

Remembering the Early Sixties

Up and up ...

I'm not giving you objective history, but rather a mixture of my own recollections and whatever leaps out at me as I look again at the books and newspapers of the time. And I shan't go through things chronologically, but shall jump about within the period.

One could spend the hour just discussing the layers of irony in Larkin's poem, but I won't. Absurd to say 'Everyone felt the same.' But I do remember those years of the early 60s as something like a breaking of the bank. As a child I didn't know about the wrangle for a ring, but I do remember that many things in the 1950s seemed cramped and fenced in by inhibitions and euphemisms – which somehow were swept away between the end of the *Chatterley* ban and the Beatles' first LP.

But of course I was young, 16 in 1963, just beginning to explore beyond the grey south London suburb where I was brought up. Also, my parents were both teachers, and around 1960 they were, I think, beginning to feel financially secure, for the first time since the war. My family were left wing, anti-establishment, and we felt that the tide in the early 60s was beginning to flow our way. All these things influence my memories and affect my choice of what to talk about today.

I think of the early 60s as a time of unbounded possibilities, the sky is the limit, anything might happen, you never know. Up and up the stolen millions.

St Andrews Citizen 1960/61

A different picture from the St Andrews Citizen of those days: a town aware of change, half-ready to adapt, but making heavy weather of it, casting many a backward glance.

Back then, in the early sixties, 'fifty years ago' meant that distant time before the Great War, an impossibly foreign country. For today's young people our past must seem just as quaint and foreign.

Fifty years ago

Old people in the sixties looked back to 'before 1914' as a period of peace and stability. Historians tell us that this was an illusion; that the world was seething with unrest and undergoing headlong change. We look back to our 'fifty years ago' as a period that ignored tradition, mocked authority, and introduced new ways of thinking and behaving. Now we're told that this too is an illusion, that old habits proved surprisingly resistant to change. Historians tell us sternly that those years weren't such a big deal as we like to think. Well, perhaps so, but we're entitled to our memories.

For the purpose of this talk I'm treating the early sixties as starting roughly with Macmillan's election victory in 1959 – and ending just 50 years ago – but I'm not going to talk about the Kennedy assassination.

In London, the autumn of 1959 was warm and dry, like this year. The ground was so hard that we had to play 'touch rugby' rather than the real thing. Not that it made much difference to me. I remember standing in a quiet part of the pitch, watching the trains and horse-chestnut trees, and looking up into the cloudless sky, when an aeroplane appeared doing sky-writing. 'Back Mac,' it wrote, 'Back Mac.'

Supermac

The country did back Mac. Supermac, the cartoonist Vicky's creation, rescued the Conservatives from the disaster of Suez. Only in Scotland was there a swing to Labour, although the Conservatives (or rather Unionists) still had a strong presence, holding five of the fifteen Glasgow seats and four of the seven in Edinburgh – and of course they won here in East Fife (Sir James Henderson-Stewart, Bart).

By the end of our period Supermac had resigned, his government in disarray.

Stagnant Society

Macmillan's downfall was mainly caused by the problems of the stagnant, stop-go economy and the fact that the Conservatives had been in power for over a decade and had run out of steam. But I took the superficial view that he was brought down by a combination of scandal and satire, because those were the things that interested me.

I've never read this book, but I remember when it came out, and I remember feeling that the title was absolutely right as a description of the Britain of the day. *Stagnant* was a verdict that applied to much more than the economy and politics.

Satire

What was needed was a blast of satirical fresh air, something to ruffle the surface, stir things up. and of course this was what we got. Look closely at Millicent Martin because there will be very few women in this talk, except in decorative roles. Politicians, entertainers, broadcasters, writers – it was an overwhelmingly masculine world.

As I said, historians are criticising the accepted wisdom that the sixties were a time of unparalleled freedom and openness, when we threw off restraint and deference and crossed new frontiers. Of course it didn't happen everywhere all at once. Everyone didn't feel the same. If all the bastions had fallen at once there would have been nothing left for the satirists to get their teeth into.

