad weather very shortly. So the duchess and I boarded the plane, whereupon the pilot, who was a good-looking Bolivian, knelt down in front of me and informed me that he wished to marry the young woman, extolling as he did the advantages of his salary and his father's large house:

Señora! Yo quiero casarme con esta niña. Soy piloto. Gano tanto dinero. Mi padre tiene una grande casa en alguna parte. Por favor, yo quiero casarme con la dama.

She did not say a word, fortunately, as she did not understand what he was seeking based on an offer of rather limited charm. I was urgently wondering how to resolve the situation, very conscious of the fact that this man was the only one within a huge distance who could pilot the plane and probably would not cooperate if a satisfactory answer was not produced. Suddenly the ideal rebuff to his pleading came to me. I interrupted him after quite some time and told him she was already taken: "Pero es imposible! Ella está casada!" Her non-negotiable marital status finally pacified him. I never told her, of course! So we got back to Trinidad with some difficulty because of the bad weather. Emma was waiting for us.

By that time I had become very friendly with a future Mexican finance minister, a very nice-looking and personable man married to a beautiful woman whose father was the head of one of the big museums there.

Together we prepared a conference of five central bankers, those of El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Honduras and Mexico. The themes were to be practical and pertinent, such as that of monetary mechanisms and management of public debt that we discussed in the Dominican Republic. I went first to see how arrangements were progressing in Mexico City. And there I met another man, an extraordinary half-Chinese, half-Jamaican official with a black Jamaican wife and about ten little children. Some of them were blond, some were black, all sorts of colours. They had a beautiful house; he was charming and in his own way he courted me but always with dignity. Anyhow, I was invited two or three times to dinner there. It was really glorious, with I don't know how many people serving, almost kneeling. The night before the start of the gathering, most of the heads of the central banks had already arrived, and the meeting I organised took one week. We met to eat at this wonderful house, and at one point the host asked the man who was then the head of the economics department of the ITAM (in English, the Autonomous Technological Institute of Mexico), the prestigious private university in Mexico City, what he would like to drink. The answer was a *cuba libre*. And the host, the Chinese-Jamaican said to me, "What is 'cuba libre'?" And I said, "It's rum and coke." A little later I was asked if I would go to the airport to welcome the next person and I invited my ITAM friend to join me. He managed to get up but then sat down immediately. I asked him what the matter was and he answered he felt drunk. And so I said to the host, "What did you give him?" And he said, "Well, just what he said, a glass of rum with some drops of coke."

The meeting itself was really a glorious thing. One curious personal experience outside the forum, however, was memorable for what it said about people's opinion of other people. I remember the man who drove me; he was not in fact a chauffeur but one of the poorer people hired to drive for the duration of the meetings. And while he was driving me, he tried a

little bit to court me. After I rejected his advances, he became a quite different person, very much nicer. He said to me, "I am so glad that you did not go to bed with me." I said, "I am glad you enjoyed it, not going to bed with me!" And he replied, "No, all the women here are *putas*." "Are they all *putas*?" I remarked and he said yes. And then I looked at him and I said, "If I had gone to bed with you, I would have also be a *puta*?" He agreed.

At a previous meeting located in Honduras in 1978, it was insisted that the official head of the conference should be Venezuelan. He turned out to be a horrible man who entirely changed all I had organised to its great detriment. So when I was flying back from Honduras to Mexico I was furious. But during the flight a man whom I had never met before advised me, as I was literally growling in my seat, to learn the difference between what is urgent and what is important, and not to suffer so much from something which has no importance in the long-term scheme of circumstances. The man never looked at me, I never looked at the man, and it made the most incredible impression on me. Immediately all my fury at what had happened disappeared, and I think from that time onwards something very positive entered me, a realisation of the difference between what is urgent and what is important. I never looked at him; when we arrived to Mexico, I went first and he came after me, and I never turned around. I do not even know if he was young or old. But it is one of the very simple things which made an enormous impression in my life.

The Jamaican conference we put together was very important because the IMF in the 1970s had run into great trouble and some people commented that it wasn't needed any more. Just like today there are many books with the refrain "Fifty Years is Enough" and it is true that in many cases it is enough. However, this was a different question but there is no denying that at the time there was a lot of opposition against the IMF. At one meeting of finance ministers and others the call did come out for the IMF to change,

because it had become an instrument of American politics and there was this impression that the countries who were in trouble did get help but that the help was so costly, very often it was not worth having it.

During the six months of travels on behalf of Victor Urquidí (the man I had met in New York in the late 1940s when my son was born) when I went around Asia to order to find speakers for his Mexican conference on the humanities, I stopped at Singapore. My journey on the plane was most diverting. It turned out that we were to arrive at midnight on New Year's Eve. The only people on the plane were airline employees and I was the only paying passenger. And they all shouted and got drunk at midnight. I had a really wonderful time. There was one thought that distracted me: "I just hope the one who is piloting the plain is not drinking as much as we all are!" Anyhow, we arrived safely to Singapore and I went to my room at the Raffles Hotel, the famous English colonial hotel. It was extraordinary, really something from the nineteenth century; very comfortable, but there was nothing white, everything was beige, and there were no chambermaids, only a corps of uniformed bed-men. It looked like you were rather in a comfortable military camp. Unfortunately the food also gave the same impression. But it was quite an experience. It is located in the lower town and since it was very different to what I was accustomed to, I every now and then went to the upper town, and I remember the biggest hotel there, one called Shangri-La – the place where, if our wishes were to come true, life could be a sort of dream.

I have been to Egypt three times. The first time I went – in January 1979 – was due to the fact that I had a lot of free flight-points. I was already in Mexico and calculated to go by myself, but I did not have enough points to go straight from Mexico to Egypt. The travel agency in its wisdom worked

out that I could take a flight whose final destination was Haifa in Israel but disembark at Athens in Greece; then I should buy a very cheap ticket from Athens to Cairo. So I bought a ticket to Haifa and got off at Athens; there I stayed for two or three days and then I took a flight to Cairo. I went to Aswan and I saw the Museum of Cairo, which was still in an incredible disorder; I saw the Valley of the Kings and the Valley of the Queens. I got very furious with the leaders of the men who act as guides. The Valley of the Queens is all underground, and down below you'll see many fantastic things, the tombs of the Queens and the tombs of the Kings; but you are not allowed to go alone, rather you must join a group. And as a general rule the leader of the group rushes you through with some cursory comment: "This is this, this is that..." And I like to look at things properly and he would always call me with curt phrases like "Come on, darling!" So the only means I had to really look at the ruins and art-work was to take the second tour and then the third tour. It was not very satisfactory, so I decided not even to look at the Valley of the Kings. I was to see it on another occasion. And I took a boat – a "floating hotel" – overnight up the Nile. It was horrible. I was told not to eat any food and I did not; and I was also advised to take some water with me and not to buy mineral water on the boat, as it was the habit of the staff to open the bottle and put other water in. As it turned out I was the only person on the boat who was not sick.

I liked Aswan. Nearby there is an abandoned Christian monastery, and with its great arches and stonework and adornments, it was a place that I wanted to see. As things turned out I did not see it that time. So that first trip was not really wonderful; the museum itself was a catastrophe. I was to go another time to do research, but that was very much more satisfying and the museum itself was by then very well arranged.

We had at the university in Mexico City a student, a very good one, who was the daughter of the Egyptian ambassador; and through her I got to

know her father and mother. Her father invited me very often to his embassy. A very intelligent man, socialist and very learned, a really great person from whom I learnt what it is to be an Arab. And I talked and talked to him and to her. At that time I still went every weekend to Cuernavaca and they came quite often. Like my home in Coyoacán, this weekend retreat became a place of intellectual debate, ambassadorial meetings and – what was different there – students swimming. There was a very amusing story involving the visit of this family to my weekend house and the presence at the same time of a young German man. He was a student at our university and told everybody he was a Nazi, that Hitler was right and Jews were all criminals, and Russians were degenerate and other slogans. He was good-looking, a bit older than his fellow students in the masters programme and quite intelligent. He would invite students to his house, where it seems a portrait of Hitler and other Nazi material were on display. One day it was Ramadan, and I had invited the Egyptian father, mother and daughter to spend a weekend in Cuernavaca. The German was to come as well.

The mother pointed out it was a period of abstinence and that it was not possible to eat during the day. And so I offered to cook a meal in the evening. But both father and daughter told me that they wouldn't observe the rule of day-time fasting. I said, "That's fine. We are going to arrange that you two and I, we are eating, and mama gets her wonderful meal in the evening." And then this German comes to me and says, "You know, I had never told you that at heart I am really a Muslim. And I would very much love to know the ambassador of Egypt." So I spoke with the ambassador and he said, "God! This is such nonsense! But the best thing is for you to invite him and I'll get rid of him like that." We sat in the sitting-room, which was a big hall, and I announced that, since the mother and German were observing Ramadan, the daughter and father would eat with me. And then the mother said to me woman-to-woman so to speak, "I am

having my period and that means I can eat normally.” So we had a so-called Muslim, the German, sitting alone, not eating, while the four of us were enjoying our food.

A number of months later the ambassador and his wife had to leave Mexico, precisely a week before the girl took her final exams. This presented a big problem because she could not be left alone; at the same time she could not leave before the exam. In the end, I slept at the Egyptian embassy residence to make sure she did not lose her virginity. She completed her finals, intact, and then followed her family home. Afterwards, the ambassador invited me officially through his ministry of foreign affairs in Cairo to come and give a number of talks. I stayed with them at their apartment and they showed me everything. On one occasion the girl and I went on the Nile by boat, this time a much nicer one but we still took our food with us. It arrived all the way up to Aswan. The local transport consisted of donkeys, which she knew how to ride but I had never ridden. In my defence I must say that I am quite good at riding a horse. There was a crowd of women standing around when we came off the boat and they secured two donkeys for us. She very easily put her foot on a step and swung her right leg over the back of the animal. My plan naturally enough was to imitate that movement. I put my foot on the step and somehow or other ended up with my right leg on top of the saddle. The pain was immense! But with all these women standing here looking at us and my pride being gravely tested, I was not going to show how much agony I was in. And I put my feet through the stirrups and we went on our way, and my foot just swelled and swelled.

The engineers of the dam and lake, first helped by the Soviets and then by the Americans, decided that all the fantastic statues, some of them twenty or thirty metres high, had to be removed to another place as the lake-water would cover it all. The place where they took the statues was in the middle

of the desert and we boarded a little plane to go there. There the temperature soared to fifty degrees but you can stand it because it's very dry. You could go down and see all these immense statues that had been brought there block by block. In its own way it is very impressive, but at the same time I was not so affected by what I saw because of the rather over-the-top symbolism. The statues are so terribly stylised that they don't really give an impression of human beings; they were much too formal for me. Then again, perhaps the complaints from my injured foot had something to do with the opinion I had come to.

Two days later and with one limb not yet in good working order, my Egyptian friends invited me to go to Mount Sinai. Sinai belongs to Egypt but the Israelis also had permission to come to the mount. I had been promised that three cars would go because the vehicles themselves would break down all the time on the road. This arrangement did not happen. The invitation had been announced but there was no follow-up. So I took matters into my own hands. I took a taxi to the station from where a bus departed every two days to go up the mountain. With no Arabic and again wearing my usual jeans, I pronounced the iconic word Sinai and paid for my ticket. I had taken something with me to sleep at night because I knew our arrival would not be on the same day. Inside the bus on one side were the women and on the other side the men, and there was no communication between them. I thought it prudent to sit with the women, who immediately began talking to me and I could merely defend myself with "no Arabic!" We journeyed for two hours or so and then the bus stopped in the middle of nowhere. There was a small stand and the rest went there and drank something. And again all the men went on their side and all the women on the other. I stood there not knowing what to do, so I half-followed the women wondering what they were planning to do. And then I realized that the women were opening their legs and making *pipi* and

the men were performing the same task in their place. I decided that I just had to abstain as I stood there in my jeans.

We went back into the bus and carried on, and when we arrived I met a man who spoke English. In actual fact I had wanted to go there not to see Mount Sinai but rather the nearby Saint Catherine's Monastery. The man was very much surprised to see me there, not only because I was a foreigner in jeans but also one hobbling around with an enormous swollen leg. I could walk only with difficulty by this stage. He told me about accommodation in cabins, with their bed, chair and cold shower, and wanted to know what I was going up to "the Moses place." I replied that, because of my swollen foot, I intended to see the icons in Saint Catherine's instead. But he gave me the frustrating news that the building wouldn't open until Monday. This was a Thursday. He promised to get me some means of transport to take me the short distance to at least see the monastery gardens. I still had hopes they would make an exception for me. He procured a kind of two-wheeled seat and a man who pulled it. As it turned out it was a great effort for the man to pull it and cost a lot of money. But there was Saint Catherine's, just a paradise: beautiful gardens, gorgeous roses, I enjoyed the wonderfulness of the place enormously! And though there was no answer to my knock at the door, I sat very sadly on a bench conspiring to find a trick to get in.

Then who should come but a cleric in long robes, like my Dominican clergyman in Geneva, small and fat and out of breath, obviously some type of Catholic priest. He told me he was from Belgium, had come there to see the abbot and would gain entry with a letter he carried for the abbot. I still thought his chances of entry were poor: "Try! They would not even open the door for me!" But we went to the door and knocked, and knocked, and he shouted, "Abbot! Abbot!" in French as neither of us had any Arabic. Finally the door opened and a little monk took the letter. We then spent the

next half-an-hour sitting on the bench talking about the Saint Catherine he knew and I saw that it was very important for him to see the abbot. Suddenly the monk came back and made a sign for him to follow. So I sheepishly entered behind him through the door. A notice written in English pointed to the icons and I quickly went into that room. They were absolutely fantastic; I sat on a stone bench and just stared and admired them.

In the meantime the door was locked and I ended up having to sleep that night with the icons; lying on the floor in this incredible cold, sleeping badly until the next morning when, waking drowsily, I was confronted by a girl standing beside me. She said something in Arabic, which I did not understand; I just smiled at her, the door was opened and I went outside. But then my problems really started. It took me about five hours to walk back but, because Saint Catherine's was not open, there was nobody on the road to assist me. But anyhow I got back only to see three cars coming, looking for me. So the last bit of the road I travelled comfortably sitting with them. Soon afterwards I took the plane to England and my daughter picked me up at the airport. She had one look at my foot; she did not say anything but just drove. She brought me to hospital where I stayed nearly a week. She said to me, "One can't let you go alone!"

While I was in Egypt I wanted to get to know the Copts and was brought to a town nearby. I was told to change out of my usual informal clothes, to place a scarf on my head, not wear make-up and travel accompanied. The very narrow road to the town contained only bicycles, there were no cars, and once we reached the town, the houses themselves were located on both sides but at a lower level to the road. It was explained to me that the locals had put their garbage on that road and that was why the road had become higher and higher. The interior of a typical house would have a big room with an enormous Christ surrounded with lots of very thin candles and his big eyes staring at you. There the women looked like Arab women

to me. Among themselves and with their grandparents they spoke Copt but they also spoke Arabic. The normal practice when visiting their houses was to pray in front of their altars and buy their candles. So we went and pretended at least to say a prayer or just stay quiet. At the first two or three places I had some coins to buy a candle but eventually I had only an Egyptian pound note, which at that time was worth quite a lot. When I bought a candle at the next house, I gave them the note and was told that they had no change, and I asked them to keep it. This they also refused and then we tried to buy a pound's worth of candles but there weren't enough of them. All of this meant that we had to wait a long time to get change for the purchase of a candle. Good manners and pride and old custom had all come into play.

The third time I was in Cairo I was interested in attending an Arab marriage. I let my curiosity be known to the manager of the hotel and soon afterwards the father of a bridegroom came to me and said what an honour it would be to have me as their guest. It was a rather innocent desire that later on caused me a sleepless night. It was extraordinary to discover that the people engaged in Arabic dances are nearly naked. The bride you could not see because she was not yet married; her face was covered. But the young man was absolutely gorgeous! Great family, good looking, dressed splendidly. And then something was said and a ceremonial action was performed, and after that a very beautiful Arab voice read a section from the Koran. At that we looked over and saw the uncovered face of the bride and this indicated that they were married now. Bride and groom held hands. Then all of us, me included, went up the stairs; we bowed in front of him and then in front of her, and then went downstairs to be met by the sound of music. A cake had been produced that was as high as the ceiling. The people of the hotel started cutting it, whereupon I was told the event was finished, a sort of good-natured code that I should go. And I did, but I was to hear music the whole night.

I had been to Istanbul various times since the early 1960s. On one occasion I went there with a friend to a conference on finance and law hosted by the International Institute of Public Finance. We were sightseeing and went to the Bosphorus and had some fish which was wonderful. We were in this very nice restaurant at the top of a high building, and there we met another couple and decided together to look at Istanbul at night. So the two men walked together and we, the two women, were walking fifty metres in front of them. In Istanbul at that time you could not cross the street because there was a lot of rubbish as high as a room, and so you had to go around these massive obstacles. Somewhere along the line we got separated from the men, when suddenly we came to cross the street and saw lots of young men running downhill in the street. Naturally we thought that there must be something down there of interest. With our partners still far behind us, we also went excitedly down this street. The youngsters all went through a large arch on each side of which stood two very strong men. When we came there and wanted to pass through, one man on one side and his friend on the other grabbed each of us by the neck and lifted us up. They said something in Turkish that we, of course, did not understand. They kept us there until our two men arrived; they did not know any Turkish either. But they put us down next to our companions.

We did not know what had happened and quite puzzled we decided to go back to the hotel. We took a taxi with a driver who spoke German – like many Turks he had worked in Germany – and he started laughing and explained that this was a whore-house. Apparently inside there were various kind of huts and in each there are four women, fully dressed laying on the floor, and you paid at that time one lira (about ten American cents) and stood in line, and got the chance to lay on one of these women for three minutes. And if you hadn't finished in that allotted time, you paid one lira and stand in line once more, with a man standing there who counted

three minutes. This was an official whore-house, managed by the government. And we asked, "But what about syphilis?" and our driver laughed and explained, "We all have syphilis, so a little bit more or less does not make too much of a difference! It is only dangerous if a foreigner comes."

For that conference we stayed in the Holiday Inn, which stood on the hilltop overlooking on one side the city of Istanbul and on the other a long stretch of the Bosphorus. But for some reason we could not get through the traffic jams so we went to another hotel from whose large terrace on the upper floor we saw the incredible lines of vehicles. In the middle of a nearby crossroad we saw a policeman and nobody was really paying attention to him. And close by there was a man with his bicycle lying on the side of the road who had been struck by a car; I don't think he was badly hurt. I was informed that if a driver did something wrong, they would take the number plates off his automobile. When I went out next time, I did not see one car which had a number plate! I then imagined myself becoming the head of Istanbul and having to solve the traffic problem. I made two or three different plans and I came to the same conclusion that none of them would work, as basically the whole chaos is derived from the tendency of the people. All the same I quite liked the city of Istanbul.

A curious thing that happened in Istanbul was that I had to give a welcome talk in Russian. How I came to learn some of that language was that earlier at the beginning of the 1960s I had attended my very first philosophy conference in a tiny place called Alpbach in western Austria. There they had so little land that they made a song about it, that even the dead were buried standing in order not to use up arable land, so "even in death we cannot rest." At that conference in late August 1961 I met a young Polish professor, Janus Kaczynski, a very agreeable character but with very bad German. My German is all right and we began a friendship. We went into

the adjoining woods to discuss philosophy. He invited me to a philosophy event in Warsaw and I told him, as a matter of good manners and in the interests of conversation, I would learn some Polish but he advised me to learn some Russian because supposedly everybody understood it there.

So I went back to London and I learned some Russian, taking about ten or twenty lessons. I could even have a little chat in the language but I must confess I did find it very difficult. Then we had a vivid correspondence; he had told me that there was no censorship, that he was a head of the philosophy department at the University of Warsaw and nobody would dare to open his letters. With this assurance I wrote what I thought; I wrote that I did not like the Communism and why, and so on. And he answered. Then quite suddenly there were no more answers. So I waited a little and wrote again, and again there was no answer. Since I was expecting to go to the conference in a very short time, I went to the Polish embassy, a beautiful English house whose interior was dominated by an enormous staircase. I was received by the cultural attaché. In his room this young man heard my story of the halt in communication and gave me some reasons why this might have happened, and ended by suggesting, "You'd better not write again if you don't get an answer." In his office everything was studiously polite. After the meeting the man accompanied me and when we were in the middle of the staircase his tone changed and he told me very sternly, "For heaven's sake, woman! Stop writing to that man! He is in prison because of you! I couldn't talk upstairs because it's full of microphones. He is in prison. And I don't know for how long. And it is all your fault." That explained the silence. It also explains why I stopped learning Russian; I had no more interest after the poor man got imprisoned.

