



Canberra's Embassies

Graeme Barrow



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Graeme Barrow

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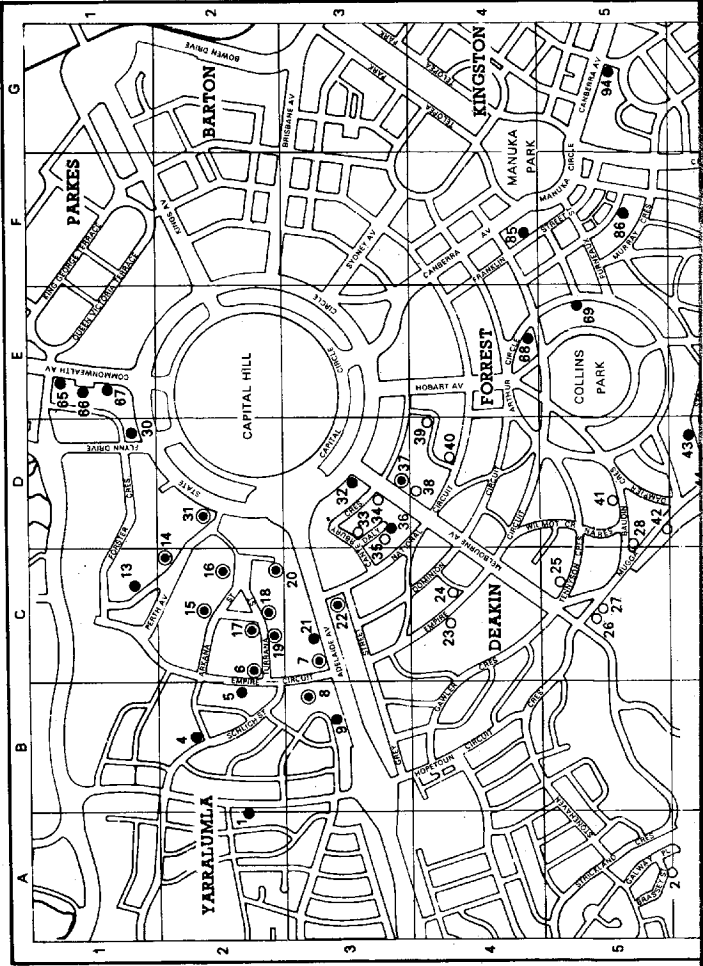
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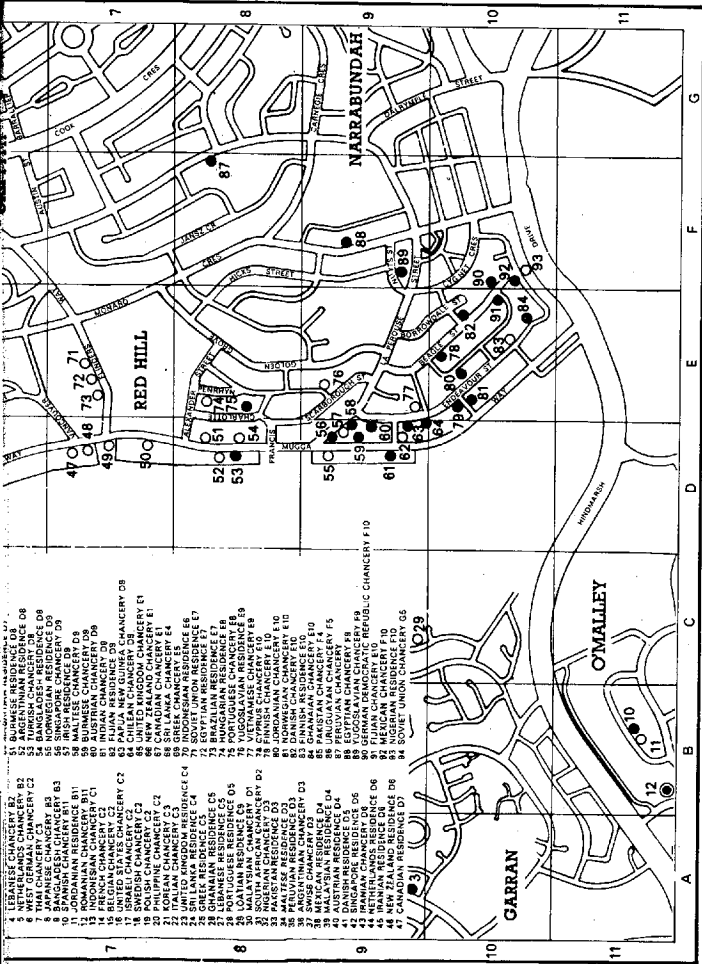
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Main Embassy Area





Introduction

That fiery Welsh nationalist, David Lloyd George, a great Prime Minister of Britain, had a poor opinion of diplomats. 'I want no diplomats', he snapped in 1917. 'They are invented merely to waste time'. Given this view the peppery wartime leader would be shocked if he could see how diplomacy has grown — especially in the post-World War II years.