But whatever they say, I stick with my memory that things were stirred up. It was all very exciting for a teenage spectator.

Absolute Beginners

One of the revisionist historians, Dominic Sandbrook, takes particular issue with the novelist Colin MacInnes, author of *Absolute Beginners* (1959). Sandbrook says that MacInnes used his young working-class protagonist as an implausible mouthpiece for his own self-indulgent fantasies. Admirers of MacInnes say that his novel was what launched the 'youth thing' and lit the blue touch-paper for the sixties; Sandbrook says it had no effect at all beyond contributing to popular myths about the decade.

When I read *Absolute Beginners* in 1962 or 63 I was thrilled. It is set in the London of prostitutes and small-time thieves, narrated by a young photographer. I was a law-abiding and bookish suburban boy, but I identified very closely with the narrator, because, whatever the differences, we were both young. It convinced me that my life would be what I chose, not what my elders dictated. Most of us remember being inspired with this ideal, and most of us feel special affection for whatever it was that inspired us. So I remember MacInnes's book (and the public library where I found it) with gratitude. I re-read it when it was re-issued in the mid-80s and was disappointed, but when I returned to it a year or so ago I recovered the excitement of that first reading.

MacInnes's belief that society was being transformed by the energy of the young was based partly on his observation that for the first time in history working-class teenagers had disposable income of their own; this, he said, gave them opportunity without responsibility. '... you don't like it, do you. Well, as for us, the kids, we do like it, see? We like it fine.'

Us kids, perhaps, found inspiration in the message that the young were no longer docile, but there were others, such as St Andrews town councillors and the prosecution in the Chatterley trial, who found it disturbing.

Commando style juvenile delinquents

In July 1961 St Andrews Town Council debated the causes of vandalism. The councillors each had their pet culprit. I didn't hear the Town Council discussion, but I remember all these theories being aired at one time or another on *Any Questions*. At about the same time Provost Braid of St Monance was prosecuted for shaking and slapping a ten-year-old boy caught climbing the fence of a tennis court, and described by Braid as a 'commando-style juvenile delinquent'. Braid was given an absolute discharge.

Lady Chatterley: Penguin Special

In retrospect the prosecution of Penguin Books over *Lady Chatterley's Lover* seems farcically one-sided, but at the time the conflict was serious and the issue was in doubt. The 1959 Obscene Publications Act had explicitly permitted expert testimony as to literary merit to be taken into account in such cases, and the trial was to test how this would be applied by a jury.

Lady C: Hoggart

The defence called a succession of high-powered writers and thinkers to testify to the merits of the book. The prosecution called no witnesses at all, their case being to appeal to the jury to apply their ordinary common-sense, to ignore the intellectuals and trendy bishops, and recognise that it was a dangerous book.

The star of the defence was Richard Hoggart, author of *The Uses of Literacy*. Mervyn Griffith-Jones, the prosecuting counsel, mocked Hoggart's description by reading out what he called the 'purple passages' and asking, Is that puritanical? Yes, replied Hoggart in a brilliant put-down, if we understand the word correctly as referring to the non-conformist's 'intense sense of responsibility for one's conscience.'

Lady C: Griffith-Jones

Griffith-Jones was a formidable barrister, though often ridiculed since for his famous question to the jury about permitting their wives and servants to read the book. The price of 3/6 was what really agitated him; it meant anyone could get hold of the book and be depraved and corrupted by it. Anyone. Not just wives and servants, but the young, in particular the working-class young.

He explained that what he meant by depravity was a lack of restraint, and played on the ordinary newspaper-reader's fears that *since the war* all sorts of threats had arisen to disrupt the orderly, docile progression of young men coming out of school ...

Linwood

... and going into the nation's factories. Isn't it obvious, he says, that this book with its undisguised celebration of sexuality will subvert it still further. Griffith-Jones has seen what MacInnes saw, that the kids like having the fun but not the duties. It worried him. And, if it were true, it would have worried Richard Hoggart too, because in speaking up for Lawrence he was not arguing for throwing off all restraint. It was a case of two rival nostalgias, Griffith-Jones looking back to a time when moral questions were uncomplicated and everyone knew and kept to their place in society; Hoggart invoking, and placing Lawrence within, the long tradition of English non-conformist morality.