That sad experience explains why I knew some Russian; I could even read it within limits. For some reason, the person who was supposed to say a welcome in Russian at the Istanbul conference was not there and

somebody found out I knew a little bit of Russian. I had to read a text, which encouraged many people afterwards to speak Russian to me, which of course I did not understand. They complimented me on what to them was a very good speech but I did not really know what I was saying. All I do know was that it turned out to be a very good conference on finance.

My Japanese trip of 1976 was very interesting in that it opened my eyes to many things. It was the year my mother passed away. My daughter did not know what she wanted to study. One evening a university teacher was coming to have a dinner to discuss something with me. Our guest was to be an older gentleman from the University of Sheffield. For some reason, which happens very rarely to me, I had to do something else and said to my daughter, "Look, you have to look after him. See if he'll take a glass of whisky or something and I will be there later. Just keep him company for a while." I did what I had to do and rushed home, and my daughter received me in a very animated state: "Oh mama! Now I know what I am going to study! I am going to study Japanese." I asked her why study Japanese when none of us had any relation to anybody or anything from that country. "Yes but the lecturer has told me about the excitement of going to Japan, and to know Japanese, and he told me about Japanese literature," and so on. And I said, "I did not know that he knew Japanese." "He doesn't. But he is a teacher in Sheffield, and in Sheffield there are relatively few people who speak Japanese so he's motivating people to study Japanese." So my daughter went next term to Sheffield to study Japanese and later the university sent her to Japan to stay some time there.

When she came back the first time, she was quite encomiastic and wearing something completely different to her normal attire of before. The second time she returned, she had not liked it at all and she told me, "I don't want to go to Japan any more. They are not human beings. They are completely different from anything." She told all sorts of stories explaining why she now

had this opinion of the country. In the meantime, while she was studying, she made contacts through the university with a number of Japanese firms and their directors; so, since we had a nice place, we received quite a lot of people for dinner at our house, and some of these were rather important Japanese. They generally spoke perfect English, and one or two among them asked me to write some articles on economics which were published in Japan. So little by little I came to know several important Japanese people in England in the economic field. All this led to an invitation from the head of the Central Bank in Tokyo inviting me as an official visitor in April 1976, to spend three weeks operating from an office with two secretaries to give talks about the eurodollar market – all through my daughter in a way. I accepted.

The official visitor part started in London: I was accompanied by two directors of the Central Bank when I was boarding the plane; they pretended to understand English but replied to everything with a “Yes”. So I arrived as an official visitor to an incredible hotel, which was a short distance outside Tokyo. I was there for three weeks. At first it was a shocking experience. My daughter had told me that I should take about thirty to forty presents, little things, but they must be properly packed with the right colours. I made myself busy in the plane making the little packages. And she had a friend who had studied with her, the son of the owner of Nomura Securities, one of the largest security companies in the world. He was to spend two or three years in Japan to learn all the tricks. He came to the plane to fetch me (along with the two directors). I thought him a very nice man. Immediately he asked me, “Have you got many little presents?” and I said, “Yes, Ines told me.” He asked to see one example and I took one of them out for him. “For Heaven’s sake take this paper off!” he ordered. “That colour means death! So take it all off!” I remember sitting my first night in Japan and packing all the little presents in a colour he recommended to me.

The next day I was received by the head of the Central Bank. His gift was interesting because my daughter told me that I had to take a really good present for him as a welcome gift. I managed to find something very nice, something like a magnet with some tiny metal cubes stuck to it – what is called an “executive toy”. So I had this toy ready for him and with a big bow, as my daughter had explained to me, gave it to him and this was then followed by three minutes of small talk. He asked me how my trip was, how I liked Japan, if it was my first visit, did I like the hotel – all typical small talk. And exactly after three minutes he said, “Finished. Now, this is why we have invited you as an official visitor.” And he proceeded to tell me what he would like me to talk about and that I would have these two directors with me. And they literally were with me all the time! When I went to the chemist’s and wanted to buy something personal for myself, there they stood. There was nothing for them to do; I never met their wives, I never was able to talk with them about anything. As my daughter had been there a couple of times, she knew many foibles of the country; she confided to me, “Each time they do something new or bigger, you’ll give them a present,” and so on. And she added, “You’ll have to have *the* great dress, a long dress, for the last evening. That is absolutely necessary.” So I had all that ready. A few days later I gave the two directors very nice gold necklaces for each of their wives. They were even beautifully packed. And the next day I got both of them back with the paper in a terrible state, with the retort from the two men, “Me not wear necklace!” And I said, “But for heaven’s sake! The necklaces were not for you but for your wives!” And then they said, “You no reason giving present to my wife!” And then, absolutely offended, they returned them to me.

In 1974 the Chinese had discovered an enormous number of artifacts which they found buried in the earth. These were mainly terracotta warrior sculptures, dating from the third century BC, found by farmers in March of that year near Mount Li, the place of the necropolis and tomb of Emperor

Qin Shi Huang. I said that I wanted to see this absolute wonder! I travelled to the site and looked at the warriors, and my Japanese companions were standing there, not looking. At one point I was so disappointed that they did not even bother to look that I said, "See this! Isn't it incredible?!" And one of them said, "Yes, madam, a pot." I gave up!

From there we went to Kyoto where I decided to try a proper Japanese room at the best hotel there, a change after the American-style room in Tokyo. So I came into my room and there was no bed; there were flower arrangements and nothing to sit on. I was then shown the bathroom, which consisted of three different kinds of closets: one to wash your hands, one which had a shower, and the last one was a toilet in which there was a Japanese bath, which is high and very small. You can only sit in it and it is boiling hot! The heat was terrible when I was in Kyoto, so I wanted to go and have a cool shower every now and then. And it was not possible, as each time I entered the bathroom, the servant appeared and wanted me to go into the hot water. I only wanted a shower but they want to wash you! They have little pieces of cotton and they dip them into some liquid soap and they start washing you like that. And I don't want to be washed like that; I'd rather wash myself. But there was no way! And each time I would enter to have a shower, somebody would come in as well and start washing me! It was interesting; it is certainly another way of living.

The whole visit lasted for three weeks. I do like Japanese food. But after ten days or two weeks, I started feeling that there is nothing in the world I needed more than a ham-and-cheese sandwich; that really I would die if I did not have this sandwich. And to the horror of my two directors, I suddenly saw a very cheap kind of place, where outside was written "European Food" in English. And I entered. And the two men exclaimed, "Not here!" I said, "Whatever you say, I'll get my ham and cheese sandwich!" And I like Japanese food, but after two weeks of it ... But afterwards they knew. Every second day they would take me to that place, and I had a ham and cheese

sandwich. The first day at the Central Bank I was given a very impressive large office. There was a girl who would come in, walking without lifting her feet, and brought me coffee. I tried to say "No coffee, tea." So she went backwards out of the room, something she would always do: you cannot show your back to the honoured person. And I tried to say to her that I always wanted tea, I did not want any coffee. At that time I still loved coffee, but for my taste Japanese coffee is undrinkable while the tea is absolutely wonderful, though not the ceremonial tea. What I said about the coffee she understood perfectly well but she said nothing. I then got an urge to go to the restroom and when she came with the tea, I asked her, "Can you show me where the restroom or the toilet is?" And she let me know that she did not understand me. So I repeated "Restroom?" and "Toilet?" and then followed by saying, "You must understand me, because you say *no*." She started to smile and I said, "You are not allowed to say that you understand me, are you?" And she said: "No." I walked out to the corridor and I saw two girls coming out of another room and I thought, "That may be it." So I opened the door, at which a group of women screamed and all of them left. I never succeeded in doing anything alone, even my ham and cheese sandwich.

I loved of course the Rock Garden. It was incredible. I sat there and looked, and I had a guide, since I was an official visitor, an elderly Japanese woman who again thought she knew some English. And all she ever said was, "A laying Buddha. A standing Buddha. A sitting Buddha," as if I could not see that! So I knew much more afterwards. These rock gardens of Kyoto did leave a deep impression. You have to get in the spirit because there is nothing but some grass and a few rocks, and some benches for people to sit. But it just does something to you. You'll just sit there and nobody talks. No music. And, of course, my two men accompanied me there. After five minutes when they realised I was just sitting there, they simply vanished. They were not particularly sophisticated companions. One day one of them

suddenly mentioned the word Bach, at which I thought, “Gosh! Fantastic! I can have a conversation with them about Bach!” But no, it was about some technical problems they had recording Bach properly on a disc; so nothing about the actual choral and organ works of Johann Sebastian Bach.

One day I decided to escape my two directors; unfortunately it did not turn out very well. We had gone to a mall and I made a sign that I was going to the toilet. Inside I just waited and came out when other ladies were leaving so they did not see me. I thought, “This time I am going to see Tokyo.” It was not so agreeable an experience. First of all there were Japanese men who came after me; they were saying, “You spoken English, Madam or Sir, whatever would apply.” This came from their books of English that would include the phrase “Madam or Sir, whatever would apply ...” And then, since I had eaten very good food in the most elegant restaurants where I was taken every day, my eye was caught by a bowl of rice and other simple plates in a window, and I went inside and sat down. It became more complicated: it was plastic not food. So they thought I wanted to buy the plastic, not food to eat. It was there I found out that the Japanese food as we know it is not what the Japanese eat. They eat a big bowl of rice, with one egg or just two little pieces of meat on top. That’s what a normal employee would eat and not the fancy things we eat.

After that I needed some hygienic towels. Naturally, I wanted to talk to a woman about the matter but there were no women in the shops to speak about it and at the end I gave up. I took a taxi and told the driver to take me to the Hotel Okura. He looked at me. So I said “Okura Hotel” and then changed the pronunciation slightly: “Okurá” and “Ókura”. Suddenly I had an idea: I knew about a Hotel Tokyo in the middle of the town; we arrived there and I asked the bellboy to explain to the taxi driver that I wished to go to the “Okura Hotel” and finally this was made clear and we went there. That was my day of freedom, when I came back with nothing I wanted to buy. But it is when you do not know the language.

I was to have a wonderful time teaching at the Jesuit University of Sofia, next to the Imperial Palace. That was the next time I came to Japan. I was in a much more simple hotel but one that was still terribly expensive. There I was surrounded for three weeks by Japanese students who knew English. I had talks nearly every day, mainly on economics, no philosophy this time, and that was a different thing, just like going to the Universidad de los Andes in Bogota or something like that. I was later to take another trip to Japan, when I went on behalf of Victor Urquidi to personally invite people for his international conference. And I went once more to Tokyo; people wanted to come with me to London and I told them to go to the British Council. But people I met on that occasion knew English quite well; the impression I got was that when a Japanese learns something, he learns it perfectly.

A very interesting experience was the unbelievably fast bullet train that runs between Tokyo and Kyoto. Nowadays, thirty years later, the French and others have trains like that, but back then neither European nor American trains were going that fast. I was asked whether I wanted to go by car or by train and, since I'd never been on one, I chose the bullet train. So they put me into the train and my companion-directors brought two cars! There was a driver for each of the cars and there were two directors and, of course, it was an honour for them to sit next to me. So for half the way, one of them travelled in one car alone and the other sat next to me. Then we stopped in the middle of the journey and the other came to sit next to me, and the other took the other car. When we were in Tokyo, I said to one of them, "Does your wife know you are not coming home tonight?" And he said to me, "That is of no interest to her." I continued, "Well, but if you do not come home, your wife will get worried." "She does not count," was his succinct reply.

It was then that I had a terrible experience: I committed the greatest sin you can do in Japan. I was talking with the top-man from the Central Bank every

day eating lunch in a restaurant. I love Japanese food and the meals on this occasion were just fantastic. But when you come in, you have to take your shoes off. My daughter had told me that, that I would need to have the type of shoes I could just slip off, without having to do anything with my hands. I was prepared: I was to elegantly take off my shoes and put on a kind of slippers. But then, the first day, I was taken by the head of the Central Bank to a restaurant. When leaving, you should sit on the stairs, then you get your shoes and you give the slippers back. So I put my shoes on again, very easily as my daughter had advised, and then I went a step down.

At that moment I saw the two men, the head of the Central Bank and another director, pass me and *leave!* I just stood there. Since it was a very elegant restaurant, a *maître de* came to say to me that I had performed the greatest crime anybody could commit. I found out only later through an Englishman, the friend of my daughter, that when you are invited into a house or into a restaurant, when you put your shoes on again, you have to do a ritual of staring, turning and looking at the people who have invited you. Not to carry this out is an awful sin. I never outlived this because the head of the Central Bank would only see me on the last evening of my visit and that was a sign of his displeasure as was explained to me later. And all that because I had committed my “terrible crime”.

But before I finally left Japan two other things happened to me. One, the official tea ceremony, was performed for me by the Head of the Ceremony, an older man who did the same ritual for the Emperor. I can only say it is an absolutely boring and tedious thing. I sat by myself, as always accompanied by my two directors, of course, who were not to get anything. And there was the man who did the ceremony, about which I did not understand anything. The terrible thing is that it takes a very long time, but then at the end you get what they call “ceremonial tea”. It was a beverage of something that made me feel that I would die before I actually finished

it! It's like a soup of sick, quite disgusting! Or at least for me. And you *have* to drink it! That was not a good experience. The tea-master continued to pour until it overflowed and explained that this was like western people, that they didn't know when they had enough.

But then came the geisha experience – that on the other hand was fantastic! A geisha in Japan is highly honoured. They are educated as geishas from a very young age. There were five directors of the Central Bank who spoiled me with five cars and we went together to the most famous of the geisha houses. We had a ceremonial meal, which was fantastically good as it turned out to be a marathon of thirty-five courses. But each course is on a tiny plate, of the size of a small saucer. And I learned very quickly, because my daughter had told me when to know when the end has arrived: they'll bring you a miniscule plate, and then take it away, and bring you another one, and later take that away, and it's finished when two strawberries are presented together – then you'll know that that is it. Since I was a foreigner and not accustomed to eating with my legs crossed, in the very elegant restaurants which are also for foreigners, like this great geisha house, there is a hole in the floor where your feet go in. All geishas are painted white. An older geisha, the most important one, was on my left and the young geisha stayed on the right, and the old geisha was quite a revelation! She spoke English absolutely perfectly. She knew all the English poets. I had the most interesting conversation with her, in perfect English. And she made origami. The young geisha just smiled; she did not say anything and all I did was smile at her.

The meal was finished after about two hours. Then the old geisha bowed to me and said, "I am sure you would not like to spend an hour with the young geisha alone." I replied, "Certainly not!" And she said, "What would you like to do? Because now the directors disappear each with their geisha." During the meal there had been wonderful *koto* music. In the meantime the same lady had given me all sorts of things, records and this

and that, and of course a kimono. And I said I would like to listen to *koto* music for an hour. So we walked to a smaller room and the *koto* music people (all women) came in, and after a while she said, "Will you excuse me a moment? I'll see if the gentlemen are already in their cars." Very shortly afterwards she came back and said they were still busy. So we heard a little more traditional music and afterwards she gave me huge amount of presents. Then she took me to my car and at that we had finished. It was absolutely wonderful. They are educated to give men pleasure but it is not just a sexual pleasure; it involves other things. They are dancing in a very distinctive way, they are all painted white wearing those high soles. And it just has nothing to do with our culture.

One evening we went to the theatre. Suddenly one of my companions looked at the clock: it was 8.50. I was told we had to go but I protested we were still in the middle of the play. The response came back, "Look around! There are only men here. You must be back to the hotel not one minute later than 9 o'clock. Afterwards only street-girls are out." Things were also so expensive. I remember that I had been told by my daughter to send flowers to the main man towards the end of my visit. So I went to the Hotel Okura, the very best hotel; I went to their flower shop and asked for white roses, following someone's recommendation. I chose a dozen white roses and then I had to stand in line to pay. While I had not looked at how much the roses were, I simply knew I had to send them. Only when I was about to pay did I look at the ticket. Two hundred dollars! But I had to send them.

Quite apart from all this diversion there were some important activities. I gave very serious, well-prepared talks about what was the cutting-edge of economic thought and practice at that moment. Then came something very interesting: I was supposed to visit one large factory. We went to the Toyota Tahara plant and there I saw a car being made. It took four hours to do this.

So we came there and there was an enormous sign, a “Welcome” for me written in Japanese. The only thing written with our letters was Dr. Ruth Troeller; the rest I could not read but they translated it for me. I was called the greatest economist in the world, and the greatest woman, and all the best-mannered exaggerations. A little electric car came with a man sitting in it and behind him I sat myself, and we left, him and me. We left for four hours and once every hour exactly the car stopped. And I was given the choice of three or four cool drinks, exactly every hour.

The whole factory was about seventy square kilometres in size. First we saw a carburetor and then there came some kind of tubes. And the carburetor was transported with the tubes over to another place and there something else was added, and then something else. In the whole circuit I saw only one man, who was wearing a large white overall and red rubber gloves. In this way I saw a car being made and at the end, after four hours, the car was unfurled. And then – it must have been arranged – somebody jumped into the car and oil was thrown onto the floor. But then the cigarette lighter for the special display did not work. An elegant man in a suit, who spoke English, explained to me that the car now would be destroyed, because it was cheaper to destroy the car than to repair the cigarette lighter. All the same, I felt very much like asking them to give the car to me but it is not the kind of thing you can do as an official visitor. And two big mechanical arms came and destroyed it. I am sure it was all done for show.

I had been told that the last night would involve a big ceremony for me. There would be fifty people. Obeying my daughter's advice, I had a long and very beautiful dress and was made up very carefully, thinking that now I would be meeting the wives. Not at all, fifty men and no wives! In a big hall. And we were all eating, with the General Director of the Central Bank on my right; on my left the people were constantly changing because they

all had to have the honour to be seated next to me. So every five minutes I looked and there was somebody else beside me. Then came the unexpected invitations: after the two strawberries, the head of the Central Bank bowed and asked me to dance. So we – he and me, only the two of us – danced. And then I sat down. And then came the Vice General-Director ... At the fifth man I did something which I have never done before or after in my entire life: I feigned a terrible headache. I said, “No, I can’t even see anymore.” So they said, “Oh! Something was wrong with the food!” And I replied, “No! Nothing was wrong with the food, but sometimes it happens to me.” Just so not to blame them. So I was taken home after the fifth man.

The next day I was taken, like always, with our two cars with the two directors, this time to the airport. And we were too early. So in order to make some last-minute small-talk I said, “When you are going back now, would you both go in the same car?” And they answered, “No, we are going back by underground.” That was how we finished; once they had delivered me to the airport, they became simple people and they went back by metro. The cars had left. I thought that told me a lot about the whole culture; that so long as the honorable guest was there, they went by car. And the moment she was gone, as in this case, they were simple workers and travelled by metro. And they were high-ranking directors of the Central Bank.

All this travelling, to Japan and other places, was very interesting and I learned how different human beings can be. At the same time I also learned to appreciate Europe, to really feel “I am European.” I felt the same thing when I went to America, though not the first time with the baby when I was really only with my parents and a doctor, and had little dealings with Americans. In Mexico I also have the same feeling, and I still have it.

In Japan I met a lot of people who wanted to bring Japanese culture abroad and quite a few of these did speak English, of course. Later on I invited a dozen Japanese executives in the name of the Venezuelan Government to come over to Venezuela for reasons of “cultural exchange” but in reality it had a business purpose. So the Japanese in Caracas were speaking English. It was a strange culture shock between the Venezuelans and the Japanese. The Japanese are terribly stingy – my own theory is that it may be because they have always been poor – and the Venezuelans at that time were very generous. The first day of their visit we had a lunch in the best restaurant and the Minister of Finance was supposed to come, though finally he never arrived. I was there acting as the hostess. I thought that the safest choice for everybody would be steak. Venezuelan food is absolutely wonderful, almost like Parisian food in my opinion. The beefsteaks came and they were very big. The Japanese guests proceeded to cut off a small piece and eat it, and then they asked the waiter if they could take the big piece to the hotel. These were the official people, with diplomatic passport and all that. It was their practice each time, and they were there for two weeks or so. And after a week I asked, “What do you do with the big piece? You are invited for lunch and you are invited for dinner. When do you eat that big piece?” I never was to find out but that is the custom. After all there are very few fat Japanese.

