

## Christopher Mallaby

Susan and I met Christopher and Pascale in Moscow in 1974 – which is to say almost 50 years ago. He was the political counselor at the British Embassy, and I was the Moscow correspondent for the Washington Post. We were accompanied by our formidable wives whose wit, charm and common sense were essential in coping with Cold War dynamics.

The Mallabys were everything we could want in a place like Moscow: brilliant as well as wise, fun, and elegant. At the very first sign of spring, with remnants of the long winter finally receding, we would make Sunday expeditions to what we called The Cabbage Patch, on a hillside not far from the city. Our small group included a dashing French bachelor diplomat, the Newsweek Correspondent, Alfred Friendly and his wife Pie (as in Sweetie), The Le Monde correspondent and his wife, a film critic. And the Garimbertis of La Stampa, a mix therefore of people with enough variety in our perspectives to assure some stimulating debates. The Mallabys had Julia, Emily and Charlotte. Sebastian was at Eton. In time Susan and I added Katherine and Evan whose name Charlotte decided was “baby heaven.”

What we had in common was the sense that the experiences we were having would be indelible in a country we found fascinating with a system we abhorred.

It is impossible to overstate how much these outings added to Moscow life of that time. Our Frenchman was an embassy courier who would return with cheeses, saucisson and artichokes from his monthly missions and we would exult in the belief we were the only people in eleven time zones with a comparable picnic spread. Thanks to a cook at

the US embassy canteen who had a bustling black-market sideline, we ate caviar by the spoonful from large jars.

Friendship and animated conversations on matters great and small ensued as the Mallabys made their way through Germany in the period of reunification, France (and Christopher's memorable emergence from the Channel Tunnel), and London where a post ambassadorial career in banking, as I understand it, did have its rewards. In Paris, the upstairs guest suite at the Napoleonic-era embassy residence was the setting for an unforgettable anniversary week for Susan and me. The framed dinner seating downstairs from a dinner in the days of Duff and Diana Cooper and other relics of a glamorous past fit comfortably next to the warmth and contemporary bonhomie of its current occupants.

Then there was the house in the French countryside. There is a particular sort of relaxation in a cozy country getaway with excellent comestibles and spirited afternoon walks. And I repeat, conversations of consequence were a principal recreation.

In London in 1982, with Christopher in the Foreign Office top tier, he invited me, now reporting from Europe to the ceremony for the awarding of his KCMG. You may remember that was around the time when an intruder had just made it to the Queen's bedroom. The occasion at Buckingham Palace was notable for the orchestral choice of music, the American standard "Strangers in the Night." If she noticed, the Queen did not flinch. We however, over a celebratory cocktail at the RAC, had a good laugh.

We did not again live in the same city, but distance could not diminish our Moscow-forged comradeship. Every session would pick up where we last left off, affirmation of the strength of long-lasting friendships launched when we were so young and our children even younger. We pondered the unexpected implosion of the USSR and whether the end

of the Cold War would mean that Russia could become a place where the politics could fulfill our vision of democracy. Alas, we know how that turned out.

Christopher came to be considered among selected foreign office colleagues and by journalists with access to his insights as “old laser brain.” He could take the most complicated issues in the evolving eras and explain them in ways that made them comprehensible, expertise without any hint of palaver. I was not privy to his dispatches, but I bet they were classics of the genre.

And Pascale’s sense of humor and appreciation of ironies which abound in the follies of political men and woman, including the Iron Lady, made every encounter a source of anticipation and satisfaction. Diplomatic careers (and those of foreign correspondents as well) are best when the couples’ responsibilities are shared, dividing pomp and circumstances, challenges and frustrations with the aspects of a good life that can be carried to wherever you find yourselves.

Sebastian, Julia, Emily, Charlotte, your spouses and innumerable Mallaby grandchildren, you doubtless know that being in your family is more than an honorific or a privilege. For people like us, you will always carry the unique legacy and charms, the enduring spirit, of our very dear friends, Sir Christopher, and Lady Mallaby.