Lady C: Sub judice

It took the jury three hours to reach a verdict in favour of Penguin Books. It is sometimes said that their decision opened the flood-gates to a tide of pornography. Geoffrey Robertson QC, writing in 1990, pointed out that there were several reasons for the spread of pornography, which had nothing to do with *Lady Chatterley* – the most significant being the corruption in the Metropolitan Police vice squad, which operated as a protection racket and allowed the pornography industry to grow unchecked.

Most of my friends read *Lady Chatterley* as soon as they could, but I never got around to it until about ten years ago. Most critics regard it as well below Lawrence's best, and some say it's a very bad novel. I think it's fascinating for what it has to say about class and industrialisation, but much less convincing when it comes to sex.

In 1963 it wasn't *Lady Chatterley* who had us fifteen year old boys talking about sex: it was Christine Keeler.

Stolen millions

Like the ever rising millions of the great train Robbery, each new detail of the Profumo affair made us stretch our eyes still wider in amazement.

Daily Express

Profumo's affair with Christine Keeler took place in 1961, and the story emerged bit by bit during 1963, with heaps of related gossip, and culminating in the Prime Minister's resignation and the comedy of the Conservative leadership contest. At first we lacked the key to what was going on. How many guessed at the connection between these apparently unrelated stories on the front page of the Express in mid-March?

It made superb spectator sport for salacious adolescents like me. But it was not a victimless affair. Profumo's wife and son must have suffered. The succession of young women drawn into Stephen Ward's rackety world of sex and drugs were victims, although at the time they were just girls, and sex and drugs were what that sort of girl did. Stephen Ward suffered – his entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography* is headed 'Osteopath and scapegoat', reflecting the widely held view that his prosecution at the end of the affair was an act of revenge. The Establishment couldn't punish him for helping to bring down the Macmillan government, so they set the police to dig up something they could punish him for – and then employed our friend Griffith-Jones to make sure the charges stuck.

Darling

There was a lot of humbug about it all. One thing that made it such a perfect scandal for a hypocritical nation was that unlike the equally sensational Argyll divorce it was about more than just sex; it was about serious things such as state security or the peculiar wickedness of lying to Parliament. The Labour Opposition made much of the espionage aspect, but Lord Denning's hurriedly produced report concluded that there was no security breach.

Among all the rumours of spying and photographs of the headless man and the man in the iron mask (minutely sifted by Lord Denning) there was one damning piece of real evidence linking Profumo with Christine Keeler: the Darling letter.

On the matter of the lie to Parliament (perpetrated on 22 March 1963, the same day as the Beatles' first LP was released) Denning concluded that although Profumo's government colleagues had no option but to accept his word, the way the thing was handled represented a failure of leadership on Macmillan's part. Like everything in the report it is quiet and understated, but this verdict must have contributed to Macmillan's decision to resign a few weeks later.

No impropriety

The Darling letter meant Profumo could not deny being on friendly terms with Christine, but he added that there was no impropriety ... The language is studiously vague, *acquaintanceship* even more abstract than *acquaintance*. And what is meant by *impropriety*? Might Profumo even claim that he had not told a lie, because with all the talk of spies, all he meant was that his conduct had not been improper from a security point of view? Well no, that defence won't wash because (the story goes) before he agreed to the statement his colleague Iain Macleod told him baldly that the simple issue was, Did you sleep with her? (Some sources suggest that Macleod's question was posed in cruder terms.) But the opaque language must have made the lie easier to tell – easier to deny *impropriety* than to deny a simple fact straightforwardly expressed. This was one reason for welcoming Lawrence's attack on the gauzy euphemisms that were habitually used to talk about sex – and about so much else. These euphemisms made it so much easier to lie.