Between my two longer Japanese trips, I got acquainted with contemporary Japanese literature through the help of the Mexican diplomat, Graciela de la Lama, who knew lots about Japanese literature. I think they possess a complete modern style of talking about ancient things, which we do not have yet either in the European or American traditions. I also discovered the difference between Japan generally and a place like Hong Kong. Both

have Oriental cultures but they are so completely different. I have never been to China except the big toe of my right foot, something I'll explain in a moment. But Chinese even physically are completely different: they are short, slim, have always a kind of smile on their face even when it is not intended to be a smile. But the Japanese, even if he means it to be a smile, does not look to be smiling. That contrast in physiognomy is part of the big difference between the two.

I went to Hong Kong to teach for a few months at the British University there, through an invitation that was arranged by my old Surrey lecturer Dr. Lord, who was now head of that institute. The people of the island are businessmen: they approach you because they want to do business with you. A Chinese man does not want to show himself superior, does not wish you to feel that he has a culture different from your own. And he is mainly a businessman; almost everybody you meet there, even if you meet them in a gathering about cultural affairs, you'll find somebody telling you something about a book he or his friend has published, and inviting you to purchase it. It always boils down to some kind of business. It is very practical for a European to go there. You can have a man's suit made perfectly overnight: handmade, hand-stitched, they'll just get together twenty people to make it. The Japanese feel superior to westerners. I suppose the Chinese do too but perhaps they hide it better. They would rather show that they want to help poor you, poor thing! You don't speak Chinese? Poor thing! You can't use a chop stick properly? They treat you in a motherly way, if I can put it like that.

Why do I say that my big toe had been to China? Hong Kong is an island and there are other islands adjacent to it. There is a small part that is attached to "mainland" China called the New Territories. There practically nobody speaks good English. A Chinese University is located there and I

gave various talks at that institute. They pretended not to speak any English but they asked questions which showed very clearly that they had understood it very well. That region was really the part that was lobbying for a return to China. When you went there you found, first of all, that it was a small forbidden city. You couldn't get in there; you couldn't go there by bicycle, no walking, there were no cars going there. And it had something mysterious. There was a very old rusted grill, on the other side of which is China, and I put my naked foot through a gap in the barrier. So my right foot toe was in China.

Dr. Lord, the same head of the economics department who helped me found a sub-department, had been for (I think) a year at the British University before I met him again. And so, when I went to Hong Kong to give some talks, I was asked if I knew "the Dr. Lord" and would I like to come for a semester there. I was supposed to go for a term, but as things turned out I found that my sabbatical year finished before the end of the term, so I was only to give about three quarters of the term. From what I could see, the institute was an attempt to make the Hong Kong people British; a ludicrous endeavour but it had some success as British culture there is very well known. I did not teach economics there but subjects related to general European culture. I gave a course at a Chinese university and was informed that I was the first westerner to teach in English there but I suspected that no-one understood a word. I learned Chinese philosophy and its approach to its European, mainly Greek, equivalent. I took some classes to see how far you could contrast or compare, or even find equal, much of Chinese philosophy and its Western counterpart. What was more difficult for me to get a grip on was the adaptation of Buddhism in China. Buddhism was not born in China; it came there in the first century after Christ. They have their special way of looking at Buddhism, which I find difficult to swallow. It is not just non-existence of the sovereign God of

one unique authority. Something I can find in Hinduism I cannot find in Chinese Buddhism, nor for that matter in the Kegon Buddhism I got to know in Japan. It is something very close to Shinto, which I dislike. But of course I came to know Chinese Buddhism after thirty years of Maoism, at a time when it was still suppressed to a degree.

I have always travelled by myself because I like it. If you want to do things, if you want to have an experience of the world, in general you can't do it with somebody else. The other person wants other kinds of experience. And this brings me to the question of each person's journey through life. You are born alone, you'll die alone, and your life has to be lived so that you can look at it afterwards, see your mistakes, see your sins – if you want to call them sins; where you went wrong, where you went right, and indeed see how you have developed. To witness the icons at Saint Catherine's and think on your own what they mean to you. This is your right, to live your own experiences, and you can't do it if you are with somebody else. Inevitably people always pull you this way or pull you that way.

Part 8 – 1970s: Venezuela and the Americas

I was invited by the University of Santiago de Compostela, a public institute situated in the wonderful city on the Atlantic coast of Spain, to teach for a term from December 1971 to May 1972; at the same time I was teaching a course in the University of Vigo to the south of the city. Though the level was considerably lower compared to what I was used to, the summer school itself was an agreeable experience as a result of the extensive propaganda they made on my behalf. It was the first time I was presented really to the public as being important in my field of instruction and for the life I had led. It was really this term in Spain that gave me the confidence to believe that foreign universities were interested in what I had to say about international economics. If I can be forgiven for perhaps showing off a little, this is what I recorded in my diary after giving some well-received talks:

(...) During Thursday and Friday I gave 2 sets of 3-3 ½ hours conference each day. Thursday was rather glorious in the great hall of the university, about 250 assembled and an applause of 15 minutes. Standing ovation. There was everybody except the alcalde [mayor] who was in Madrid. I was really good, forceful, coherent, informative and often funny. There was even much applause in the course of the lecture. There were good questions, fat professors, important officials but mainly rows and rows of enthusiastic students - in the morning I had been speaking on optimum currency areas. Friday my theme was Spain and the common market in the Colegio Mayor La Estilla. I did not know that that was my subject but so it seems because the papers say so. Dozens of photos were taken too and maybe 40 students and professors of the Opus dei listened reverently. The talk was good. (...) A remarkable 24-year-old “director” of the College, remarkable

for his old age, his complete humourlessness, his hypocrisy, smoothness and stupidity, also his stubbornness was remarkable. 24 years of age, viva el camino.

Even my weakness in the language of the students was not so distracting an affliction. My Spanish of course was rather non-existent but a clever interpreter made my talks understandable for the audience. I even managed to sing in Madrid night-clubs. However, I never completed the course I was invited to give at the university there owing to the very poor student discipline I experienced.

Dating from my sabbatical year 1972/73 my life was to change completely. Continuing until 1979, along with my teaching activities at the University of Surrey, I was invited to Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada, to spend six months there as a guest professor. I was also to give classes at the Université d'Ottawa, Université de Montreal, and Queen's University in Kingston. I came to know quite a few politicians at the Canadian capital and often appeared in interviews on CBC to speak about political matters and economics. Initially I was again greatly disappointed at what I considered the low level of the academic teaching at that university, and my only consolation were the classes on foreign direct investment I gave, also by invitation, at the Business School of the University of Chicago. I also became a member of the international trade workshop at the same university. My life was quite interesting academically, but the fact that I did not invest as much thought in my own comforts had consequences on my health. I purchased a small used car but did not realise it had no heating. So the fierce cold of the winter 1972/73 hit me adversely on my trips between Northern Illinois University in DeKalb and Chicago. While I enjoyed the high teaching level in Chicago, I deeply resented the teachings of Milton Friedman and his version of monetarism; of course I could not then imagine that the academic world would join me in my disapproval

some years later. But at that time I almost gave up economics as it seemed to me that the science would take this route afterwards.

Very shortly afterwards I received a phone-call one day from a Dr. Henry Jarecki, who had heard about me through Robert Mundell. He invited me to see him at Chicago to talk to him about writing a history of precious metals and in particular his company. It was an invitation that one had to take seriously as he was at that time the owner and head manager of Mocatta Metals Corporation, probably the world's leading gold and platinum firm in that period. Mummified in coats and clothes I drove in my little Volkswagen through hail to reach his office. Without really looking at me, he sat there languorously smoking a cigar, his walls littered with machines indicating the price of metals, and immediately began to speak of his company while I tried to get out of my wet coat. "I will start by explaining how I made my first twenty million," he said as I put my dripping coat on a hook. "At one moment the American government made a public announcement that they would buy up all the silver certificates from the public at a good price." Though not long in the United States, he went on to say that he had managed to borrow the required money very quickly and bought all the certificates he could lay his hands on. The government realised that the certificates had been purchased and that they would have to deal with him. For me this typifies how clever he was as a dealer, but what impressed me very much were our conversations on psychology – he graduated in psychiatry from Heidelberg and is the author of a book entitled *Modern Psychiatric Treatment* that was used in many schools of psychology. I argued with him that I was not a business historian and was not too warm about his offer. However, I proposed to write a study on the theory of gold whose main purpose would be to prove that a comprehensive and clear-cut theory on the subject was impossible. Dr. Jarecki agreed to this and paid for ten assistants at Surrey to work with me on the research. Right from that first encounter, I was fascinated by his

habit of answering phone-calls during our conversations giving instructions to buy in large amounts and sell in smaller amounts so as, in his words, “to confuse the market”. He was very aware that a collapse might occur in the market as his actions were so eagerly watched – his intelligence was revealed by how much care he took to avoid this. All the same, I didn’t get the impression of a happy man even in the midst of so much talent, success and wealth.

The countries of Latin America were now entering my life. It was a region I must admit I would understand well only after an economic lecture tour in 1974 focusing on its serious economic and financial problems. In 1972/73 we had a Venezuelan girl called Leonora at the University of Surrey, studying for her masters degree. She was a very intelligent person who had been sent by the Central Bank of Venezuela, and her unusual beauty meant that all the boys of the university were chasing after her. And since the London of that time had much looser morals than Leonora was accustomed to, they not only courted her but expected her to go further in the courtship. Since she in no way was ready for such a “light” relationship, she was making plans to leave for home before obtaining her degree. Fortunately, she explained the situation to me. Since at that time my son Gordian was studying at the University of Manchester and our place was very large, I invited her to come and live at our home; and thus she finished her masters with honours.

As a consequence of her return to work, I got an invitation from the Central Bank of Caracas to give a talk there on monetary economics in April 1973. It turned out to be the highest-paid talk I had ever given: \$10,000 for just one conference and first-class flights. A short time before this I had met again the eminent Mexican economist Victor Urquidí, a Basque refugee and then president of the prestigious graduate school Colegio de México whose mother had been a head of the Red Cross in Spain during the Civil War, at

the IMF and I let him know that I would be in the Americas during that month. He subsequently invited me for three weeks of teaching in Mexico, three hours in the morning at the National University (UNAM) and three hours at the Colegio de Mexico in the afternoon. I also wished to get to know the Mexican cleric Samuel Ruiz in Chiapas, about whom I had heard a lot concerning his work visiting and helping political prisoners. So I changed my expensive London-Caracas ticket to a tourist-class London-Mexico-Caracas-London ticket. I came in April 1973 for the first of many times to Mexico. As Victor was actually from Neuilly in the Basque region of southern France, the very first Mexican I met was Jorge Alberto Lozoya, who later became sub-secretary of the ministry of external relations under Rosario Green and Mexican ambassador to Israel and then Malaysia; and the first Mexican woman I met was Graciela de la Lama, former Mexican ambassador to India and later to Egypt. Knowing only these two, I had a quite grand idea of Mexicans. Later I was to make friends like Eva Usmani at both institutes.

The arrangements I had made to travel to both Mexico City and Caracas were relatively simple on this occasion. On another, what I was given a first-class return ticket to Venezuela but I managed to change this for a tourist-class ticket that would get me both to Mexico and Venezuela. This entailed zigzagging from Cairo to Rome, then on to Madrid, Cuba and then my two destinations. Departing from Madrid, the plane I was allotted was packed with Cuban soldiers returning from the intervention in Angola. Stinking and dirty and covered with a blanket each, two of them made room for me near the front of the aircraft. They also gave me a dark, almost German bread. Arriving at La Habana, the police informed me that I had no right to enter Cuba and I informed them of the simple fact that I was in transit to Mexico. Recalling an international conference I had attended, I came up with the name of a minister who was awakened to vouch for me.

Through his good graces, I was able to remain the two or three hours more in Cuba without further molestation.

This first time in Venezuela my lectures were in a mixture of English and Spanish at the UNAM, and in English at the Colegio de Mexico. At the same time I was able to visit most of the famous ruins of Mexico to my great delight. After the three weeks I flew to Bogota to visit the family of a Colombian friend whom I had met in London, but when I took a plane from Bogota to Caracas my suitcase went missing. It was a Sunday evening and the famous \$10,000 talk was to be given at 11 or 12 on Monday morning. I was in a typical traveller outfit, trousers and T-shirt, trying desperately on Monday morning to find some clothes and not succeeding. I had to tell the man who had invited me, the Finance Minister himself, that either I could not give the talk or I would have to give it in my travelling clothes. He did not reply with what I expected, a friendly dismissal of a small problem; instead he said, "That is terrible! Because our people are expecting you to be very formally dressed. We are very formal in Venezuela. And since all the authorities will be going to your talk, I don't know what we can do." Since nothing was to be done, my answer was, not very accurately, that the Queen of England on some occasions is to be seen wearing trousers. All of which was true as this was her preferred apparel on horseback, but this I did not mention. And so it happened that the \$10,000 talk was given with an introduction by the minister stating that, since the Queen of England every now and again gave talks to her nation wearing trousers, there I was dressed in the same attire!

After the talk, the head of the Central Bank invited me to come three times a year to Venezuela to give classes to the various heads of his institution. And I agreed to a five-year contract. In this way, at the end of 1973 I was appointed economist overseeing the nationalisation of the petroleum industry of Venezuela, though I must admit that at the time I knew almost

nothing of petroleum, OPEC and the importance of being a “swing producer”, not even of the famous seven sisters and their cartel (BP, Exxon, Shell and so on) – for me oil had always meant olive oil in large containers in my father’s business in Wiesbaden. But one thing I very soon came to understand was the limited importance of oil if essentially your main export of a certain product and you are dependent on the goodwill of the foreign buyers. I also became senior adviser in the establishment of the Venezuelan Investment Fund and then later at the end of August 1978 head of the Institute of International Capital Markets of the OAS (Organization of American States), the headquarters of which were located in Venezuela. I even managed to help enlarge the Venezuelan national carrier. At the close of my time working in Venezuela, the manager of the beautiful hotel in which I stayed each time I went to that country told me that I had honored them with a visit forty-four times, though I should be clear in stating that I never stayed for more than about a week each time. However, Venezuela never became my home; indeed, I did not particularly like the generation of newly rich Venezuelans whose wealth came from oil.

At one point the minister of finance had been informed that there were three thousand people working at the Central Bank but that there was a doubt that this was in fact the case. I was put in charge of overseeing who actually was working. I arranged matters so that, at the next payment of salaries, every employee would personally have to see me in a specially created office to get their wages. At the end of the exercise we found that there were just over five hundred people who were actually working at the bank! The fact that five times more “people” were employed but not actually working there pushed the bounds of credibility. For example, there was a woman who came and said, “You know, I am also receiving on behalf of my sister who could not come today because she is ill.” Another one reported that her son had broken his leg so he could not come. I was with three policemen because I knew that some of them might become violent.

Though my stays in Venezuela were always of a short duration, episodes like these, staggering as they were to me, I hoped would lead to long-term benefits for the people of the country.

In 1973, as I said, I signed a contract with the authorities in Venezuela and took advantage of my holidays and saved sabbatical free time at Surrey to come three or four times a year for a period of five years. My largest job for them involved helping them to nationalise their oil industry through compensating the owners, mostly foreign ones, with long-term government bonds. The public holding-company *Petróleos de Venezuela (PDVSA)* was to take over by 1 January 1976. However, as I could not do it alone, I asked some people in London to come and help, and together we established the Venezuelan Investment Fund. The work was not only related to the oil and gas industry: in April 1980, for instance, I completed a study for them on rural and urban energy alternatives for the third world. While working for five years in Caracas for its Central Bank the first thing that interested me was a very feminine one, if I can be permitted to explain it like that. And that is how beautiful the women were, and how well dressed, their hair, their clothes, all extraordinary! I came to the conclusion that in Venezuela, in a way, everyone is beautiful! People are gracious, they are agreeable. The first time I went to Caracas was in April 1973 and the second time in November of the same year; the difference in the country between these two dates was absolutely tremendous. It happened that during those seven months the oil price had tripled. The price of a barrel of oil had been the same for decades. Then from about 1970 onwards, but even more so from October 1973 when the Arabs had chosen to attack Israel during the Jewish celebration of Yom Kippur, the price rose hugely. Which was only just for the Arabs as it was ridiculous for oil to be worth a pittance a barrel in a world where the refined end-product was sold for very much more. I pointed out to people at the time, however, that the savings and investments of the greatly richer Arab states were located in any case in

safe financial institutes in New York, London, Frankfurt and other Western cities.

So when I came back in November, suddenly the whole capital city was full of workmen. They constructed houses and office-buildings and many construction-workers complained about the heat in English as they were often men from the United States, and the whole nation was really in evolution, moneywise. The hotel fees went up three times, everything cost much more. And it was suddenly a country that now tried to progress from a state of complete underdevelopment to something more advanced. For me their low starting position was shown starkly by the fact that there were only four people *in the entire country* who had a PhD and these, obviously, not from Venezuelan universities but from abroad. Another very important point to mention is that there had been a monetary union between the United States and Venezuela: the dollar was worth about 3.4 bolivars and that was the price that it had been there for years, and would stay for a little longer.

When I came to Venezuela for the first time, it was a poor country; when I came the second time, people had money and spent it on everything, because they were now the new rich. Wealth created a giddy and excited population. There were also plenty of foreigners who visited carrying what I could call almost standard-issue small leather suitcases of money, with honest and nefarious purposes as the case might be. It was suddenly a huge market-place, the whole of Caracas. Through knowing the two daughters of the Minister of Finance, who had studied at the University of Essex and who very often came to my London house for weekends, I had started travelling to this country and got to know it during this fast-moving boom.

As an economist, I was asked not only to give classes to the people of the Central Bank but also to members of the general public, if I could help. And I did this and other jobs, large and small. Number one of the big projects was I helped to nationalise their oil. It was the right move for them because the “Seven Sisters” of the petroleum industry, which had their own subsidiaries there, had taken massive advantage of them for years. Little by little, the situation was transformed with my help through the creation of a new agency; nobody lost any money and it was a fair nationalisation. And I became in many ways a “miracle lady” of Venezuela. I went there often, not because of the contract I had with the Central Bank but to help in other activities. In 1976 I gave classes at the Catholic University of Caracas, at the Universidad de los Andes (ULA) in the city of Merida outside the capital and elsewhere, and I holidayed on several weekends in the nearby island of Tobago. In the capital itself, I stayed at the Tamanaco Hotel which was filled with people who wanted to give Venezuela a loan or to get one. Young men with briefcases, beautifully attired, and of course the place became full of very elegant prostitutes.

They might have thought of me as kind of “miracle lady” who knew all the answers, but the truth was I knew I did not. I was very aware of my limitations and on one occasion I told the Minister of Finance about somebody in London who had studied with me at the London School of Economics and who was very much cleverer than me on where to invest money. He was hired for 10,000 dollars a day – what I certainly did not get but I did not ask for it either. Together we started the Venezuelan Investment Fund. My new colleague was able to take money, meaning some billions of dollars, and send it (as I might put it rather simplistically) three times around the world and it would come back with a profit of 1.5 billion, something that I was not able to do. I could do more normal things, though, and it was completely honest. He was very good at interest arbitrage while I concentrated on financial and business affairs within the

country. Each time I arrived to my office there was a big newspaper article about me along the lines of "Here she comes, the great economist". And I did, I think, quite a lot of good for them, except that there were difficulties with dishonest people. To give one instance of this. One day I was asked if I would come to a celebration of a new railway line going between two places whose names I did not know. I said, "Well, let me find out first about the little railway." And when I tried to find out about it, it went in actual fact from nowhere to nowhere; and somebody made several millions from that!

There were the most incredible things happening. I remember sitting on a big terrace of the hotel and hearing two Venezuelan men talking to each other with loud voices. "Can you see the new road over there?," said one pointing to the other side of the valley, and the other man said "Yes." "Fifty per cent in my pocket!" To which the other man said, "Can you see the wonderful road going from this side to that?," and the other man said, "Yes, I see it." "One hundred per cent in my pocket!" The whole place was like this. Many times it could be a joke but most of the time it was not. The USA in the nineteenth century must have had a climate like that.