Many countries, formerly interlocking parts in the jigsaw puzzles of empires, have gained their independence since 1945 and embarked on diplomatic sorties of one kind or another. Political, defence, trade, tourist and cultural agreements between countries have been spawned, developed and extended leading to baffling acronyms such as GATT, CENTO, EFTA, OECD, SALT — and marvellous job opportunities for those whose working brief is the world.

The growth in Australia's relationships with other countries in this post-war period has been quite extraordinary. It was not until 1936 that the first British High Commissioner opened his office in Canberra; today no fewer than sixty-one nations have representatives accredited to Australia and many also have offices in the State capitals. Another nine nations are accredited on a non-resident basis. The growth in Australia's representation overseas has been no less impressive. Before World War II Britain handled most of Australia's external affairs; today Australia has 100 posts overseas.

The Americans were the first to open a foreign (as distinct from British) legation in Canberra — in 1940 when presumably the capital remained the 'curious little place' of 1939, a description given to it by a later American Ambassador, Mr Douglas M. Moffatt, who held the position in 1956. (Mr Moffatt,

incidentally, had the misfortune to die in office.) There were only 12,500 people living in Canberra in 1939, the capital was divided into two towns separated by the flood-prone Molonglo River, and the chief mode of transport was the bicycle. Worse still, according to an 'Informal history of the U.S. Embassy and Chancery', it had only 'three houses other than the bungalow style large enough to boast staff quarters for more than one servant'. These three houses of privilege were occupied by the Governor-General, the Prime Minister, and the British High Commissioner.

The American legation was located initially in a rented house in Mugga Way, Red Hill, but about 18 months after the first Ambassador presented his credentials on 17 July 1940 there was a ceremonial signing of the lease of a 4 hectare site in Yarralumla for a Chancery and an Ambassador's residence. This was on 8 December 1941 when Canberra radios were shouting the news of Japanese bombs falling on Pearl Harbour and America's entry into World War II.

The generous Americans had agreed to construct the embassy in typical American architectural style, with the result that today lovely buildings from the Virginian colonial period now grace a commanding hilltop position in Yarralumla. Several other countries have followed suit by building their embassies in traditional styles — the South Africans, Thais and Japanese in particular — while these and others have filled their chanceries or Ambassadors' residences with cultural treasures from their homelands. But for the public at large there are few opportunities to view the interiors of these chanceries or residences although some embassies do hold open days from time to time, usually for charity.

Most of the embassies worth viewing from the outside are located in Yarralumla in an area popularly known as the Embassy Belt. It is bounded by Adelaide Avenue, Empire Circuit, Forster Crescent, Commonwealth Avenue and State Circle and despite the rate of development, is far from being built out. Indeed, one source of Australian annoyance with some countries is that they have been allocated choice blocks in Yarralumla but have failed to build on them. The Poles and South Koreans have recently erected new embassies in Yarralumla and the Finns are

following suit, but other foreign governments still hold a considerable amount of unimproved land under lease.

The suburb of Red Hill has traditionally been the popular area for diplomatic residences, partly because of its snob value. Today no fewer than fifteen embassies have offices or residences in Red Hill's most famous street, Mugga Way, commonly known as International Row. Other streets near Mugga Way are popular, among them Flinders Way and Endeavour Street.

Another compelling reason why Yarralumla and Red Hill are so attractive to diplomats is that both are close to Parliament House and the various important government departments located in, or near, the Parliamentary Triangle. The Chinese and Russians are two exceptions although the Russian Ambassador lives in Red Hill. The Chinese Embassy is located some miles away in the northern part of Canberra on the highway leading into the city; the Russian Embassy is in Griffith opposite a garage and a funeral parlour, but not that far away from sought-after Red Hill.



West German Embassy (National Capital Development Commission)

The agency responsible for the development of Canberra, the National Capital Development Commission, has tried to interest foreign missions in establishing themselves in the suburb of O'Malley in the southern part of the city, but few seem keen on moving there. Originally the blocks were large but low-lying and the suburb is some distance from the action, certainly not as conveniently located as Red Hill and Yarralumla. In 1976, however, the Commission redesigned the plan and says that now there are 'many large and elevated blocks for diplomatic missions in the western part of west O'Malley'. So far the Romanians are the only ones to have taken up residential and office space in O'Malley, although the Spaniards have an office there and the Jordanians a residence.