CND & Anti-apartheid

My parents were members of CND (ban-the-bombers) and I went on the Aldermaston march each Easter. Something of its urgency went out of the CND message when the Limited Nuclear Test Ban was signed in the late summer of 1963. I often wonder whether our leaders would have achieved this if we had all remained silent on the subject, and so on the whole I'm glad to have been a ban-the-bomber. My view of world affairs was dominated by this argument, and other issues were less clearly in focus.

Africa for instance. 'Winds of change,' became a catchphrase, but I don't think I had much idea what was going on. There was an air of British self-congratulation about it. Gauzy euphemisms

here as well. We looked at the troubles of the French in Algeria and imagined that we were withdrawing from our African empire with more dignity.

There was complacency too in our attitude to South Africa. Of course everyone condemned *apartheid*. After the massacre at Sharpeville in March 1960 when 69 Africans were killed there was wringing of hands on all sides, but also a shrugging of shoulders. What could we do? Opposition, we were told, would only make the Nationalist government in South Africa more intransigent.

There were demonstrations outside South Africa House with arrests for obstruction of the police and insulting behaviour, but the reports from the magistrates court reflect the reluctance to ruffle the stagnant surface of our lives. One defendant who refused to pay his fine was told by the magistrate not to be silly and to go outside and think about it; he did, he came back and agreed to pay. There were difficulties in fixing a date for the trial: on one day the police officer involved was getting married, and on another the defendant had to sit an exam.

Native (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act

The bureaucratic language of *apartheid* made it sound quite logical and straightforward, like a County Council's development plan. It was difficult to penetrate to the human reality beneath.

The horrors that followed the Belgian withdrawal from the Congo in 1960 should have alerted us to the reality of what the decades of colonialism had done to Africa, but it was all too horrible and too complicated to hold the world's attention for long. Briefly we became familiar with the names of President Kasavubu, Prime Minister Lumumba and the secessionist leader Tshombe, but soon the story dropped out of the news bulletins, only to surface again briefly when something especially dramatic came to light – usually something involving Europeans, such as the still unexplained death of UN Secretary-general Hammarskjöld in 1961.

Better dead than red

Serious opposition to *apartheid* was inhibited by fear of the alternative – the Pan-African Congress with its call for a united, socialist African nation.¹ Communism was the enemy, no doubt about it. As a ban-the-bomber I often had people telling me they would rather be dead than red. Opposition to dropping H-bombs on Russia was interpreted as being pro-communist. I was forced reluctantly into the position of defending the Soviet regime.

Krushchev

I think I thought there were enough anti-communists, so I didn't need to join in, but looking back, I think I should have been more indignant about the cruelty and callousness that characterized the Soviet regime even in its less brutal periods. I knew about it, but somehow I didn't believe it.

I didn't grasp imaginatively the fact that things were not everywhere as safe and snug as my dull, grey suburb, with magistrates who obligingly took account of policemen's weddings and defendants' exams.

Martin Luther King

Another example of this lack of imagination occurs to me. My parents spent a year in America. This was the time of the great civil rights marches and the 'I have a dream' speech of Martin Luther King. One of my parents' friends visited us in London. An African American academic, she told us that when she was driving north from her home in Mississippi it was a matter of course that she would make sure she had enough gas to avoid the risk of stopping in Virginia. I remember sitting opposite her and thinking to myself, surely she's exaggerating, surely she doesn't need to worry about stopping at a garage.

I simply didn't believe that things could possibly be as bad as they really were.

1 At first the PAC were distinguished as 'extremists' as opposed to the 'moderate' African National Congress, but within days of the Sharpeville shootings the ANC too was banned.

Blank slide

The greatest challenge to this comfortable view of the world was, of course, the Eichmann trial. Day by day throughout the spring and summer of 1961 the details of the holocaust accumulated before us. It was something we had known about, but the evidence presented in court made us re-learn it again and again. I remember sensing the unique importance of the trial, and collecting the daily reports from the Times. I have a feeling that my mother was unhappy that I was doing this, as though she wished I could be protected from the knowledge.