One day I was just about to leave for London and I came to get my salary at the Ministry of Finance. I was sitting with the minister when the secretary came in and said, "I know you are not taking any calls, but this call, I think, you have to take." I was sitting on the other side of the desk and heard him saying on the phone, "What did you say?! Four million? And you don't know where it is? How is it you don't know?" I sat opposite him and wrote on a piece of paper, "Tell him you'll ring back in twenty minutes." I passed him the paper and he looked at it and said, "Listen, I can't talk just now. I'll ring you in twenty minutes." He then explained that Venezuela had been sent four million dollars but nobody knew where the money was. So I told him to say that they should call back and that tomorrow Dr. Troeller would come to discuss the matter with them. I finished with "Just leave it to me!" So he

gave me my own payment and I went to New York instead of flying directly to London. Before I left I just said, "Could you give me the names of your directors here." He wrote them down, I said thank you and went to New York. Next day I went to the bank; I was received by the head. "So Venezuela is short of four million dollars?" "Yes, isn't it terrible?" And I said, "Could you just do me a favour? Could you tell me if any of these gentlemen have an account with you?" He agreed and came back and said, "Yes, they all have accounts with us". And I said, "Could you check their accounts? Which one of them has been credited with a million dollars recently?" The answer was four of them! And I said: "Could you ring the minister of finance in Venezuela and kindly tell him that you know where the four million went?" I then took my plane to London.

While I was in Venezuela I started giving classes at the Andrés Bello Catholic University. This episode stands out for me because the man who invited me to give classes there was a middle-aged professor who was a Jesuit priest. He had a small car. Though I was coming to Venezuela frequently, I did not know Venezuela and he started to show me Venezuela in his little car. He drove very badly. But he was very knowledgeable and spoke English. But what was most interesting about him was that, after going a little piece, we would stop at a rather modest house and each time he would say to me, "I would like you to meet my godson or goddaughter." Among these visits once we came to a small house where there was a nice little girl and there it was wholly clear that he was not a godfather but the actual father. Of course I never made this remark. Unfortunately, while I was there one time, he had an accident and died. At another point I was asked by the University of the Andes to give a talk. Having done this I could not leave for the capital because of the bad weather conditions at the airport. I stayed there for four days, which had a terrible effect on my work, so on the fourth day I took a kind of wagon and I went back to Caracas drawn by a horse.

Every evening I was invited to a newly built home, beautiful many of them, designed by architects coming from the United States. Some of them would have ten reception rooms – absolutely *nouveau riche*. I knew that it would be this elegant so I bought myself beautiful clothes in London before coming. The sensitivities were such that you couldn't ever put anything on twice. I remember there was one long dress which I had worn two or three years before to one of these invitations; I thought, "Oh, I'll put it on. Nobody will remember." One lady after another would come to me to say, "Oh! This wonderful dress of yours! I always remember when you wore it the first time." I witnessed when ladies would arrive with wonderful jewelry and, upon receiving a compliment from another woman, would take it off and put it around their friend's neck or on her wrist. They were by then earning so much money that they did not know what to do with it. A friend of my husband, a photographer, came to Venezuela with all his cameras. Very soon after his arrival everything was stolen. He asked me what he was going to do. That evening I went somewhere for dinner and said to an acquaintance, "You know, a friend of my husband has come and his things were robbed." That same evening when we came back to the hotel *everything* was there. But it was not his original equipment; every piece had come from who knows where and everything was new. They would spoil us with money for almost everything. I myself participated in this high-living. In the hotel I stayed at, the Tamanaco, there was a hairdresser. I felt at some point so unwilling or perhaps unable to do my hair myself, that I took the habit when I would wake up in the morning to go downstairs and have my hair done, and then to have my breakfast. It was really a kind of boom period even for me. Though I might say that things today with Hugo Chavez are horrible, since he is doing all the wrong things, but he and his social programme are a reaction to all that.

I would also go to the beach near Caracas, invited by some friends to one of the clubs there. As conditions were then, anyone who did not belong to a very expensive club couldn't even go into the sea. On one occasion I fell asleep under a very powerful sun and the next day I had a very high temperature. I was really in a very bad state. I stayed in bed and fortunately the hotel bookshop supplied me with five books. When I was much better, I decided to go to the bookshop myself. I went down in the lift that contained another woman, one of those elegant prostitutes the hotel was full of. When she saw me, she said (referring to me in the familiar "tú"), "You! How can you do something like this?! Now you won't be able to work for two weeks. No American is going to want you like this!" And then she wrote me something on a piece of paper advising me how to recuperate after severe sun-burn. I did not know how to react; I felt like saying, "You horrible woman, you're taking me to be a prostitute!" But I recognised her good wishes. She really wanted to be nice. So I said, "Thank you very much", and I took the little piece of paper.

By doing all this I became very well known. They called me in Venezuela *nuestra doctora* though I am from a country nobody in Venezuela had an idea where it possibly could be. Afterwards I started to write about Venezuela. In 1979 I was asked by the OECD to write a book about the economic future of Venezuela. I earned good money from this and other tasks for the OECD but never what could be called excessive money; not because I would not have liked it but because I have in me a certain measure of things, a habit that makes me identify other priorities ahead of income and riches. I sincerely feel I did useful work for them; fortunately, at no time in my life did I do a task I did not consider worthwhile and to be done well. I thought the same way about the Venezuelan Investment Fund. It still exists, as far as I know, though I am sure there is very little money left in it because of the Chavez regime.

At one moment in Venezuela I was made a director of the *Instituto Internacional de las Inversiones de Capital*, the Institute of International Capital Markets (IICM), an entity that belonged to the Organization of American States (OAS). I gave quite a lot of advice to them. They needed an academic director and I became that. That is why I had to go to Washington very often, at least once a month to their meetings. That was very interesting because I organised meetings of the central banks of the Americas in different places. As an international monetary economist the activities of the IICM interested me very much. I learned a lot about capital market movements and projects like the Eurodollar, which at that juncture did not exist yet. I was invited to a ceremony in Washington to be confirmed in this position and thus become an important person at the OAS but one who still had a rather vital question: "What do you want me to do?" I was told that I should spend my time inviting the central banks of Latin America to come together to solve the problems of each individual nation and of the region. As an economist I knew about the workings of these banks and how their organisation and services, and mutual support, could be improved. But what impressed me most was that I was a woman in the completely male-dominated banking system. All the same it was quite fun. By the end of the decade, speculators were affecting the economic well-being of the country and I was commissioned by the OECD to write a book called *Venezuela in the Year 2000* that predicted a breakdown in the economic and political stability of the nation. There was to be a later book, *Petroleum Substitution*, based on work I had done in the summer of 1977 and also sponsored by the futures programme of the OECD that encouraged a diversification away from too great a dependence on oil. I became somebody, a sort of great European economist in Latin America, a strange animal who could think. Along with Prof. Robert Triffin, I was even a major player in the initial development of what became Brady Bonds, the programme to reduce debt in the region starting from the late 1980s. I proposed to the then head of the IMF in 1985 that Latin America could

reduce its debt and also develop some sort of monetary union but the idea was thought to be too grandiose and costly. There was also a practical problem that the persons responsible were being constantly changed. This was called the T-Plan ("T" standing for "Troeller", in answer to the obvious question). At the level of individual countries many of the smaller nations feared a loss of sovereignty if their currencies were linked to the great regional powers. However, within the plan – indeed a major element of the proposal – was the issuance of bonds to finance projects like large infrastructure building. We arranged to have a meeting every three months or so in one of the Latin-American capitals, with the other heads of central banks as guests, principally to speak about cooperation between them and so on. This we did in Honduras and San Salvador, one in Mexico, another one in Jamaica – in many locations. In Jamaica it was just great. It is a fantastic island and I like the Jamaicans and I loved to dance mambo. Some very funny things were to occur in the course of these meetings.

My acquaintanceship with the Caribbean had started many years before. The government of Trinidad and Tobago had honoured me with an invitation to their independence celebration in the capital, Port of Spain, on August 31, 1962. It was the result of a combination of events. We had a Trinidadian student at Surrey University, the son of somebody important, and that young tall black man with his wife and a number of his children would come to see me while he was studying. The strange thing was, though there were British Officials there to give Trinidad its freedom, somehow the people spent much more time with me, thinking I was one of the colonial representatives. Big dinners, big receptions, very formal conversations ... I felt great pride, giving up my little Caribbean country. It was one of those moments when you are taken and spoiled for something you have nothing to do with. But slowly and unwillingly I realised I had to play the role and I must admit I did my duty very competently on behalf of the British Empire.

Later, while working for the Venezuelan Government in 1974, as a result of a suggestion by ex-student I took the plane to Tobago very often for a Saturday and Sunday. Tobago itself is a very small island where Robinson Crusoe is supposed to have lived. There on the island I stayed in an absolutely wonderful, very simple English *pension* run by two old ladies. It was directly on the sea. And the food ... the fishermen would actually come into the apartment and you could choose the fish which they would then cook. Tobago itself was very wild. I was not supposed to go out alone by myself. At that time there were not too many streets; the main street went around the whole island. There were mainly palm trees and a very virgin landscape, and water on each side. There was one big hotel but that establishment was also in reality a place where wild activities happened. I knew many men from Venezuela who went there with their women; it was not exactly a nice place, with a noisy, libertine atmosphere. But then there was this pension which I was to visit quite a number of times, a secure haven of peace away from the messy world surrounding it.

At some point I told the old ladies that I would take a car to see the island and, scandalised, they responded that I couldn't go alone. I insisted in any case. However, the one thing I had not realised was that there would be no food; there were no shops or something on the same lines. It is a sign of how little I really knew then of the island world outside my little holiday home. I was nearly back from touring around the island when I saw high up something written like "food". So I left the car and I climbed a lot of very rocky steps and came to a room with many of windows, between each of which were photographs of sailors. And there I met a woman who spoke English. She told me she could offer me chicken to eat but mainly I was terribly thirsty. She gave me a can of Coca-Cola, a type of beverage I normally didn't drink in a container I was not accustomed to. I enquired how I should open it. She found an old rusty nail and started to bang it, an

unhygienic activity that prevented me from drinking it. I asked about the sailors and she said they were clients. I continued, "Clients of what?," and she responded, "Young ladies like you." At this I wondered nervously where I was and how I'd get out. Then she said, "I will call somebody. You are beautiful." But even though I was restless I stayed on the assumption that the clients were not actually coming and I needed to eat something. I was waiting and waiting, seated against my better judgment on the very large bed. Suddenly I realised that, not very far below in the courtyard, she was running after a chicken. I called her and asked how much the chicken was. And she said, "You'll pay afterwards. Sailors are coming," to which I replied, "Yes, I know, but I like to pay before." I paid for the chicken-meat and with the greatest difficulty I made my way out and rushed down the stairs to my car. I met my old ladies and told them I would never do that again, and they explained to me, "Oh, she is well known for this kind of business, finding girls for the sailors."

Part 9 – Recent Times: Mexico

I had come to live in London again in 1960 and this time stayed there up to 1979, taking many important trips during this period. I must admit that eventually I left the University of Surrey mainly due to the fact I was never there and they were also fed up with me because of my constant absences. In the last thirty years now, except for the year 1984 as a visiting lecturer at the Watford, London campus of the American university where I worked, I have not been back for any great length of time and only then usually just to visit my son and his family. The 1986 sale of my flat at Kensington Court represented the final break with London.

By the end of the 1970s I was visiting Mexico on a habitual basis and then I got stuck. I never came based on a clear conclusion, “I am now going to move to Mexico”. And all the same I’ve never felt myself to be a part of the country, or indeed that I liked the people. I like individual persons but not “the people”, I do not like their way of life. I did not even like the Spanish language; thankfully I spoke by then a little Spanish (though by now I speak it perfectly). Living in a house in the old colonial district of Coyoacán, now surrounded by the capital, I travelled all over the world. It was a ‘safe base’ of a kind but I never consciously felt it like that. I always felt it like that I *happen* to be here, a chance event that has to do with my whole life and how it has taken different turns by good fortune or bad. I am living on a bridge.

The fact that I was a director of an entity of the Organization of American States gave me membership of some powerful committees. I was asked various times to travel to Washington and during these trips I met many very interesting people. For instance, within the United Nations there was something called the Group of 77, representing those who wanted more importance to be given at the UN to developing countries. The founder of

this organisation was to become a very good friend of mine partly through the good services of Victor Urquidí, the Mexican economist and university administrator, who very often travelled with me to Washington.

In 1975, while still a full professor at the University of Surrey, I was asked by Victor Urquidí to spend six months travelling around the Middle East, Asia and Latin America to find good speakers for the International Conference of the Humanities, which he was then organising and which was to take place in 1976 in Mexico. And so off I went, for what turned out to be more than six months in fact, to the Middle East, Hong Kong, Japan and Latin America. Obviously it was a great time: first-class planes, first-class hotels, and the great diversity of outlooks, financial ideas and economic alternatives of the different countries I visited and, again, the many economists, humanists and other experts I encountered in that half-year of meetings. Back in Mexico, the conference took place and quite a number of the sessions were chaired by me. On one occasion President Luis Echeverría was in the audience while I was directing the session and, during the discussion time, the President did not just ask a question but talked, and talked, and talked, until I gently but forcefully had to stop him. A little later he came to me and said, "You obviously do not know who I am," to which I answered: "Yes, I do. But in an academic discussion like this our titles do not count." I am glad to say that a collection of papers from this gathering was later published as *The Organic Development of Third-World Countries*. The president would later invite me to compile a report on the political situation and aspirations of oil-producing countries as part of his government's deliberations whether to join OPEC. I had recommended that a monetary conference that was going to be held in Venezuela should instead be hosted by the Colegio de México. As a consequence I was invited by the director of the organisation that includes ColMex, the CESTEM (*Centro de Estudios Superiores Tercer Milenio*), to write a book.

The man was Bibiano Fernández Osorio y Tafall and the title of the book was *Organic Growth in Developing Countries*.

After the conference the president asked me if I would come and talk to him personally, that he had some questions about petroleum. I told him I was leaving the following day and he said, "Please, do come to Los Pinos with Victor Urquidí," who was in effect the 'man behind the throne' at that time, which is to say he gave Echeverría a lot of advice. And I said to him, "Look, I can do it tomorrow morning, but I am really tired. So let it be just you, Victor Urquidí and me." And he agreed. When we came to Los Pinos, the presidential residence, the door was opened and there were fifty people sitting there. I saw the mass of people, turned around and left. And Echeverría came after me, exclaiming "please, please." I told him, "The idea was you and Victor and me. I am not going to give another talk or to give any official declarations." With that I left. I must admit that it was an interesting reaction on my part. However, my relationship was not to end there. Among activities that I carried out for him, as a result of my presentation of four projects of collaboration between President Echeverría and the United Nations starting in January 1981, I was asked to represent the United Nation Institute of Training and Research (UNITAR) in Mexico. Other projects included the economic and technical cooperation among developing countries in the pharmaceutical sector, the promotion of traditional healthcare in harmony with occidental medicine, and the establishment of a new monetary order. One of these projects involved the transformation of biodegradable dung into gas for isolated communities, so my UN work did not always involve high-class travel, hotels and topics.

Later, when he was no longer the president but the head of the CESTEM, he reminded me, "You walked out on me!," to which I responded, "Yes but you did not keep your word." At that time I saw him very often. My Spanish was very bad but then again his English was worse, so we always needed

somebody. After Echeverría had finished his term as president, he spent some time in Australia as Mexican ambassador and then he came back and founded the CESTEM. He asked me to write a book for them, for which he paid me five thousand dollars a month plus expenses for the writing, which was fine – it later came out as *The Organic Development of Third-World Countries*. However, that was a time when I was still in London but I had my sabbatical year and took eight months to do the writing. I had to eat with him quite often in his house in San Jerónimo, very near the CESTEM. I hated it. My relationship with his sons was better than with his wife. This was another confirmation that generally I get on better with men than with women. In 1979 I even stayed to write a book for them; it was never published for the public at large, instead it was printed and distributed within the CESTEM. Ivan Schultz also asked me to write what turned out to be an important paper on the inflation situation in Mexico, which I did. It provoked a strong reaction among many politicians. And these were people I knew: at that time, through Victor Urquidí, I knew nearly everybody who was important politically. Many of them I had got to know as a consequence of a series of meetings at his house where I stayed for a week or two.

The topic of conferences brings me to another, less smooth, experience I had in the same line. Since Venezuela was earning at this time huge amounts of money, they also organised many interesting conferences. And there was rapid agreement when I proposed a conference on monetary subjects, but then a suitable location in which to hold the conference could not be found. I therefore proposed to accommodate the conference in Mexico, where there was enough space available in the recently created Colegio de México. My friend, Ambassador Graciela de la Lama, helped me to prepare the conference. But the money did not arrive from Venezuela. First she and then I invested \$10,000 each on the understanding that the financing would inevitably be forthcoming. And when the money still had not arrived, she proposed that we go to the head

of the CESTEM, where she knew the top-man who happened to be Spanish. It is as a consequence of this visit that I am in Mexico.

This extraordinarily interesting Spanish older gentleman, Osorio Tafall, had a very unusual domestic situation: his first wife had been presumed dead during the Spanish Civil War but she later turned up after he had remarried; their remedy for this state of affairs was – literally – to create an arrangement of two wives and one husband. He did in fact hand us another \$10,000 dollars and after the conference, when I brought the money back, he said, “Would you do me a favour and read a proposal of a book which should be written on behalf of the Center of Economic and Social Studies by somebody whose name I unfortunately forgot? And could you look at the outline he gave me?” I needed to read only two or three sentences to realise that it was an absolute catastrophe. I told him so and he replied, “I thought so too, but I am only a chemist by profession.” I then had to leave for Venezuela, and hardly had I arrived there when I received a telex from the Centro proposing that I write the book. I answered back that I had to return to England but that during my next sabbatical I might consider doing it. And so it happened that I came back to Mexico, this time for eight months, to write the book. Since the book needed to be written in haste, I proposed a formula, which I’ve now used quite often, that it would comprise pieces by various international specialists writing authoritatively on their subjects. My task would then be to coordinate them and write a substantial introduction. This was a fortuitous decision and the project turned out very well for all involved. One comment that Mr. Tafal made that has always stayed with me was his answer to the question, “Why had you come to Mexico?” His reply was to tell a story of a baby who had fallen into the icy waters of a canal in Holland and had been saved by a man braving the ice. When asked why he had done it he replied, “Who pushed me??”

My introduction to living in Mexico was not very propitious. My husband had had a bad experience and therefore he never wanted me to come here. He came with Ivan Illich, a friend of his who was a Catholic priest and a fantastic writer and philosopher. Ivan had started a big school of languages in Cuernavaca (what was strangely called the *Centro Intercultural de Documentación* or CIDOC) which was also a sort of free university above all for counter-culture intellectuals and students. My husband came here to make a film about the poor people in Chiapas. However, when he came to the frontier all his filming equipment was confiscated and was never given back. He waited, staying with Ivan. He tried to sue the Mexican Government, to no effect. He was never to return and was certainly not keen when I started working here.

But I tried to be useful here, trying somehow to help increase the intellectual and educational level in Mexican universities, although perhaps it did not increase as much as I would have liked. The American university I have been mainly teaching at had its ups and downs. Except for the ruins Mexico itself had not enchanted me, not even its history – it depends on how you read it, how you think about it. Of course, there is too much corruption and too much poverty. I would not know how to change it either. But I think a real genius will appear in Mexico to somehow change the basis of the thinking of most people there. I don't think that in Mexico the Catholic Church is doing much to help this. It is not in my view what religion should be for people. I think it is just making people too passive: you'll accept how things are or you'll go to hell. I don't like this very much, especially because for the last fifteen years I am giving classes on the subject I call the philosophy of religion.

The first time I came to Mexico I was en route to give a talk in Venezuela and in the latter country I met a naturalised Mexican called Ivan Shultz, a Hungarian by birth. He was a very intelligent man and among other

subjects knew a lot about oil. I had number of conversations with him about oil and its nationalisation. He was later to become rather important in Mexico, principally as a head of the giant electricity company Luz y Fuerza. It is partly thanks to him that I came and did a book here. First it was to be a visit of eight months and later it became much longer. There was a continuous and large amount of work offers in Mexico and so I relocated, though I never really *moved* here. I always only came “for the time being”, as the phrase goes. And then it became more work and the work I did became more interesting, with more benefit for the world. At that time in the late 1970s Mexico was really in a bad shape.

As I said, Mexico was constantly throwing temptations my way. I remember once being invited to a garden party in Cuernavaca. I sat next to a man who had a blue-and-white striped T-shirt, a man of about seventy. He introduced himself as an American and his wife was sitting on the other side of the table. After eating something he asked me if I were an economist and I told him that was so. He continued, “Maybe you can give me some advice. I was at Harvard, a scholarship boy. I did not have any money; they even had to pay for my food and everything. But now I have millions.” “Well, that is good,” was my simple reply. “What is your problem then? You seem to be a very good economist yourself.” Hearing this he realised I had not understood what he wanted to say. “I suppose I am,” he carried on. “But it is not as an economist that I am asking for your advice. What should I do with that money when I die?” I looked him over and said, “You don’t look like you’re dying at all!” He replied, “No, I am very serious. I don’t know what to do with my money.” I told him the obvious: “Look, you just introduced me to your young wife opposite here.” “My wife?! I will not leave her a penny! She has a lot of money herself but she lends money at six per cent interest. No!” I was very intrigued at this and said, “Haven’t you have any children?” “Yes. I have a daughter who collects Picassos, but she is not interested in anything else. And I have a son who is at Harvard, a very

brilliant professor, and he does not want my money. So I don't know what to do with my wealth. I can't sleep at night. I earned all this money by myself thanks to the things I learned at Harvard." Again I made an obvious recommendation: "So why don't you give it to Harvard?" "They have so much money themselves that they don't know either what to do with it all!" So I came at the end to tell him, "You know, we have a little university, but I don't think that would interest you either." And he repeated, "A little university? Really?" Eventually we finished by not finding any way for him to get rid of his money and so eliminate his sleepless nights. We often do not understand the problems other people have, even those whose riches increase by a fortune every month. I did manage to arrange scholarships through other people: for example, beginning from April 1980 when I visited him at the Niels Bohr Institute in Denmark, I came to know quite well Dr. Thomas Gold, the great physicist who created the theory about abiogenic origin of petroleum, and arranged for a very good student of ours in Mexico, Peter Tiel, to study with him at Cornell.

On another occasion at a similar party the lady of the house offered to sit me next to her nephew "because he just got bankrupt." I protested, "For heaven's sake don't sit me next to him!" but she persuaded me to do it "because he has a question for you." So I sat next to this young man who, though he did not look very intelligent, certainly appeared very worried. The moment I seated myself he immediately started, "Are you the economist?" "I think so." He continued restlessly, "I just had to close my factory and it's all your fault!" "In what way is it my fault?" "You are a professor, aren't you?" I concurred. "Have you not been teaching your students about the point where your revenue equals your costs?" I replied, "Surely not!" "Oh, yes! You are teaching that!" I clarified the topic: "No, you make just a little mistake: you are doing it where your *marginal* revenue equals your *marginal* costs." "Oh!" he said and immediately decided, "And because of this little word marginal I went bankrupt?!" And I said, "Yes." So as teachers

or advisors we serve for something or nothing to those people who then make little errors by forgetting key words like “marginal”. At the same, it might seem an odd admission to make, in light of the work I have done as a consultant and instructor of economic matters, but it is really philosophy that I am most interested in: the philosophy of religion, all the questions about Kabala, Sufism and Hinduism; and after that literature. For the last twenty years I have been giving courses whose title I took from an expression in *Books that Changed the World*, teaching eighteen hours a week. Economics did not really interest me.

At one point he and I talked about some certain things Mexico wanted from the United Nations. I told him that I knew somebody, a woman, who had a very high position in the UN, and he said, “Why don’t you go and see her? Maybe we could do something together in the field of development.” So during these same eight months I went at least once a month from Mexico to New York and made progress so that an agreement was almost done. I had at that time as my assistant Jorge Alberto Lazoya, who later became Mexican ambassador in Malaysia and has remained one of my very closest friends. At various times he came with me to New York. But there was a former head of Echeverría’s presidential guard who had his own agenda and who in the end impeded the big arrangement that was to be made between Mexico and the UN; from my point of view, what he did and why was so much nonsense.

But then Jorge and I were sent in July 1980 by Echeverría to Guyana (the old British Guyana), and that turned into a catastrophe. First of all, we had no idea how poor Guyana was; it had a degree of poverty that is difficult to imagine. I recall distinctly that the only hotel there had towels with big holes. We took a plane from New York to the capital Georgetown and by pure coincidence met the President of Guyana, Forbes Burnham, and two or three ministers on the flight. So when we arrived into Georgetown, there

was a red carpet for them and they introduced us as “Our friends”. In Guyana at that time there was an international institution called APEC. And why we were sent there? Because Mexico was a member of APEC and was paying a contribution every year, and one of the plans I made and that was agreed by Echeverría could be executed by APEC. So Echeverria wanted to know how this was going. We had informed the Guyanan president that we had come to see APEC and he immediately offered us a car since there were hardly any cars in the place and the next morning a man came to the hotel with little old car and we told him that we would like to go to APEC. He said “Yes, of course” and he showed us the river and he showed us the town, and he said “Tomorrow – APEC.” So tomorrow came, and the little man came, and he showed us a little bit more – there was nothing to see in any case and he never took us to APEC. So on the third day I telephoned Echeverria and I spoke to his head of security, but my Spanish was not good and his English was even worse. But Echeverria got on the line and said, “In that case, come back!”

Once a day there is a plane of one of the American airlines to New York that has a stop-over at in Trinidad. We telephoned to book the return tickets. When the little man came, I said that I wanted to say goodbye to the President. So he stopped at the National Palace in front of a staircase that had some steps missing. We went up three steps at a time and the President came out of a big room and looked at me. There then started a chain of events that is entirely my fault. He said, “Are going already? I am so happy you have been able to see everything you needed to see in APEC!” And me, being Ruth Troeller, I responded, “We have not seen anything!” He turned around and walked back into the room.

We went down with great difficulty. There was no more car! Our luggage was just standing there. We asked people who were there where we could get a taxi. They told us there were no taxis but we could hire somebody

who pulls a small cart. So we were brought with our luggage in this little vehicle to the airport. When we came to the airport, an official took my passport and threw it to the floor in the middle of the room. And then he took Jorge's passport and did the same. They said, "You are spies! You have no entry stamp in the passport!", which was actually correct because we had come with the president. "And you are under arrest!" But they had no place to detain us. They placed us behind a high wall, covered with luggage, and left us there. In fact one could easily have stepped out but there was no point. After about half an hour they put us in a room and locked it. I immediately noticed a window in that room overlooking the area where the planes arrive. I knocked at the door and I said that we wanted some sandwiches to eat. And I remember a sandwich costing ten dollars.

We ate and we stayed there overnight, sleeping on the floor, which was not so uncomfortable because it is a hot country. Every hour or so a boy came to the window and sold us some sandwiches. And at one moment I gave him ten dollars or so and I said to the boy, "Can you ask at the American airline office when the next plane arrives?" He already had the answer: "Tomorrow morning at seven." And I told him, "OK. Here is money. Would you tell the captain that two Americans are here kept prisoners and they have tickets and they need to go back on the next plane?" And it worked. We slept the night on the floor and the next morning the captain of the plane came to the window and asked, "What has been happening?" I told him the story. He then asked me, "How much money do you have?" I said: "As much as is needed." And he said, "\$500?", and I replied, "\$500". He continued, "You'll do exactly what I tell you. Can you give me \$50 now?" I gave him the money through the window of our small room. He explained, "I have to get your passports. Listen to the key in the door. About half an hour before I'm leaving a key in the door will be turned. And you do nothing, just stay. But you'll take \$500 into your hand and make sure that it is \$500. If not, I'll be in great trouble. And then, when I give you a sign, you'll quickly

go through the door. I'll have your passports. You'll run to the plane. There will be aircraft stairs going up and I will have the plane engines already running. But before going in you'll give the money to the old Guyanan man standing there. He is my man. You'll just give him the money and go." At that point Jorge gave me the bad news that he felt incapable of running. We did precisely what the captain had told us and I pushed Jorge and, since I was the last passenger on board and the aircraft was about to take off, I literally fell into the plane in my hurry, standing on the steps as they were pulled into the aircraft. My other experience of Guyana involved a conference I instigated to try to resolve a territorial dispute between Guyana and Venezuela in August 1977.

We then went to the island of Trinidad to pick up more passengers on the way to the US. I had fallen asleep by this time. When I woke up I could not understand why we were still at the airport. I called a stewardess and asked her about this. She explained,

We have trouble with some Trinidadians. The father of the family is an old *cacique*. They have American visas. But he is smoking a cigar. When the stewardess came to tell him that he cannot smoke a cigar on a plane, he told her to go to hell. And he didn't stop smoking. So the captain decided that all the passengers and crew have to be evacuated from the plane. But he does not want to be evacuated. All the children and grandchildren, and aunts and uncles, with their valid American visas, have already been taken from the plane, but he is not going.

The authorities could not decide what to do, since it was an American plane and we were in Trinidad. The airport police did not dare to take him by force, so they were awaiting instructions. We were waiting there two or three hours before the man in the end, voluntarily, left the aircraft and

stayed in Trinidad, all because he wanted to smoke a cigar. His final comment was that he was not going to be ordered around by these young girls. Then we finally left and arrived to New York and from there to Mexico City.

Very often I would eat at a CESTEM *comedor público*; unluckily, somehow I got trichinosis which comes from eating pork in the southern countries. I was to spend nine months lying in bed, capable of hardly any movement, but many people came to see me. One day Victor came and also a young woman whose then husband was teaching at that time at the Colegio. They were to get married later on and had a very happy marriage. They met at my bed! That day she had to go to a wedding in a church in Coyoacan. She left late to that wedding because she had met Victor, but came back about two or three hours later and without a car; she had arrived late at the church and had let somebody “help” her with her car and she was never to see it again. But she had met Victor. Victor changed completely. Before he was very stiff: the maid could not come into the room without first being asked, and the driver could not come into the kitchen, and other such formalities. And he acted in a similar way with his children, too. But his new love would greatly relax his strict habits.

The teaching at the famous graduate school Colegio de Mexico was very interesting but very narrow. I felt you could not go really right or left when you were teaching a subject. I was also teaching short, specialised courses like the management class I gave for the UNICEF in 1993. But at the private university Tecnológico de Monterrey (usually called the Tec) I taught capital markets and related topics for five years at the beginning of the 1990s and enjoyed it very much. Maybe I enjoyed it also because they paid me very handsomely; I was regarded as if I had come especially to Mexico from abroad. This was a great experience and one that was relatively new for me. I mainly taught a programme which went out through televised

transmission to thirty-six different colleges of theirs from eight to ten at night. They could ask me questions which I would read and respond to aloud. The only thing which was a little bit difficult was that they made me teach in Spanish and my Spanish was not then that good. So there were always words I was lacking and students had to help me too. But I enjoyed it very much even though the campus I taught at was very far from my home and I had to do the driving myself. Eventually I left it only because things had gone wrong at our American university and I had to take over all sorts of responsibilities – it even got to the stage that I was invited to become director of the school but I turned this down, a decision that I think was wise particularly as academic administration is not really of great interest to me. An incident that occurred afterwards explains why later I was not so enthusiastic about teaching at the Tec. One day I passed by one of the classrooms and there were a lot of students standing outside and talking. I enquired, “Haven’t you any class?” and they said, “No. It’s a broadcast from Monterrey on the TV and that we don’t need.” At that moment I thought that probably, when I give my talks, they also stand outside and don’t really listen to me; and I started asking lots of questions to find out what they generally did. Unfortunately, viewing my class on a TV screen was often not something they bothered to do.

During this period I did a lot of work for the Banco de México, the country’s central bank. Mainly I wrote papers for them, attended meetings and working breakfasts, and presented my politico-economic proposals. I worked occasionally with a Mexican professor of economics, Leopoldo Solís, on these projects. Some of my recommendations were implemented and eminent friends like Robert Mundell were invited to meetings at the bank. But the lack of remuneration forced me finally to write a letter saying, “There are Latin-American countries which ask me to give them some ideas about their policies. They do what I advise them but they will not pay me. Others, they pay me but won’t do what I tell them. But you here in Mexico

neither pay nor do what I say.” Afterwards I was to write that things had become very much better. I will give an instance of one of the jobs I was asked to undertake. They asked me to write about Mexican futures and offered me a large sum for the work. And then they suddenly said to me that they were not sure if I should do it. That was fine, their prerogative. Then they came again and said that I should do it; and the reason was that they had invited the Canadian Robert Mundell, the Nobel prize-winner in economics, to do the paper but Mundell had asked for about five times what had been offered to me. When this was explained to me I said, “I can’t do the paper because Robert Mundell is one of my best friends and I can’t undercut him.” So I never did that job. Once I had become rather well-known in Mexico as a macro-economic advisor, large enterprises and even the military asked for conferences on economic and financial matters: this included a series of talks about terrorism to a group of service personnel from the army, navy and air force. The new political conflicts horrified me and I dedicated a lot of time to preparing and delivering talks about the ethical implications of terrorism.

On the 1st of August 1985, just eight weeks before the massive earthquake in Mexico, I moved to my new house (bought on proceeds from selling my apartments in London) in Cuernavaca, one hour’s drive south of Mexico City. I was there when the tremor struck early in the morning. I was asleep in my bedroom on the ground floor and the shaking literally moved my bed to the middle of the room. In my habitual rather analytical way I surmised, “Well, this is an earthquake.” My next thought was to go back to Mexico to see what had happened to my apartment there in the old colonial district of Coyoacan. I took the bus but services were stopped quite some distance outside Mexico City. There were some taxis and I quickly took one. The taxi-man would only proceed if two or three more people took the same cab as he protested there were very few taxis operating. When I finally got to

my place, there was no damage at all, not a painting had fallen from the wall. Fortunately Coyoacan is built on volcanic rock.

I had a maid there in Cuernavaca who spoke Spanish in single words as she was a young indigenous woman from the southern state of Oaxaca and knew only her native language well. She preferred not to wear shoes or sandals, would kiss my hand to say good morning or goodbye, had no conception of days of the week and counted up to ten because that was the number of fingers she had. She came originally from a small house high up in the Sierra Mountains, from which she was abducted by three youngsters and brought to live with them as their – how can I put it? – female partner at an even higher altitude. At some point later she was discovered by a stranger cooking herbs and mumbling a language he didn't understand; he brought her to a river, washed her and gave her clothes, and sent her to his brother in Mexico City to work there. I came to know her when I visited a medical consultancy near my weekend home and she was recommended to me as a domestic help. We arranged for her to get an education with the local nuns, to learn to read and write. She made tremendous progress in two years, became very religious and decided to teach. And for years after that on my birthday she would come with a beautiful rose and a veiled smile and recount to me how she was advancing in what she hoped was a spiritual way.

I should now speak finally about how I came to work at the United States International University (now called the Alliant International University). A course I gave on high-risk investment was to a group of people all employees of the banking group Citibank (now called Banamex in Mexico) except for one man, and that man seemed very intelligent but he never came or he came late and left early. And he was the only American, the rest being Mexicans. And I did not like him. And one day, after he hadn't come two or three times in a row, I said, "Look, Dr. Osborn, why do you

come at all? You are coming late, your attendance is very erratic.” He said, “Yes, you are quite right,” and left. Now why is this important? A few weeks later I got pneumonia and people warned me that to go to hospital here means you go in with just one illness and come out with five. I lived in a very nice place at that time in a bungalow in the middle of Mexico City, in a hotel called the Escargot. It was directly next to what is now called the World Trade Centre and sadly does not exist anymore. So I decided not to go to a hospital and instead have a day nurse and a night nurse, and I had a doctor anyhow. And there I was, really very ill for quite some time.

Out of the blue one day my telephone rang while I was still very sick. As the nurse was not there, I picked it up. There was a male voice at the other end of the line who said to me, “Would you like to teach a course in philosophy at a new university?” I replied, “Well, of course! Who are you?” I did not understand who it was but I reiterated, “The answer is yes.” He told me classes would start on the 5th of January; it was the 21st of October, 1981. I put the receiver down. When the nurse came back I said to her, “You know, while you were out, I am going to teach philosophy in English at a new university here in Mexico!” And she said to me, “Oh, come on! Forget it! You are hallucinating all the time about philosophy courses. You must have been hallucinating.” So I forgot about it. A while later a friend came and said to me, “Have you given a written answer to your appointment?” “Which appointment?!” I asked. And then I realised that she was speaking about the invitation for January and I just remarked, “That’s great!” I was still very sick at the time but in November I got better. I went to Cuernavaca for the very first time. I stayed in a pension and I did get better but very slowly. So on the 5th of January I came to give my first philosophy course to US undergraduates with about three shawls, hugging them, but I was just so happy! Forty hours of classes later I finished the course and returned the cheque of a thousand dollars as it was so much

less than I had been earning – oh naïve days of bounty! That was the beginning of my time at the university where I still teach.

The first years I mainly taught philosophy, with some economics – they did not seem too interested in economics at that time. There were very few students but the teachers who were there were of a very high quality. Dr. Noel Osborn himself was a very disagreeable but very capable man. He was a type of what I would term an “empire-builder” and later went on to develop a world leadership institute. He divorced I don’t know how many ladies, all the teachers were afraid of him, but he made out of nothing a really good university, of course with the help of our colleagues in San Diego, the home campus. In this regard he was absolutely excellent. So afterwards I was putting down roots of a sort in Mexico. In 1985 I bought myself that small house south of the Federal District in the town of Cuernavaca, with its own swimming-pool, a neat little garden, and so on. I immediately made it larger, buying a piece of land next to it, and it became a rather beautiful place. I had some interesting neighbours, such as Baron von Warthenau who had resigned from the German embassy in Washington in 1933 when Hitler came to power and had eventually come to live in nearby Tepotzlan. I was to meet a German acquaintance of his in April 1983 who claimed to be the head of something called the World Parliament and which I discovered, when substituting for him at a London meeting in December of the same year, to be a group of mostly bearded and curiously dressed eccentrics. I became rather well known in Mexico itself. I had many invitations to teach and give seminars and conferences, at the Colegio de Mexico, where I had been teaching already when I came here the first time for three weeks; at the National University (UNAM), the ITAM, and the Tecnológico de Monterrey where I taught from 1990 to 1995. And I had broadcasting hours at Radio Universidad, where I talked about philosophy of religion, indeed mainly about strange things like gnosticism.

I was still travelling very often to Washington and by chance I met a very powerful man in the oil business. As I usually flew in the afternoon, I would check if there was something special to see at the theatre or ballet. On this occasion I found that there was a concert I wanted to hear but there was only half an hour to go before the concert started. There are always touts who sell you tickets outside the venue but this time there was hardly anybody. Then a young man appeared and offered me a couple of tickets. I was discussing this when suddenly I saw an older man arriving who as luck would have it was looking for a ticket too. And I said to the young man, "Maybe this gentlemen would like to buy a ticket." And he did. So I paid my ticket and the man paid his. We sat next to each other.

It was a fantastic concert. And in the intermission he said to me, "Well, since we have been thrown together, let's go out during the interval and have a drink." I gladly agreed. He asked me who I was and I told him about me, and then I asked him about himself. And it turned out that he was a senator from Texas; he also owned several oilfields in the same state. It was very interesting that we met and we could not stop talking about petroleum; he even invited me for supper. At that time I probably knew more about petroleum than I knew about anything else. After a while I said to him, "We at the university have two students who are very good, but they are not interested in what we are teaching. They need to go to Cornell because they need to do something about oil, which we don't teach. But we don't have the money for them and they don't have the money either." And he said: "Give me their names and I will pay for their studies in Cornell." And he did and the two boys went to Cornell. I was in correspondence with him but possibly he has died in the meantime.

On one occasion my institute of advanced studies was asked to give a series of courses in the Universidad Autónoma de Chapingo. It's a place where the lovely chapel of Diego Rivera is. It is small and the depiction of

people and events has a Communist influence: instead of Mary there is a beautifully painted pregnant woman; there are no saints but in their place are famous writers. I think this is the most beautiful of Rivera's works. We were asked to give a number of classes to PhD students. There were about twenty people at each of the classes and I gave most of them.