Almost everyone in the West was protected from knowledge of the greatest disaster, or greatest crime, of the age, which was still unfolding in China: the famine that followed the reckless experiment in social engineering known as the Great Leap Forward. As I understand it now, the plan was to collectivise agriculture and transfer energy and resources out of food-production and into rapid expansion of industry. But it didn't work, leaving many millions to starve to death. I don't remember hearing anything at all about this at the time. In fact, I remember Mao Zedong (Mao Tse-Tung) being quite a popular figure, even among some non-communists, who compared him favourably with the grey bureaucrats of Moscow. Romance still attached to the Long March, and for many who longed to escape the dreariness of 1950s England the idea of a Great Leap had a certain appeal. We just didn't know.

Spies

The Cold War gave us an unhealthy interest in spies. James Bond was transferred to the big screen and the more realistic procedural novels of Len Deighton and John le Carré focussed our minds on the murky and morally ambiguous world of espionage. Real life spies also abounded (the Portland spy-ring, Vassall, George Blake and Kim Philby), which was why people were so ready to believe in the security aspect of the Profumo affair.² Spying wasn't all one way. British spies Greville Wynn and Oleg Penkovsky were on trial in Russia during the summer of 1963. In 1960 an American U2 spy plane was shot down over the Soviet Union, and the incident was used by the Russians as a reason for scuttling the four-power summit.

Fallex and Parapluie

In 1963 a piece of amateur espionage was published. The *Spies for Peace* leaflet described the Regional Seats of Government that were hidden around the country to provide bases for running things in the aftermath of a nuclear attack. It was distributed during the Aldermaston march, and a section of the march made a detour to draw attention to the location of the bunker near Reading. It gave the locations and telephone numbers of twelve RSGs, and listed the men (a motley band of academics, soldiers, police officers and civil servants – I think that they were mostly men, apart from some women police constables) who were booked to occupy the Reading RSG. There is also a diagram of the layout, which includes (as the authors noted with amusement) an emergency exit. The real bite of the pamphlet was its account of two exercises to test the system (codenamed Parapluie and Fallex). These exercises, the authors claimed, had been based on a gross underestimate of the size of the Russian nuclear arsenal, and on the comforting assumption that the enemy would not launch their attack until all our arrangements were complete.

There was a lot of huffing and puffing in Parliament about this breach of security, at the time and for some years to come, but so far as I know the sources of the information were never traced.

² The Vassall case also helps explain why government colleagues were so unwilling to doubt Profumo's word. A junior Admiralty minister, Tam Galbraith, had been forced to resign because of allegations of impropriety with Vassall; a judicial enquiry exonerating Galbraith was published during the course of the Profumo business.

Cuba

The Cold War almost came alight in the autumn of 1962. Last year, around the fiftieth anniversary of the Cuban Missile Crisis, there was a radio play set at the time and describing the reactions of a couple of strangers to the prospect of imminent nuclear war, the man spending money as though he would never need it again, and the woman accepting that she would never see her husband and children again. As a study of how our behaviour in normal times is based on an assumption of continuity the play was plausible enough, but as an account of how people actually felt and behaved at the time of the crisis it did not strike me as true. Looking back, I don't remember feeling afraid, or having the impression that anyone else was afraid. I can't recall any disruption of our normal routine.

I've asked around amongst my friends. A few clearly took the situation more seriously. One was just starting at university at the time, and she remembers thinking, Damn, why does it have to happen now, just as my life is getting interesting? Another recalls a teacher at her religious school praying at great length for peace, and another says her mother did a bit of panic buying. Another was aware of the V-bombers coming to Leuchars, and staying always airborne, ready to go. One friend who recalls fear was living in Africa – doubly powerless, not just in the sense that all private citizens were powerless in the face of the crisis, but also because his government had no influence on the outcome. And for him the threat was not immediate annihilation, but the creeping spread of radiation disease, the terror of which had been vividly conveyed in Neville Shute's *On the Beach* (1957; filmed in 1959).

Teachers talked about it, but I didn't think they were doing so because they felt we needed to be calmed and comforted in the face of imminent death, but rather because here was an important event that we needed to understand. There were grim jokes, and wild fantasies about the orgiastic indulgence with which we would seek to fill the last four minutes – or would it be ten minutes? Perhaps we looked on familiar scenes and wondered, what if this is the last time? what if rockets were to appear over the horizon? There was a lot of mock-fear.