To my enormous surprise there were various Russians, who spoke Spanish quite well. I had various adventures with them, which made matters very difficult. For instance, in the very first class I asked all those present to write me their name, a telephone number and an e-mail address if they had one. There were several students who did not write their names. So I insisted, "I do need your name because sometimes I have to change the class or when I have to give out your grades." One of them told me, "I know, you are a CIA spy!" So I laughed and replied, "No, I am not, I would not have been engaged to give these courses here because this university is very socialist." There were three students who at the end did not give me their details because it was too dangerous for them and they could be reported to Moscow. I have found that the people who came from or who had been studying in Moscow are generally very good. The only thing was that they were so suspicious that it was very difficult to have them in class. I had been warned beforehand that this would happen by a friend, Carlos López Cerdán, who was teaching there as well. But it was quite an experience. And whatever we would say there were some people – not only Russians but Mexicans too – who interpreted actions in their own kind of socialist-Communist way. It was very interesting because they used to have semesters on Lenin and Stalin and Trotsky; and at the time it appeared to me that the university was trying to become less Communist and to become more socialist. The level of the people was very high, but we were very careful. As a result of these graduate classes I was asked to give some courses for the undergraduate school, which is located not so far from there. This turned out to be a great joy; the only thing was that they

never paid me. But, in a way, I did not really mind because it was a time when I was teaching at the Tecnológico de Monterrey, at the Colegio de Mexico, at our university (then called the United States International University or USIU), and everybody paid me quite well. As I said, I was even giving classes to the Mexican armed forces about terrorism: they wrote me a letter, one of the most beautiful letters about my teaching I have ever got, and I felt that the letter was worth not being paid.

In Mexico I had become very involved with many members of the diplomatic corps, partly thanks to my work for five years in the 1990s as president of Belumex, the chamber of commerce for Belgium and Luxemburg. So as not to lose the diplomatic touch, I was busy every day enhancing the diplomatic and commercial importance of Belgian in Mexico, helping art exhibitions of Belgian painters and the efforts of the francophone in the country, until finally I chose to direct my efforts completely to intellectual pursuits, that is, to the Institute and the university by organizing and focusing our teaching more and more towards philosophy, by taking part on television and congresses, in arguing topics of existential living, and thinking about the future and dignity of man. One specific example of my work with diplomats were the talks that I and the longstanding Palestinian representative to Mexico gave on the Middle East – he was even to pass on to Yasser Arafat a long letter I wrote concerning the First Iraqi War in 1991 and asking him not to cut off relations with the United States.

I became involved with the Mexican ministry of foreign affairs in creating a group called “Las Damas Diplomáticas.” They were to have a breakfast every month at a particular embassy, inviting the wives or daughters of ambassadors so they could meet each other. I had previously been helping to set that up as for different reasons I had met a great number of ambassadors’ wives. Through these encounters I found out how miserable they were here, how none of them knew what to do with their lives, how

none of them knew any Spanish and did not want to learn any since they were to be here for only about three years. And the born teacher that I am, I told them that I would give them some classes and that they would not need to pay anything. It was in the Golf Club in the grounds of Chapultepec Park, the nicest golf club or certainly the most expensive one in Mexico. We began meeting every week. I taught them the simplest things, like the exchange rate between the dollar or another currency and the peso; I showed them that the peso has a hundred centavos. It was incredible what these poor women did not know. As I speak a few languages, I repeated everything in English, in French and Italian, in whatever; and it became quite a feature, especially of course because I did not ask them to pay anything.

One of the ladies attending these talks was Ave López Mateos, the daughter of a former president of Mexico and herself the director of a school; I became quite friendly with her. She was much more intelligent than many of the people with whom I worked. One day she said to me, "Why don't you open an institute and take money?" I have a strange relationship to money: I need it and yet at the same time I am not so interested in it. As long as I can pay, it is fine; the rest I am not really interested in. I quoted her in reply, "Take money?" She said, "Yes. You will see, the people will come. And as a country, they will appreciate it much more because what you don't pay for people generally don't appreciate." So I opened an Institute of Global Studies on 2nd of December 1991 and it still exists as a centre of learning (and it has a sister entity called the Troeller Institute of Integral Studies). We were engaged on a search for reality a little like the *chevaliers* of the Middle Ages who went and dared their lives to find the Holy Grail perfectly aware that it could not be found. And it went very well till 1995.

In that same year the terrible catastrophe of my life happened: my daughter died. I was just not interested in anything. I gave classes which had to be given. I cried all night through. And for two years I was just not there somehow: my body was there, my mind was half there but was not really interested in the here-and-now. I was completely empty, I had no resources, I was really like the figure “standing naked in the wind alone in a howling storm on the top of a hill”, only that the problem was not me but my beloved child and I was completely helpless. This despair finished two years later, through the intervention of one of my brothers who always called me by telephone from his home in California, two hours’ flight time away. One evening he called me when I was crying, already in bed, and he gave me his stark opinion: “You know, if you’ll continue like that, you will be dead in two months.” It was exactly what a doctor had already told me. I very furiously put down the receiver and then I suddenly started thinking. Does or did my life really have a certain worth because I had a daughter? Or maybe is there something in my life which, apart from the loss of my daughter, I should be living? And by eight the next morning, I got out of bed and started a new life. It was partly through my brother’s remark which prompted me to really think about my life; and from then onwards, I am the person I am now.

In the meantime, however, the Institute had gone down badly. I had given the classes half-heartedly; I just did not need employees anymore. But since then the Institute has gone well again, though I must confess that it has changed character and in reality has never been as good as it had been between 1991 and 1995. The groups were much larger before; it’s now rather for individual students, or two or three people, talking mainly about philosophy. There are still some classes in economics. There are quite a number of executives of large firms who want to talk about topics of business and finance that the Institute addresses and I am quite suited to give. Then from about 2007 it has been picking up again, an improvement

partly to do with my neighbours and friends, a Frenchman and an American woman, both of whom are psychologists and exceedingly successful in their fields; kind of uncomfortable with each other because they believe in and practice completely different methods, one being a Gestalt psychologist and the other Jungian. And then I complicate the mix as I don't agree with either, though I am very friendly with both of them.

What I am mainly teaching at the moment is not psychology, or I hope it is not psychology. I call it for the moment while I search for a better name, the philosophy of religion or simply philosophy. What are we talking about? The big difference between what my neighbours are doing and what I am trying to do is I talk to people to bring out their potential, while in psychology it is all the time the sick person, who has to talk about his youth and so on, but mainly talking about negative things: "My wife has left me", "My childhood was terrible." The typical patient or student is focused on horrible stories of their lives; it is very rare to find any of them saying, "I would like to make something greater out of my life." But the people who think this are the very ones who come to me. They are people who are not in a desperate situation; or if they are, I try to get them out of that, not by them telling me the horrible things the man they love has done to them, but rather by talking about human relations and talking about couples. I talk to them. They don't usually say very much. I don't want to know their horrible story because their stories are always horrible. I am not interested. I keep in mind what more or less may have happened to them. I was always interested in why people do the right or the wrong thing. From where does this decision come from? That is I suppose at the end of the day an education in some ways. And then I talk about Jaspers, I talk about Nietzsche, who had the greatest problems but was at the same time one of the greatest philosophers.

You know, perhaps a brief recollection will show very well what I do. I had a lady who came to me and she said, "I am so desperate. I have been

seeing I don't know how many psychologists and they can't help me because my last son now is graduated. My husband is an important employee of the government. I have a very beautiful house. And I have maids to keep it. I am fifty now. And my life has finished." I looked at her and posed the question, "When you were young, before you got married, was there anything you wanted to study?" "Oh, yes," she said. "I wanted to become a medical doctor. And I had started already, but then I met my husband and we got married, and I did not continue." And I said to her, "Would you not like to do it now?" "Oh!" she replied, "I am fifty." "And so what?! You have some money, you have free time. Do you really want it?" "Oh, there is nothing else I would like more." Then I told her, "Stop here. Go to the UNAM and register yourself." That was in the year 2000; about nine years later, she came to visit me to tell me, "I have just opened my consultancy. Thank you!" I said: "You don't need to thank me. I just thought of it. It's you who has done it!" Before leaving she expressed these wise words: "I am not yet sixty and I have the whole of life in front of me!" That's the kind of thing I am doing. That is not "psychology". It is just giving to people who don't have much faith in themselves and to try to get them to develop their head a little. I don't talk about money, of course. This is what I am doing in this Institute.

I am also arranging big seminars with themes like "executive coaching". I don't like it that much but it is a good idea. Otherwise I get executives at the Institute who feel they are not really good enough for their job or have difficulties, and other people who don't like themselves. These are all people who are almost at the top, who are good at their job but their wives want to divorce them or their children hardly know them because they come home late in the evening. And I can help them. I can try to make out of their jobs something more complete. There is no reason why you should neglect your wife because you are a director somewhere. It's mainly people who are quite successful who come to me, perhaps successful but unhappy.

And then, of course, now and then I have a couple who want to divorce. I generally get them not to divorce, though if they really want to divorce, that's fine. But generally it's based on ridiculous little things. Once I had a conversation with a woman who told me she had found out her husband had an affair. I knew these people, and I knew jolly well that some ten years before she too had conducted an affair. I just looked at her and said, "Do you think an affair is good enough a reason to leave this man? Do you love your husband still?" "Oh yes!" she said, "I really love him very much." I continued, "And because after twenty years being married he was attracted by a young girl." I paused for a moment, looked at her again and said, "Is an affair a really good reason to break with a person? Could you think about it? And you are not that young anymore." Then she looked back at me and I realised she knew what I was talking about. "Maybe you are right," she said, to which I responded, "I *know* I am right, you know." They left and there the matter ended.

There are also people who don't come to me for many reasons and perhaps regard my advice with disdain. One girl I knew from when she was still at school, married in the late 1990s a son of a very rich and important family here. Then recently I got a telephone call that she is going to divorce him. They had four small children, between two and eight years of age. I heard the news from her mother and I said that she should phone me. She did. And I questioned her, "Tell me what is the terrible thing why you asked for a divorce?" "I have proof that he was together, spent a night with a young girl" In answer to my question she said they had been married now for ten years. I carried on with a strong question: "Do you really think he did not have the right to spend a night with a young girl?" "Oh *no*! Marriage..." "Could you think again? How terrible is it really to spend a night with a girl! Does he want a divorce?" "No. He says he loves me. But how can he love me..." And I said: "Come on! Think it over again. What are you going to do

with four children? Ok. He will have to pay you a lot because he is a very rich man. Alone, with four children, because your husband spent a night with a young girl? I just don't understand!" She replied, "But I have been faithful!" I answered, "The way you say it, it seems very difficult, to be faithful." "Ah! You are a devil," she said. "Well," I said, "If I am a good devil, that's good enough for me." And I put the receiver down. People have such stupid ideas! I can't imagine a couple who are together for sixty years being faithful to each other for such a long time. It does not make sense to me.

What else do we do at the Institute? Quite a lot of spiritual things now. What is that? Do we preach? Nothing of that sort. We are talking a lot about Sufism; actually, some friends accuse me of being a Sufi, which is quite right probably. We are reading very many things in different fields: for instance, my great professor Carl Jaspers' writings about Jesus, about Confusions, about Socrates. We are doing a lot of philosophy. And I have come almost to the conclusion that any philosophy, if it's real – is thinking about life and the foundation of life – is similar to religion or, better to say, to spirituality. And I think we have arrived at a moment, now in the twenty-first century, where this idea has come again to the fore. We only need to think about the comments of [Kendilberg](#), who endeavoured to awaken so many people, that whatever we are doing in the end will come down to some kind of spirituality. By the phrase "in the end" I don't want to say "when we are old" but rather to say "if you are thinking things through".

Another point I think important is that logic will never give us spirituality. We have lived in the twentieth century during which the system and ideas of logic, the positivism I have been talking about, were important until Wittgenstein in 1949 showed that logic cannot show that things are logical. And with that mathematics in a way fell down, too, because it is based on logic. So we are now at a point where people are finding that it needs something different to rational thinking to recognise and know ourselves as

spiritual beings. The spiritual does not need to be at all a religion. As a matter of fact, I don't think there is one religion one can subscribe to completely. But one can also feel like the Sufis very often. In the end all religions, if they are right, are searching for our spiritual background and our spiritual future. And that is something which we are doing at the Institute.

But as I said, this does not prevent us from talking about big business, as very often we are advising banks. We also look at history, for instance a course on history since the French Revolution. Past and current affairs are important. People don't know what is happening in the world; many students have little idea about events like the French Revolution and the Cold War. It is a key undertaking, I think, talking about history; we should know something not only about our own history and that of our parents' history, but also our country's history, but without glorification, something about where we come from. Not our roots in the sense of "my roots are here" – my roots are nowhere and I am not interested in that kind of sense. But all the same, why things are as they are today, or what may be next, what may be in tomorrow's newspaper. Nobody can write tomorrow's newspaper and that's a good thing. But at the same time we should be thinking a little bit that what we are doing today will have its consequences. In life, there is nothing that just happens; there are things which are caused and causation is really nothing that just happens out of the blue. That is what we should know at least a little bit about, the causes that come from yesterday and that have effects today, and maybe understand tomorrow when it derives from the present.

I still continue to wonder why I have never felt really settled in Mexico though I have been here for over a quarter of a century. I've never considered it my home; I just haven't been able to settle down here. Then again, I was never at home in Germany either but I was at home in

Luxembourg. I don't think I know what home actually means; I am living on a bridge between two or more worlds. There is a saying – I think by Jesus but I am not sure – which says, “Go over the bridge but don't build a house on it.” But I think I have in fact built my house on a bridge. And I think that this was done because of the kind of being I am. I had a house in Coyoacan, which I had rented and where I lived for eighteen years, an old house and one I liked it very much. There the neighbours, all Mexican and certainly not wealthy, would discretely look after the foreigner they referred to as the “smiling señora” or the “rica americana”. There was a very marked difference between when I was in this house in the city and the house in the town of Cuernavaca one hour by car south of Mexico City, where I went each weekend. There we hosted big parties, very elegant parties, with ambassadors and all kinds of people. Once or twice a year I organised round-tables of four ambassadors of very different views who would participate with masters students in argument about whatever topic came up. Sometimes tempers could only be cooled by eating a good supper. I had some famous musicians come to the house and play for guests. I was also active in more tranquil activities: I was embroidering and I was always doing ‘gobelins’. Not the Mexican kind of embroidering, which I hate, where you just make a flower in the cloth. And I was writing and swimming in the pool. When I came to my weekend retreat I was in that rather small place, but not really so small that I felt crowded. I could be an intellectual there and then back in the city I was ready again for my many daily classes. It was a completely different world for me. And from here, from my little house, I left for Japan, Hong Kong and Brazil. I still own the house but keep it as a museum of past discussions where the tapestries I embroidered – during my truth-searching stitching – are spread all around.

Let me try to say something about my nearly thirty years in Mexico. Why did I choose Mexico? I never chose it but it just happened in a way. Do I love it here? No. Why am I here? There is no straight answer to that. The

answer could be that at least at the beginning I was rather astounded by the low standard of teaching here. I started here and there to teach and it was important that I did that because otherwise people had not the same quality of teaching. For instance, I gave a seminar at the much-respected ITAM about the philosophy of religion, with about sixty people attending that course, which for Mexico was an enormous number for a topic such as this; I gave courses in economics at the Institute of Finance, which was a great thing because it was just for a few directors of the Institute and we did some very serious studies on the risk-taking. It was interesting and moneywise well paid. And in the end, thanks to all that, I started teaching at the American university where I continue to work.

Now, I have been long in Mexico. Why is it I haven't come to love the country, like many other foreigners? There is something which I do not love, something very essential, really. It's what I call "Mexican sub-culture". It may be that I have not understood Mexicans. On the one hand, they have this kind of strength, thinking highly about their own country, this kind of defence of the cultures of their nation. But there is a contrast between them and their southern neighbours. For instance, I spent some holidays in Costa Rica; there the people are completely different, they are sweet, they want to please you. And I found that Mexicans never want to please you. Most Mexican women want only to show you that they are better than you are and that that has been problematic for me. As a Luxembourger, I never in my life have tried to convince people how superior we were. I think we all are as we are and we can all become better, but this kind of superiority complex I do have difficulties with.

I find it quite amusing in Mexico, like in other countries, that in order to be allowed to work you need a work permit; but after residing here for thirty years I still need my work permit renewed year after year. I have what is called an FM3 that gives me permission to live and work here; I have never

changed it because anything else will make me little by little Mexican and I really can't see myself as a Mexican. You see, sometimes I say that I am here because I am stuck; and then people think, "Oh! She must have met a very nice man and that is why she is here." I have never met a "nice Mexican" in the sense of romance; friendships yes but not an affair or anything of that sort. So why am I still here? I give reasons why I have remained: maybe because I have that nice house in Cuernavaca, where I hardly go anymore, and partly because I am teaching here.

And now I am coming to something a little bit more serious: I do know why I am here. At the beginning, I thought very strongly – and now a little less – I am useful here. I think that some things wouldn't be that good if I were not here. I have been at the university for thirty years. Dr. Noel Osborn the "empire-builder" was wonderful but he was not very interested in what his staff taught. During my time there I have taught almost every subject at that university because most things of the mind interest me. I can read and I can think (sometimes), and I came to teach what I could. I have been teaching at most of the better universities in Mexico. And each time when I stopped teaching at the American university – and it was always me who stopped, because the campus was too far or I had another commitment or whatever – I got wonderful letters. In 2009 I got a very high award for my years of teaching and for what I had given to the university. It had been of more benefit than, for example, instructing at the Central Bank of Mexico where I was not completely happy with the use they made of what I had been teaching them. I was told when I got the award that the Mexican university world would not have been the same if I had not been here. And though I am always saying "No, no, no!" I really think that that is the point. I think that I have been able to make sure that the teachers who were engaged kept standards, and the people who did not reach these standards had to be dismissed.

For the students themselves I used to give at the end of every semester a big party in Cuernavaca; and I kind of try to honour the students who had done well and to say to those who had not achieved so much, "You know, next time you will reach this standard." Very often it works: people generally come up to the heights you expect them to keep. That is the important sentence in the context of education: if you expect people to fail, they fail; if you expect people to do well, to do their best and you support them during the time they are doing it, in most cases they will almost or fully come up to the expectations you put on them. It's just like parents with children. If parents say to their children that they are no good, they generally become "no-goods". And parents who really follow their children and expect the best from them, and help them to reach that also, they generally produce men and women who succeed in life.

When I turned forty I wrote a story that was published in many places but which unfortunately I don't have any more. It is a story of two men, one being twenty and the other twice that age, who meet and discover they are the same person. A kind of miracle. The one of twenty appears with the one who is already forty and the two have a heated quarrel. The young one says, "Look at you, bourgeoisie! What have you become, made out of me?! I had these ideas for the world! I had planned to change the world," and the other replies, "You were nothing but an idiot! You have made my life difficult because you lost things, you didn't do things that you could have done," and so on. This story had a great success. It was all about if you were to meet the person you had been at twenty, and that person would give you his ideas of that time, which you, of course, had betrayed.

I think we don't need any psychotherapists on the understanding that we can make it on our own; and we talk about that in the classes and discussions of the Institute, what I simply define to my students as "putting your shoulders back". At that moment you feel yourself to be a worthwhile

human being, somebody who has dignity, somebody whom others cannot just treat as a “*jerga*” (a *serge*). When your shoulders are back it means that you have your head high in any circumstances, you will show that you cannot be treated as if you were an animal (let me say in passing that I have much respect for animals). And that is really why you don’t need to go to psychotherapy. This is exactly why I reproach psychotherapy so much: that you tell your worst story. You tell what you should be forgetting, that you had been behaving abominably or that somebody did something to you that was painful and nasty. Forget it! Get your shoulders back! And in spite of it, *be* a worthwhile human being. And the “worthwhile” can be that you clean a house, it doesn’t have to mean that you need to be president of the country; just that you’ll pull your own weight and perhaps help other people to pull theirs without having to listen to their *basura*. This last action is what they are mainly doing in psychotherapy. You show how badly you were behaving, how others have behaved badly to you, how you are unworthy. My advice remains that you should just forget all that and walk tall with a healthy pride! There are dozens of people who have come through this Institute who have started a new life; not a new life in a big way but to look at themselves differently. In the end we, each of us, have something which is worthwhile while we are on this planet. We only have to find it and then do it. And that again is what we at the Institute are doing.

So what is Mexico for me? As I have said I don’t love it. What I do admire about Mexico is their art. There is art, there is a tradition of writing and there are great works in this country. On the other hand, I don’t like their academic approach to philosophy and other fields. But what the country has given me is the possibility, which I would never have had in Europe, to just add my grain of support to the quality of education here, even at those universities in which the teaching is in Spanish. And I also – it was very bad of me! – failed some students who were not worthwhile but I have no regrets for that – indeed I generally don’t have any regrets. That is maybe

very bad of me but I have done some things as others would not have done them, or at least I have done things which were not too kind. It was however my decision to do this. So I can't really present the excuse that I did not know what the consequences would be. Whatever I have done, and even the negative things, I have done because at least at the time I felt it was the right thing, which may sound like "pride" and in a way it is matter of pride. I have given around twenty talks in Mexico over the last few years in many different surroundings about the dignity of men and women. My own conclusion has been that I think that absolutely the most important thing of any human being is to keep his dignity. And dignity itself can be developed and nurtured through different means. The habit of reading, for instance, one of the practices that I see as essential, is not practised widely here. I have a course here at the university that is called "Books that Changed the World", starting with the Bible, and then the Bhagavad Gita, Aristotle, and then you come up to Dante and Boccaccio. There is one terrible thing in Mexico: people don't read! Bookshops are getting closed – people prefer to read magazines. They don't even read cookery books. I bought a very simple book of dishes for my maid and she complained, "Oh, señora! I know how to cook!" It is just something which is not in their thinking, to read a book, not even the Bible.

So here I am living and working in Mexico City; and if I were to be asked if I feel I want to stay here, my answer would be yes. As long as I can be teaching but teaching something which makes people think and not simply accepting what they are hearing. I tell them what is generally accepted as the truth and add my point of view, and clarify that very often my own comments are possibly not the truth for this and that reason. As long as I can do that I think I will continue teaching. Will I go back to London? Yes, possibly, because my son and my grandchildren are there. But I also feel that as long as my grandchildren who are still in their teens, as long as they in a way need me far away (if I can put it like that), I'd rather be far away.

To go back to England to be the grandmother who perhaps can't walk anymore and with other infirmities – I would not have the same influence which I can have by being here. To send them the books I think they might want to read, to hear what they want to say, that they have been doing very well. That is something I feel I can be more worthwhile.

Part 10 – Musings

I started something which my French neighbour Guy Pierre recommended me to do in about 2005: I bought myself one nice little copybook and I started to write aphorisms, things that would come to my mind. Just one line, a part of a line, that type of writing. And I found it was not a bad idea. I have written my own thoughts but also aphorisms which are not mine, ones which I accept completely, which somehow express best what I should have written but never did. And that is, I think, a good idea: it shows my spirit at a particular moment and that is what I find most important. And what follows is based on what I have written and other points that I firmly believe in.

In life there are so many things to be said; and I wonder if I ever were to have the time, which I don't think I have, to think and then write about an idea that came to me, something that has a certain importance for me. My life at the moment is mainly thinking about that: to suddenly to look at your life. Before I hardly ever opened my diaries, volume after volume of them. The value of them as a witness of my life was brought home very keenly to me one time on a flight when bad weather made me think that the full collection of diaries I had as luggage – the record of all I had lived – would be lost forever should the plane go down. So the very next day I made copies and later received the great honour from Stanford University that their library's special collections department would keep the originals in their manuscript collection in California. Recently I have been reading some of the copies of the diaries and I find a strange thing. And that is that, after all, diaries do not completely show your life. This can be partly explained by answering the question: when do you write? In general you write when you are emotionally either very happy or anxious. You don't

write to say, "I went today by metro," you don't write everyday things – but the point is that life is made of everyday things.

I have found, for instance, that while in Venezuela I wrote four diary pages at a moment when I was very upset, having written a letter to somebody which I hadn't sent. Very upset indeed. What had affected me was that I had been spending many months writing a book on the future of Venezuela because the OECD in Paris was paying for it and the Mexican government wanted it, and in the end it would not be published. And in those four pages I go on and on and on about the Venezuelans and the promise, and not this and not that. Upset for four pages of text. The fact is that it was subsequently published. But I never went back to my diary to say, "Actually, I am so happy, it has finally been published." Or, for instance, if there was some man I liked for a time, I would never write: "Oh, so and so, I like him very much and we are going to do this and that." None of that. But I would write in the diary, "Oh! He has not phoned! He should have phoned! I think this is the end!" It is hardly ever that I wrote, "Success! I have my room full of trophies that have been given to me for talks!" Never! But the very few times things did not go well I would write, "Oh, yes!! I should not give talks anymore! I am too old for this kind of thing," and continue with critical comments. I recently have been writing something in my diary about that, saying that it is really extraordinary that at the end most of the fifty volumes would give an impression of not having succeeded. I suppose all this though is quite normal, unless you are a very vain person and you write, "Oh! Again a success! They gave me this and that." But in my case, not once!

I had a conversation with an old friend that surprised me very much. We were talking about the subject of age. She expressed the opinion that after sixty nothing important happens anymore. She is a very youthful, very beautiful and very intelligent seventy-five year-old. I stared at her and said,

“You know, the most important thing in my career, in my teaching, in my fulfilling myself is the way of giving what I can to others. After sixty! I just can’t follow you! Even love affairs take place after sixty. And perfectly all right.” And she told me, “Oh, it’s because you’ve never looked your age.” I replied, “In love affairs that might be true, because I never did look my age.” A man who I had a romance with, someone I liked very much, never knew my age. He thought I was younger. We travelled together; I did not have my passport for when I was ten years younger, but as things happened he never saw my current passport. And I am absolutely sure that he did not know my age. He thought I was ten years younger and he was younger than that. I have never been interested in older men – well, just one: my husband was one year older. But this point addresses only the surface level of age, a calculation of the years through appearance.

In my life I know that age is very important. But for me it is important exactly because of the fact that all of my professional successes came after the age of sixty. In terms of the impression I made, I did not look sixty, nor did I behave or dress like a woman of that age. So there was something in my life which I kept very well from others, my age, and in some ways I am still keeping it from people. I simply behave, think, do things most other people do not think, behave, do or take risks for. I do it in part because I have to prove to myself that I am twenty years younger – it is part of that ceaseless demand I have with myself, to prove myself again and again, the need still remaining even when the reasons and circumstances. I think it is my only dishonesty; I freely accept the charge. And it comes from a very amusing origin. A long time ago in Portugal, at a party standing with my husband and many people with us, my friend Suzanne, who was very good looking, walked by. There were two men talking near us and one of them said, “Oh! Look at Suzanne Chantal! She is very gorgeous.” And the other one said, “She says she is thirty, which means that she is at least forty.” That little experience taught me never to *deserve* my age but rather to *compete* with

it. She was really thirty but the point is that two men said that because she acknowledges she is thirty, so she must in fact be ten years older. And that taught me: Never be my age. As my life turned out, it was certainly a right decision and not only with men but also in my profession. People saw me as a creative younger woman when I was already seventy.

I believe that the soul will survive but not for example in somebody else's body. It has to survive where all our really interesting developments, our acquisitions, our thinking, our believing go. In this regard my belief is possibly like that of the Sufis. I even think about it along the lines of the more Buddhist idea of an enormous carpet, a woollen one containing all the colours, red, blue, and then the black of bad people. The colour black is needed to delineate the shapes so that something stands out, and shadows are also required in order to bring out that thing or things which are great. It is necessary to have the good people stand out in strong colours. I am sure that something of what you have acquired, what you have been making out of yourself remains. But not in the way of reincarnation; I can't imagine how, if I think of myself, how I will be somehow returned as a baby. It's just not the right image. But I think it is important – so important in fact that at the end it is the goal of our life.

A recent book that reflected thoughts that I have harboured for many years is Karen Armstrong's *The History of God*. Each of us has our feeling of what a God may be, something we arrive at mainly through thinking and feeling of our own mystical experience. God is part of you, the *Atman*, which is linked to *Brahman*. We may agree with and participate in this idea or belief but there must be a force just like in Hinduism. There are as many ways to God as there are people who seek it; not people who don't care but people who purposefully and actively seek it. And therefore my own mystical feeling gravitates towards something you could call God, a higher

and more embracing All or Whole, an extension measureless by human standards. There is maybe after all the one same God, but there are different approaches, different mystical feelings about it. Yours may be red, mine green; obviously, there are no colours but if you bring red and green together it becomes one single colour. Sometimes I wonder how we could have lived over two thousand years or, if you take Judaism into it too, six thousand years with this idea of the male God, who is a loving God and also a warrior God – how could we could? If He is something higher than us, it could not be in this form.

The book of Genesis uses a wonderful word which is *Hule*. *Hule* is something very difficult to imagine: it is unformed matter, which can only be recognised by having a form. Therefore *Hule* is something very special. It had to do with an enormous amount of things. You could say God is not *Hule*; he must be something else, there is no *Hule* in God. On the other hand, the Genesis, the creation of the world, we were told, was made out of nothing. If you separate light from darkness, than both light and darkness must have existed already. All you do is separate them. If you separate the firm land from the sea, both must have been already mixed up with each other. So it is not that God created the world out of chaos, which is quite understandable, because chaos means that things are there but they are in a state of disorder. He made order. The essential point is that God makes things with words.

And then a few chapters later in Genesis you get some giants and they are uncreated (as I once asked to my father, “Where do the giants come from?”). That means that they existed before creation. I recall that an atmosphere of peace pervaded my early childhood, created by my father’s songs, but a calm that was disturbed by these biblical giants of pre-creation. So what was present before the Creation? How can we talk about

“Before the Creation”? Yes, God was there beforehand, but these bad giants?! You can of course explain matters by saying “It existed with God”. But I don’t want to do that either. All these uncreated things; what is then the Creation if there were things before? There are so many things you have to think about and to discuss with others. What had shocked me the most as a child was Sunday, the seventh day when God was resting. A deity who needs to rest?! Because he had been creating the world?! When I was five years old I opposed that and I asked sarcastically, “He got tired?!” I talked about all these things with my father. With my mother there were mainly household chores; I never talked about God with her.

I do believe that we, human beings, have a disposition to believe; the Bhagavad Gita calls it Guevara. There is something significant in the Christian idea of the Trinity. I do think that Jesus was the greatest man who ever existed, but I do not think that in any way he was a son of God. For me that just does not make sense, and neither does the discussion whether he was a half-God or a half-man, or if he is a god and a man at the same time. All of this I find absurd! It is not dignified for human beings to think that he has done the fantastic work that many ascribe to him. He did not establish Christianity, as in many ways it was really Saint Paul who did this and afterwards [Arinaus](#). Likewise, I find popes and all the system related to them an absolute absurdity, an aberration since there is then someone between God and us. I am not convinced of the idea of a priest who can forgive your sins. What is that exactly? Of course he is supposed to pray for us in order to get our sins forgiven. But my argument is that there is a direct line between me and God, between you and God, that there is nobody in between because there cannot be anybody in between. And if I sin, it is a sin which I consider to be a sin; there cannot be sins which other people, a pope or anybody says, identifies as such. Obviously, there are lots of bad things each of us is doing every day but we know what they are and when they occur, and we can do our own part.

What has been conserved of religious organisation and ritual appears to me mostly wrong. The world has not found yet a religion; in fact it does not need to find a religion. But it should be explained to people that they have to find their own way. This very book I am writing could be called *Towards Ruth*, to quote the friend I mentioned in the introduction. Indeed, when I think about this personal commitment to a journey, I sometimes say to myself, “I am looking for a Super-Ruth” on lines similar to Nietzsche’s “Overman” or “Superman”: the Ruth who is down the road, the Ideal Ruth, the Wonderful Ruth, the Absolute Ruth, towards which I would like to go. The way happens like that, with powerful objectives or images. Very often I turn my back towards the Ruth I want to become or I would like to be, because the road goes around. And the trip involves a fight with oneself to get to that “Overman” or “Overwoman”, where the way and the travelling itself are more important than the arrival. In any case one never arrives since each time one goes a little further, the image itself goes further away. However, to recognise a path and to take it is in fact what life is about. We live in the midst of formal prayers and rituals, and the priests and all that – I generally don’t say priesthood when I talk about it but “priestcraft” because they employ all kinds of tricks. It’s like psychoanalysts and psychotherapists who think they can do something for my soul (I have never been to one but I know quite a number of them). Your past is your past and for that reason it is very important for you because that is why you are here. But the only thing which *is* is the future; you are making your life in the future. Where will you go? You’ll go a little to the left and then a little to the right, and then instead of making a big *mea culpa* about it, make the child in you go on.

The brief episode of my young maid who hoped to find a spiritual way through the intercession of religion brings back to me the topic of religious belief and dependence on another Being. Personally, I don’t want to have

any religion around because I don't believe in clipping our wings as individuals. I do think everybody has to find their own way towards God, whom we do not know. And if one considers what the bases of the Judaic, the Christian and Muslim religions are – does one think that God created this world only soon after to realise that the world is so bad, that he should send a flood to kill just about all living creatures in it? It is all the time a story about God having got it wrong. The Gnostics argue that God cannot have created such a bad world. On the other hand, I think that I am a very spiritual person, in the sense that I do believe in faith in God. At the same time I don't believe in any ritual, absolutely no ritual. Everybody has to find his or her own process of believing, his own way towards God. He may be up there, he can be in each of us, I don't know. Again Gnostics believed that God sent his beloved wisdom, Sophia; she walked through the world and everybody she met was given some sort of spark.

As I said, I have never had what Paul Tillich described as the anxiety of the meaninglessness of life. On the contrary, I always knew from my childhood that life was meaningful, that every step of it has a meaning. The fear of the finitude, that it has an end – this has now for the last few years been very present in my mind, though not like an anxiety but because I wonder will I still be able to do what I want to do. Will I have time? In essence it's an anxiety of culpability, but not in the sense that I have done something right or wrong, if I'll go to hell or not. All this is beyond my understanding. But the central question embraces the idea of not having done enough. Even in the face of my friends' comments that my pupils and their classes with me, and the other work in many countries over the years – that all this was a great success and had real benefits – I still feel I have not done enough. And that is a real culpability, but not one for which I'll go to hell or anything like that. I don't believe in things like that.

There exists in me a sense of responsibility that I could have done very much more in my life. Why haven't I done it? My anthem has always been that all the great things are done because of laziness. I know I have done lots of things. Laziness explains why I am dictating all this, but I am also old and I have time to do it. When my husband died, he said, "I have done great things and I had a happy life. And now I die and that's it." In all truth I can't say the same. First of all, I will not say "I had a happy life"; my life was never what one normally calls "happy". It was perhaps on occasion a contented life; it was always "not enough". Whatever I have done, I perennially felt "I could have done more, have done deeper." I do believe that there is something after life but not in a personal sense. I do think that what I have been accumulating through education, through understanding, through a little bit of wisdom, that cannot be lost. In the same vein, I do not believe in reincarnation: as I've said, I don't believe that one will return as a little baby, I can't possibly believe that. But one will go somewhere although probably not with one's name-tag on it. One will exist in a coming together along the lines of the Sufi and Buddhist ideas, the Moving Wholeness. It will not get lost.

Therefore, what I can still acquire, what I can still do to make myself a greater person, that bit I may add to the little bit I have acquired. That is something that will not get lost. I must add something that I regard as often overlooked but still pivotal. I have something that most thinking people seem not to have; that is, I have a belief in the importance of this life of mine and not just because it is my life. I do think that our earthly life (let's call it that) does have an importance, although not in the sense of normal Christian or Jewish faith – in their insistence that each human being is responsible and then that there will be a judgment – but in the sense that what we have been doing will in some way live on. We will die but that part persists. That partly explains why I have written up to now fifty diaries, which are now at Stanford University through their most gracious invitation

to be kept there for a thousand years or so, for the public to read them as they wish. Therefore I think it is important the life I have lived, and the life you are living, and the life he and she is living. And to remember it; not just to learn by it but to look back at it, and to recognise “this is my life, this is me.” I don’t think that “me” will disappear. And there is also that “me”, the Ruth at Stanford University.

There is also something looking back that I either criticise or I am happy about. I simply think it is important how everybody lives and how they are responsible for what they have been living. There are many episodes in my life that I think did not do any harm, but then again maybe they did harm – sometimes one is not certain or doesn’t recognise the harmful consequences. At the same time there is no refuting the fact that this is me. I have said once that if ever something were to be written and published, it should be called *The Life of a Brainless Female in the Twentieth Century*, although I hope that the word brainless is not necessarily chosen – hopefully it can be something else. There is so much that went on during those many decades and I think it has some significance, and not because it had some unique importance to me. But I think it gives a kind of a picture that I can’t explain very well. The whole of life has such a degree of importance that it should not be flipped away. I think every action in the end has a meaning, consequence or influence.

When I recall my six years in Geneva, I thought they were not of great significance, but now thinking more deeply about that, they were terribly important. And earlier in Paris, those eighteen months I was at that house that had only recently been a casino, with my clothes made by Christian Dior, and attending the opera with the big hat all by myself and then coming home and looking in the wardrobe to see if there was a man hiding in there. And the time, during the last eighteen months in Portugal, when I hosted the most beautiful dinners, and each time changing the tablecloth and two

uniformed maids, when everything had to be perfect (my mother's inheritance) – I smile now when I think of that. But even now almost each time I lay a table for visitors, I am thinking of it. Now I don't have the grand things and I don't really care to have them, although I can still arrange a good table with very little notice. I was primed from an early age to do this by my mother who used to say, "At any time you have to be able in half an hour to have a perfect dinner for ten guests." It gives me some discipline in having at the same time as perfect a household as possible.

There are times when I am not very lively or I may be worried. I would sometimes wonder why I occupy myself some much with this American university and for such a long time. Often I worry about the school more than I think about myself. I am doing my best so that it continues for many years to come and gives the best education to students. But when the best teachers are leaving because the pay is so abominable and less capable staff are taken on in their place and do not complain about the salary, there is very little one can do. I worry for the university because it is the thing I helped to create, and now we are working with people who are businessmen and are not interested in the academic part, but neither the business nor academic parts they do well.

Living alone has been a very important principle for me because when you live with others you are living other people's life, if you want to or not and even if you are an outsider like me. I must admit that I have been an outsider all my life and it is something I wanted to be. I have never belonged to a club, to some sort of group in which you have to have the same opinion or way of living. The only exception that springs to mind is my participation in a church choir; I didn't mind joining the choir and went every Wednesday night to sing in Mexico. Then about six or seven years ago I lost my voice and, though I have seen a number of doctors, I can't get it back. Even here my tendency to prefer male company was confirmed. Since I had a very

deep alto voice, nearly that of a tenor, I was very often singing with the men, which was amusing but not always very practical because, at concerts, I had to put a kind of black suit on with a man's shirt and tie so that I should look like a man. It was necessary at the time because otherwise why in a tenor section should you have a woman standing there; it was an expedient I did not really enjoy but my voice made it happen like that. What attracts me now, even after many decades is what I like to call the holy or sacred – the beauty of a sunset, the look of a loving man, the embrace of a child by its mother – but maybe for me, more than anything else, the sound of sacred music.

One thing I had been doing for many years, and I can't do anymore because I can't see, is embroidery. The very action of moving your fingers in and out of the curves gives a rhythm to the whole and your thoughts can become free, unengaged and yet structured at the same time. Your hands are engaged but your mind and even more so your spirit is free to pass above the palm-trees, away from the pool, embracing something in another sphere. Freed from the weight of the body, from duties and petty cares, one can dance, stand still and reflect. It has given me the time to think while at the same time to do something beautiful, and the time to use my hands. That is terribly important: the hands are just about the most important part of our body. Nobody can properly replace the hands while the heart can be changed with every likelihood of success. The hands have the most nerves. I played the piano, as I explained, when I was a child but I hadn't really done much with my hands. I was a really good cook because I like to eat well, and I even gave gastronomy lessons on Venezuelan television though I had to give it up as there were so many petty questions after the broadcast to do with measures of salt and ripeness of fruit. But cookery is not really employing your hands. But the embroidery was very important for me. I would embroider for hours in Cuernavaca, in my house, sitting in the shade, taking in the sun, looking at the pool and the trees, and thinking. Maybe my

character was formed through embroidery because you are alone when you are an embroiderer. I have never embroidered while talking to other people at the same time.

The question of art has always presented some difficulties for me. It is very clear to me that it is important; that comes from the time when I was very friendly with André Malraux. It is he who really renewed the philosophy of art from 1950s onwards through some excellent books and he invented a concept called the “Museum Without Walls”; the fact that we can now take quite precise pictures of paintings in colour means that we really are now living in a world of museums without walls. That means I can take a painting, photograph it, and put it in a book that contains reproductions of works of art; this is a great leap from when you had to travel from country to country, from museum to museum, for now you can buy in one, two or three books collections of art-works in beautiful colours almost as good as the real-life colours.