What's the explanation of this almost universal *sang froid*? A lot was due, I'm sure, to the reluctance I've spoken of to believe that things can be as bad as they actually are. Among our parents' habits of deference and memories of the war were still strong: if a well-spoken chap in a good suit looked us in the eye and said there was a crisis, then we believed that it was all in safe hands, and that although there might be some necessary sacrifices, things would work out in the end. My own chief memory is of one such well-spoken chap, the Defence correspondent of the Times, who appeared night after night on the television to explain the ins and outs of the crisis. He and his colleagues became familiar figures, and I rather regretted when it was all over and they disappeared from our evenings. There had been something exhilarating in the feeling that we were being addressed seriously and intelligently on a matter of such importance.³

Perhaps the most striking *sang froid* was that displayed by the British government. If we can believe the Spies for Peace, during this unique crisis the Regional Seat of Government remained unmanned, and no emergency measures were taken. Nothing was done. In fact, the pamphlet uses a more earthy phrase. And here I can reveal my own insignificant part in the Spies for Peace escapade. A friend of mine was responsible for distributing the pamphlet to people like bishops and MPs. She was an older and more genteel person than most of the Spies for Peace, and she felt that the obscenity would alienate those we wanted to get on our side, so she gave me a pile of the cyclostyled pamphlets and told me to cross out the offending words and substitute 'nothing was done'. Griffith-Jones had been shocked that bishops and teachers were unwilling to protect fifteen-year-old boys from four-letter words; and there was I, a fifteen-year-old boy, protecting bishops from one of those very words.

3 Another reason why we weren't as frightened as in retrospect it appears we ought to have been is that most didn't know about the crisis until Kennedy made his speech announcing the blockade, and by then the decision had been taken not to invade. We now know how close the argument was in the Kennedy administration and how close they came to launching an invasion.

Beatles

This is all rather sombre. What about the Beatles first LP? *Please Please Me* was recorded on 11 February and released on 22 March 1963. Extraordinary claims were made for the Beatles, and are still made. They have been described as the Picasso of popular music, changing the rules for all time. And, as in Philip Larkin's poem, they are made to stand for a whole bundle of cultural trends. Up and up the stolen millions. Up and up the Beatles' sales. As for us, the kids ... we like it fine.

I knew about the Beatles. They were a phenomenon. The Times wrote pompous fourth leaders about 'foursomes with guitars', 'guitars with electrical attachments' and the like. Crowds ('mainly girls in their teens' the Times said) queued for hours in the rain. In November 1963 the group drove up the M1 to Birmingham, and were late because their car broke down. When they arrived for their concert at the Hippodrome, the police lent them mackintoshes and helmets and smuggled them past the crowd of girls in their teens.

We couldn't avoid knowing about them, but they're not part of my memories of the early sixties. Sure enough, I bought my first LP in the autumn of 1963, but it wasn't theirs. Edith Piaf died at the age of 47 in October of that year; a snatch of *Je ne regrette rien* was played on the news and the sound sent me straight round to the record shop. It was only later that a girl in her teens played me some of the Beatles songs. No doubt my lack of interest was part of what made her lose interest in me. She was a very bright girl, every bit as serious-minded and bookish as me (she went on to become an academic and authority on Proust, so better qualified than I am to talk about memory) which is, I suppose, a measure of how almost universal the Beatles' appeal was.

Dr Who

It was a common assumption that the Beatles had transcended the ephemeral world of popular music and would be remembered for ever. Well, they are still remembered fifty years on. I think it was less generally apparent then that a certain children's serial (first broadcast on 23 November 1963) would still be going strong fifty years later. The first Dr Who came on (I seem to recall) in the Saturday evening slot after the end of a series of *Dixon of Dock Green* and I'm afraid I preferred the realism of Dock Green to the fantasy of the Tardis – although I preferred still more the greater realism and sophistication of *Z Cars* and *Maigret*.

Iris Murdoch, Julie Christie et al

If I had looked more at novels and films and less at politics and television I might have found more women to talk about. Things would change, slowly. Of all the ministers in the Wilson governments of the later sixties, the one whose legacy has lasted longest is Jennie Lee, who was instrumental in founding the Open University.

Reports

But there were deeper changes going on. The Denning Report was not the only report published in 1963, nor was it the most significant. Two reports were published on modernizing the transport system: Beeching's *The Reshaping of British Railways* (in which modernization meant drastic reductions) and Buchanan's *Traffic in Towns* (where it meant coping with vast expansion). Also in 1963 the Robbins Report into the future of higher education laid down the path to be taken by the expansion and modernization of universities.

The Arts and Humanities bias in my memories will be obvious, so I should mention C P Snow and the two cultures.

Inventions

A lot of people would say that what made the sixties a time of such rapid change were not politics, scandals, satire and novels, but science, medicine and technology. Things became faster, lighter, smaller, whiter, smoother, safer, sweeter, bigger, better, cheaper – thanks to science. My parents brought me a transistor radio from America (some ten years after the prototype!) – so on my first visit to Scotland I was able to hear test match commentaries on top of mountains.

Snow and Boothby

Whatever one thought of Snow's contention in his 1959 lecture that knowledge of science should be part of our shared culture, it was hard to deny the overwhelming bias in the educational system in favour of arts subjects. An important objective of the Robbins proposals was to plan for a growth of science and engineering in higher education. Meanwhile here in St Andrews the University had purchased 100 acres of land on the North Haugh on which to expand its science departments, to help meet the expected demand for scientists in schools and industry.

Snow was Rector of the University from 1961 to 1964. His predecessor, Lord Boothby, was attacked from the pulpit for advice he gave in his rectorial address, that students should think more of enjoyment than salvation (a heresy he repeated when he proposed the toast at the St Andrews Burns supper in 1961). So the University, at least in its choice of Rectors, seems to have been fully signed up to both the Fun side and the Modernization side of the early sixties.

We tend to think that the key people of the early sixties were the satirists, the pop groups, the kids who wanted fun. Surely these were the ones who defied convention, freed us from stale tradition and blew away with ridicule the likes of Macmillan and the St Andrews councillors. Well, yes. But things aren't as simple as that. At fifty Jack Profumo was as keen on fun as any of Colin MacInnes's kids. It needed the fifty-year-old Director-general of the BBC, Hugh Carleton Greene, to give the young subversives of *That Was the Week That Was* their head. And the 1959 Obscene Publications Act, which enabled the publication of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, was prepared by the Herbert committee on censorship, chaired by Sir Alan Herbert, born 1890.

So when I was wondering who to choose as my representative figure for these years, it was not one of the young iconoclasts, but someone almost as old as the century, a journalist called C H Rolph. He was secretary to the Herbert committee, and I was reminded of him because he edited the court proceedings for the Penguin Special on the Chatterley trial.

C H Rolph

He left school at 14 and worked as a clerk for five years before following his father into the City of London Police. His ambition to become a journalist was thwarted but not crushed by lack of resources and lack of contacts. Throughout his twenty-five years as a policeman he wrote under his pseudonym for a number of journals. I remember hearing him on the radio in the 50s and 60s, and admiring him for his liberal views, in particular his opposition to capital punishment. A member of the Howard League for Penal Reform, he described the white paper on *People in Prisons* as the most important writing he had done. He was offered a CBE by the Callaghan government, but declined.

This is one thing I'm convinced of as I look back: The dead weight of the stagnant society would never have been blown away by the satirists and pop-bands without the steady erosion that had gone on for years, for decades, the work of generations of rational, liberal, humane writers, thinkers, and campaigners. Some, like Carleton Greene and A P Herbert were reform-minded members of the mandarin class, but many were like Rolph – people such as we can all remember from when we were young, modest, self-educated people who, whatever their job or position, had no time for pomposity, deference and prejudice, who recognised what was wrong and worked and argued for what was right.