My own relation to art was very strong in my early years; my father was also very keen on it. It has not diminished but it is now restricted to looking at reproductions rather than the masterpieces themselves, which I find is a pity. But at the same time, I did find out that you cannot serve many masters at the same time. Since I became very interested in philosophy and the humanities and so on, I must say that though I do buy art and things I like and can afford, in reality I can't say that my main concern is about things that are not purely spiritual or intellectual. While I do go to galleries – and here in Mexico there are many good galleries and museums – if I have the choice between debating a philosophical point or going to an art exhibition, I think I'd rather go to the philosophical debate.

Anyhow, I have not been talking to many other people. I have been teaching; I have been arguing in discussion groups. I enjoy very much the

groups we have here at the Institute. What do we talk about? Very often of the significance of a word: for instance, how can it be that the word “mind” has no translation in French and in German? That is quite inconceivable and at the same time it is the case. Of course, there is a word that comes close (in German *geist* and in French *esprit*); but one really stops in wonderment that an incredibly advanced and flexible and important language, like French or German, does not have a word for “mind”.

What am I reading at the moment? I can only read the books whose print has been magnified to accommodate my very limited eye-sight. So I read mainly what I feel I have to read, so that the work of enlargement and the effort to undertake the reading are worthwhile. Recently I read *The Wounded Healer* by the Dutch Catholic cleric, Henri Nouwen, which addresses various things I am interested in myself. For instance, to be a revolutionary is similar to be a mystic; in both cases one is refusing the world as it is and wants to have a better one. The mystic rather is going away from this world, to something which he or she can't really understand, something which is not material. This does not involve so-called religion but rather something very much higher, which is an internal knowledge that there is a mystical reality, of which at any one moment we may be perceiving only a very small glimpse of what we may know or think we know the existence of. It's not even that we really can get into it. I think perhaps one can call it “faith”, but it is a faith in something we are not capable of knowing too much about; it involves a spirituality that escapes you once you try to grasp it.

It very much brings to mind the Kierkegaardian “leap”, but a leap which we might make perhaps twenty times a day or once in an entire life. And it also reminds me of Heidegger's thinking (though I am not an admirer of Heidegger generally) where he talks about a leap towards ourselves, to our Real Self, leaving behind all that we assume to be like the others. I can

agree with Jung when he also speaks of this type of individuation. Most people who don't live alone most of the time – who always live in company – really want to be like the woman who is more beautiful, like the woman who is richer, without even realising it. And that is, in my view, very wrong. Heidegger was talking about the leap towards ourselves, which in its way is as dangerous as Kierkegaard's leap towards God because there is the danger you can fall into the abyss, into a nothingness. The leap towards yourself, which people generally are not living, is much too transcendent and too real but is inside them. I sometimes feel that I don't have enough time for my transcendent feeling; most people don't. Certainly there is something in me, very strong, which we can call a "Mystical Feeling". It vaguely communicates to me that I am surrounded by something which I don't understand but which is there. When I was a child I called it "Angels" and I very much believed in them. But here we are not talking about angels as we see them in renaissance paintings. I had this feeling nothing wrong would happen to me because of these angels. Now I don't really believe in angels but I do believe in a "Mystical Sphere" that surrounds us like a cocoon, a *mitos* that is present and intangible but can be felt and is deeply powerful; because I first feel it and believe in it I can understand it, whereas if you try understanding first, belief is all but impossible.

Am I worthy of it? It's not completely the case but I can only say I have been striving. As one can see in this chapter and in the others, very many people, in conversation with me and through their books, have made me think about ideas that I can agree with and adhere to, and have fortified my own thinking and encouraged me in the habit of contemplation and pursuit of new knowledge and higher realities. It could be said that I did certain completely useless things and, as a matter of convention, doing nothing is not allowed. But I think the best time I can become myself is during just such a state of passivity. I just sit. Am I happy or miserable? This is not the right question in such circumstances. Am I thinking? Yes, that is precisely

what I am doing and profitably. I very often pick up my journal and write something. I put it back again, I pick it up again. But I generally just sit. It's a little bit of mysticism; thinking about the state and actions of mysticism. It's a little bit about what one would call "religion" or perhaps meditation. And I am perfectly relaxed. During this process of thinking I am not very long journeying in one direction before I let it go and change to another route. I am quite sure my mother would say it is a completely useless time but it represents when I am most myself. I feel it is right and I do it nearly every evening though not for very long. But there is always time before I go to bed at 1 or 1.30 a.m. to just sit. And nothing else.

Part 11 – Final Thoughts

I feel that now I am the sum of all that I have lived, spoken, done, dreamt to do and not done; that I am learning daily by looking back and looking forward. Life for me continues to be passionate in a more contemplative fashion. I spent a great part of last night re-thinking a little bit whether and why one wants to write an autobiography; even why I want my papers and my diaries to be preserved. I asked myself whether it is that I think that my life can teach something to other people or that I simply think it had a certain significance. Well, obviously it had significance for me, if not I would not have lived as I did. But another question is whether it has some kind of learning possibility for people to read it, and the answer might be perhaps not. Maybe after all it's me who wants to make a little judgment – not like a real judgment, “good or bad” and “right or wrong” – but to have a look myself as to what it is that I have been living for now all these years. I have been thinking about Carl Jaspers, the great philosopher, and his tale of how lucky he was to be born into adverse circumstances. When he was I am not sure exactly what age in Basel, Switzerland, we organised a party for him with students. And he gave a little speech, in which he recounted first a very gloomy picture of his life or at least of his youth. He had been born with a rather serious illness, and his father, who was a banker and general of the German army, had nine sons and Carl was the ninth, and his father did not even want to look at him because he thought his son a weakling. And when he had finished this sad tale, he told the second story, which he started, “What luck that was!” For instead of having to go to a military school he was allowed to study medicine and psychology, and so on.

There was nothing so drastic in my life but all the same it depends on how you look at it. There is one thing which seems to me quite clear and it is that I have always been living a life *in spite of*: in spite of being sick, in spite

of very often not having money, in spite of having children and therefore not being able to do what would have been easier without children. There was always an “in spite of”. And I enjoyed it – I enjoyed living that life. But was the constant challenge the most important element in my life? Definitely not. Was there a plan from the beginning? The answer is no. Or rather there existed such clarities as the plan to study, to become something intellectual. But after all I started to study formally when I was in my late thirties. Before that I had all sorts of adventures, and all sorts of war efforts and dangerous activities, jumping from an airplane, and all that.

In the meantime there always remained the wish to get into academia; but I did not until relatively late in life. It is not entirely the fault of “Fate” that I did not start, because certainly I could have made an effort earlier. There was a time in Paris in the 1940s, of about a year and a half, when I was mainly interested in getting myself beautiful clothes from Dior and Givenchy, and going to the opera. Even the beginning of my formal schooling was immediately interrupted by me changing from England to Switzerland, with the very good excuse to study with Jaspers himself, but at the same time it was my need to move, to do things “in spite of”. Later came more quiet and organised years, but as I discovered now in copies of papers I gave of conferences I spoke at, I was still not really spending all that much time in London, studying like a good girl, and looking after my children and helping them to complete their studies properly at a French *lycée*. I did such things as going to Turkey to deliver speeches there. For years in the morning every last Friday of the month I lectured for four hours to Royal Air Force officers of their financial section and afterwards shared very amusing lunches with the senior officer, frugal meals which generally consisted of half of a hard-boiled egg and one or two peas.

But all this does not answer the question why I am even *now* so busy in this work of recollection and analysis, and making a great sacrifice of time,

when perhaps I should be employing myself in preparing new ideas – why do I go back to that life of mine? I can't give a clear answer. It somehow involves a judgment I would want to form and have not as yet. It is somehow a way of giving importance to what I have lived, an importance that probably is exaggerated. A kind of wanting to show – mainly to myself – that it was worthwhile to have lived it.

Now there comes a big question related to this word “worthwhile”. Worthwhile according to which scale of values? For other people? For me? For some kind of religious feeling of having accomplished something in this world? Or is it to establish really the “negative point” that I lived “as if”, which is to say as if there was another life to come that I would be able to live again what I lived imperfectly in this life, but now on the second occasion in a more perfect way? That this life was a kind of scenario, not exactly one written by someone else but sometimes giving that impression. Or was it indeed accidental? I can start to answer this by giving an example. I try very much in this biography to write about why I stayed in Mexico for almost thirty years right up to the present. I don't particularly like Mexico, nor do I very much like Mexicans; I don't like their food or their music. So what has kept me here?

I was a perfectly regular university teacher at the University of Surrey for seventeen years or so. I went from being a lecturer to being a senior lecturer, and they were ready to give me a full professorship. So what made me – not come to Mexico because that I can explain through the offers of work that attracted me here – but to stay in the country? In a superficial way, it is that I found Mexico educationally a very poor place and that I had at least a pretention to make it better, something that maybe up to a point I achieved. If I look back, things would have changed in any case, but a little bit of that change came about through my very active participation in many of the better Mexican private universities. My perennial wish to make

the world a better place was certainly challenged and motivated here. But there must have been other longings to be satisfied and I came recently to the conclusion that maybe it was the Institute that I founded in 1991 in Mexico City.

It came about after I was not able to establish a school that I wanted to call the European Classical University, for which I had all the plans and programmes. Finally this project did not become a reality because of the removal of the vice-president of the well-respected private university Tecnológico de Monterrey (Tec) in Mexico who had promised me to put every year at our disposal some thirty students, young people who were not able to pass the exams to get into his university, not for want of intelligence but for reasons which were particular to the Tecnológico, their particular kind of technical approach even to the humanities. I was counting on that, and also on a promise of five million dollars which had been vaguely offered to me from the United States. When circumstances had changed to the bad, I transformed the project into something else, what finally became an institute of global studies. But it also evolved into more esoteric areas. For instance, from 1986 I became very interested in a bridge between psychotherapy and philosophy – reading and talking about the whole brain thinking and feeling, effectively an awareness of awareness and this focus on the consciousness as the first great step to achieving the wholeness of the person. Now it is doing what I always wanted it to do in fields like the philosophy of religion and the arts, and more actively than it has been for a few years. We have even entered fields like kabala, alchemy and – perhaps most important for me right now – the search for reality.

All courses are related to the human being, but not in terms of a superficial addition to knowledge of men and women, rather as a deeply felt exploration of motives and plans; of hopes of a deeper spirituality, of a

much more profound attempt to understand metaphysical possibilities; and the moral and spiritual role of the human being in our world. At the moment I call some of the courses, discussions or seminars simply the “Philosophy of Religion”. Fortunately I have the feeling that people who participated in these classes are very often, as individuals, living today a more profound and deeper, more reflective, more conscious life together with their moral and personal ethical values; and are becoming more responsible, conscious members of human society. This last phrase is important according to my way of thinking: I don’t want to say “local groups” or “families” because, after all, in my judgment many of these institutions like family and social groups have today become constrained, rather than forming a real minor or major community.

On November 30th of 2011, we celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the Institute and hope to continue its successful teaching in philosophy, spirituality, the foundations of the arts, music and consciousness, as well as in a new fascinating field in search of reality, a subject involving philosophy as well as the new sciences of the twenty-first century. I was born three months before the end of World War I and now at the age of ninety-three I am trying to introduce a new kind of learning: a life-long learning with its depth but also with its joy and profundity, its consciousness, and finally its possibility to integrate its profound experience where every newly acquired insight embraces our whole being. Our school was recently renamed the Troeller Institute of Integral Studies and it will become sister of the Alliant International University as a separate entity within the same campus offering two-year certificate programmes under my overall academic direction.

I think there must be by now a few dozen people – some Mexicans, more of them foreigners – living in Mexico City, whose life has been transformed through taking part in our discussion sessions and seminars. And simply

by inviting them to live up to demands they have to make to themselves, which relates to the dignity of their own person, there is an attempt to strip themselves of the artificialities of our existence. This involves the knowledge that they themselves can attempt a life according to their own decisions and in conformity with nothing but their own moral code. I dare not say their own *ethical* code because that to a great extent depends on the ethical norms of the society in which they are living. Those who have taken part in our discussions, I know, now live a life “in spite of” all the adversaries and misunderstandings and hardships of life; they find somehow a canal in themselves which helps them to go through the downside of life, when it occurs, with the courage to be – an expression coined by Paul Tillich. And talking about Tillich, I have thought a great deal about the background of my own thinking and beliefs, and I admit it has been shaped by both the spirituality and the anthology of Paul Tillich. Not necessarily his religiosity but rather the spiritual development he identified, which includes everyday life, our profession, our relations both to our own consciousness and reflection on the growth of our consciousness – and, if I can dare say it, consciousness of those around us.

As it appears to me, it is somehow not good enough to follow Christ’s golden rule not to do to others what we don’t want to be done to us. Of course, this is a basis. But as reflecting and spiritual human beings we have to go further; further in a Nietzschean sense, to attempt to reach the reality of our own over-being, to employ the most felicitous of Nietzsche’s expressions. As I already mentioned, if I had ever written a book about my spiritual life, I suppose I should have entitled it *Towards Ruth*; Ruth being my name but towards that Ruth, which of course I have not obtained and will not obtain, of an over-man with the name of Ruth.

I had a telephone call not so long ago from a friend who owns a large ranch in the south of Cuernavaca and she reminded me, “Look, I am always ready

to put some space from the rancho at your disposal to build that university you want.” I had given a lot of thought a few years ago to have the university there. We could even have done it without spending too, with nothing like the five million dollars that I would have needed for the European Classical University. But I just wondered who the teachers would be, who would be the students living in flimsy buildings with no great facilities; even I myself am not sure if I would like to spend the next few years on that ranch. I think, after all, a certain amount of comfort is part of keeping one’s own dignity successfully. It may be external but then my body is also living in an external world. So after all is said and done, I suppose our rather elegant Institute in the *fin de siècle* neighbourhood of Roma Norte in Mexico City may continue to be the right surrounding in which to find some part of ourselves, which to my own way of thinking will survive after our physical death.

I have not yet discovered the actual imperative which has prompted me all my adult life to write fifty volumes of diaries and through them to somehow bear witness to the way my life has taken place. Why does this need exist that I have not been able to soothe? And I am afraid I will not be able to express all I wish to say in this life to express. Eternity is not an answer: eternity is now, not in the future – eternity is every instant because there is no one instant that will ever be repeated. At the same time there is no instant that is not somehow hooked up to eternity, meaning it is passing and yet it is forever fixed in an ever-changing and evolving fullness. Each and every human being, even the most down-trodden, will add to the movement of this wholeness, not for better or worse because neither of these exists; rather in its uniqueness and yet always changing and not always improving, always being a timeless image of being.

It has not been so important in this work to describe events in a sort of schedule, saying that at a certain time I was at a given place. But what I

am now trying to do is, of course, almost a joke: it is to find the real me, not the spiritual me, but the person I have been and lived, through the retelling of the stories. I suppose then I will have to explain to myself and others why I put such significance into the stories at this stage of my life. It is after all a kind of non-ending sequence. So I return to the same enquiry, and this preoccupies me at the moment, why do it? For me? For people who have never met me and who may read it in a hundred years' time, in ten years' time? Is it not an occupation without sense in the end; or is there a possibility that I may be coming at the close with some kind of definitive sentence, with some kind of paragraph, which will summarise or give conclusion to my life.

This seems to be somehow all my focus at the moment, preoccupied with my past life and my life now. And I am seriously wondering if I don't have better things to do, to help people to take a certain direction that their life might be leading. Nowadays my activities are less dedicated to international problems and rather more to a search for personal growth, existential problems, research on consciousness, bringing science and philosophy together in a conscious; research about the East and the West represented in works like the Bible, the Bhaggavad Gita, Greek Tragedy, Buddhist principles and spiritual meditation. As my father used to say, every age brings its own lamp to illuminate us. I still wish to help people to open their mind, to let it stand back so to speak, and allow spirituality stand side by side with the mind's functions. But I wonder is it more correct to think that our spirituality has to go through the mind through a sort of arrow of longing, a longing for the higher reality in which we would share our longing for greater clarity and the anguish of being left out from real existence. The life without end because life in this case could not be but an eternal possibility without what we call time and certainly without the knowledge of space which would mean no void either. An infinite present, no before or after but an arrow that is flying to a goal while simultaneously

having already reached it. Being that diversifies into beings that alone can neither be divided nor form a whole.

I am not asking a question about the quality of my life because that I cannot really judge. I can judge only from the inside and from that perspective, one could say that my necessity to live and write about living has added to the quality of the person I am. And then one could also say, "The person I am, is it a valid person or not?" That is not up to me to ask. This activity is related to the question if I need to occupy myself with my present and past self, as well as the awakening effect I might have had on others. And there the Institute comes in again. By itself it is nothing: it's a name, and it has given a kind of frame within which there can be conversations, knowledge and the process of becoming aware of one's consciousness. It deals a great deal with how little we bother or give weight to our consciousness, which immediately involves the question if our consciousness is something we should be acknowledging, and also – going beyond this action – trying to penetrate.

This is all a bit inconclusive because I have concerned myself not alone as to why I have indulged in deep questioning about the life I have lived but also the reasons why I want to discuss the life I have lived. Would it not be more creative were I to bring about some general conclusion, taking my life as it had been, about what remains valid at the end of this period of living, that is in case something actually remains valid? Either that or to ask the question – what I think is the case – about the little of me that has acquired an everlasting verity, assuming that it is not destroyed by my physical death. In what form, in the Platonic sense, does this me enter the quintessence of other lives that contribute to forming this moving wholeness, of which I myself have only been able to describe as a multicoloured carpet made out of interwoven ribbons, which form an ever-

changing picture where even the dark colors will help to enhance the bright and sensitive colours of the glory of the picture.

A poem that Schiller wrote, one which was put into music, presents for me a number of important issues. One I wonder about and cannot give an answer: it concerns the lines that are more or less the following, "Only a soldier is really free / Because he, at every moment of battle, is daring his life." The soldier may die or he may not die. I am not completely sure if that means freedom – up to a point maybe. But the other part is completely correct and it goes, "If you are not able to dare your life / You will never be able to say that you are the author of your life." By this I understand that if you are living a boring, everyday and nice life, you will never have the feeling of having recovered your life, of having dared to put it at risk. And you'll either lose it by doing nothing or, by a certain risk-taking, it is now really your life. These are sentiments I feel very strongly; not that I often dared my life but I have, though not in a big way and not as a soldier. What I am really certain about is that we have to test ourselves and to do this continuously. That means our life only takes on a value for ourselves when we can win the test we are putting ourselves through. And that is something most people just don't do.

The safe little life in the end loses any excitement – which arguably is not a bad thing – because tests are milestones and milestones tell you where you are. It has to be something like "I should be able to do that", for in this way we set for ourselves a test that permits us to advance. It is very important. But I had not thought about the song for possibly twenty or thirty years; first came the melody and with that the words. I was surprised; German songs can be very insipid, flavourless. It inspired me to ask myself a question: "Is a soldier really a freer man than we are?" It depends very much first of all by what we mean by free; it is normally a condition of being free but with responsibility. But a soldier's freedom is not one of

responsibility. He is just daring his own life; he is just saying, "Ok, I win or I loss." So I am not sure about that. But I do understand very well that if you don't put your life at risk, or your mind at risk, or your beliefs at risk, you cannot ever win them back and own them. It is what is going on in the United States of America nowadays, this terrible fundamentalism; that people think that their ideas are the only ones that matter. This is in many ways the opposite of my understanding: we have to dare to know people who think differently, who may be showing us that our beliefs are not solid in order to prove to us that we are not really believing. The part "Only the soldier is free" I just cannot swallow because a soldier as a soldier is not even free, he is ordered! He is not a free agent at all. But I think that the other part is very true: if you don't give your opinion, if you don't fight for your beliefs and risk them to be contradicted, then you are in fact losing them. Your beliefs are timid, without any adventure and without strings. All of these ideas came to me while remembering that song.

For me it was very easy to acquire all these hundreds of songs, because my father sang continuously; from five in the morning onwards. All the operas, the Mozart ones, the Beethoven ones, popular songs; and I continued singing in the church chorus all my life, until my voice broke in the early 2000s. Now I hum to myself. At the end of the day, singing and dancing are the only really gracious and very human performances you can do without any external help, without any instruments. You can always make beautiful sounds if you decide to do so.