Diplomats are modern-day nomads, moving with their families and luggage from country to country, rarely staying more than four years in the one place and usually never returning to it. In a Canberra of just over 200,000 people they form a restless population of some hundreds, always coming and going, never stable. The influence of this sizeable community is unconscious rather than deliberate. Certainly given its multifarious nature, it cannot speak with one voice. Occasionally diplomats do make the news via the treadmill of the public-speaking circuit or because they have breached Australian laws, or more outlandishly, through allegations of having trench-coated spies on their premises posing as cultural or military attachés. The most recent example occurred in 1977 when there was a flurry of speculation and allegations about CIA agents operating from the American Embassy. In this connection it is amusing to read that an envoy of Louis XIV, as long ago as 1716, was under no delusions about an Ambassador's prime duty. He wrote: 'The ambassador has sometimes been called an honourable spy because one of his principal occupations is to discover great secrets;' he advocated 'retrenching all superfluous expense' so that the Ambassador might have funds at his disposal to maintain a secret service to inform him of all that happened in the country in which he was serving.

On rare occasions a Canberra-based diplomat will actually speak out on some contentious issue, as when the British High Commissioner accepted an invitation to appear on television in

1977 to defend his country against statements that it was in a state of 'economic collapse'. Recently, too, the South African Ambassador wrote a newspaper article voicing his regrets at having to leave Canberra after six happy years in the city.

Despite the South African Ambassador's genuine love of Canberra, diplomats cannot make up their minds about it. There is no consensus of opinion on Australia's national capital as a place in which to serve out a few years. Some like it because it is easy to work in; because of its garden setting, the purity of its smog-free air, its proximity to the coast and the snow. Others find it depressingly suburban, a city of petrol stations, shopping centres and vast tracts of look-alike houses, a place where all activity ceases at 6 p.m. There's no Life! they cry. It's Dullsville! So they flee the city at weekends, pointing their cars in the direction of Sydney and sometimes Melbourne, although some have been known to confide that that city is duller even than Canberra. Others shrug their shoulders and say diplomatically that they have served in worse places, it's quite nice, and, gushingly, it's a lovely place to raise a family! Some dismiss suggestions that, really, Canberra is little more than a small country town in an enormously large continent thousands of miles from anywhere and suffers accordingly. 'Life is what you make it', they say platitudinously. 'Diplomats who don't like it here wouldn't be happy wherever they were, even in Paris or New York.'

Whatever they think of the place diplomats do make an impression on Canberra. Some of their homes and office buildings are among the smartest in the capital; others, particularly those from Africa and Asia, bring vivid colour to ceremonial occasions. Their national dress — colourful saris, flowing robes — makes them stand out in a crowd and shows Australians that the world is a much bigger and more diverse place than perhaps they believed.

Some diplomats mix in freely with the local community, others keep to themselves either because they want to or because they have been instructed by their home governments not to get too close to the local population. Many bring their own belongings with them and for those fortunate enough to be invited into their homes a new cultural world of furniture, paintings,



sculpture, glassware and similar *objets d'art* opens up. Most, because of their travels around the world, are excellent conversationalists and many speak several languages, although the ability to converse in English is obviously a prime requirement in Canberra and the city's official circles.

Social life among the top diplomats can be hectic. There is an unceasing round of luncheons, cocktail parties, dinners. Most of the embassies and the high commissions have National Days and usually celebrate with a binge of some sort or another. Most of these days commemorate a memorable occasion in the nation's history; the Americans naturally enough celebrate Independence Day, France Bastille Day. Some, however, are rather quaint: the Irish celebrate St Patrick's Day, the Holy See, the coronation day of Pope Paul VI. All diplomats are members of a body called the Diplomatic Corps, a loose grouping without power and which rarely, if ever, speaks with one voice. The Corps is headed by the longest-serving Ambassador or High Commissioner in Canberra, called the Dean of the Corps. One of the Corps' chief functions is farewelling departing heads of missions and welcoming new ones.

Top diplomats and their wives naturally enough are among the most important social figures in the national capital. Usually they mix only with people of equivalent social standing or better. Further down the line, however, the lesser lights in the embassies and high commissions get out more among the general population of the city. But they, too, have their social niceties. The First Tuesday Group, an unofficial grouping of diplomats other than heads of missions, meets irregularly on the first Tuesday of the month. There is a pleasant lunch and bright conversation. Federal Ministers or Opposition spokesmen often speak on matters of current interest. Another club, the Refugees Club, has a high diplomatic membership although it was formed to provide a meeting place for people serving away from home, whether Australian or foreign. Many diplomats whose duties include contact with the media belong to the National Press Club and meet there often.

But being a diplomat in Canberra can, occasionally, be an

Ceramic exhibition by Hiroe Swen at the Japanese Embassy (Australian Government)

alarming experience. Demonstrators make embassies predictable targets. There have been some terrifying examples of what can happen when the political furies are unleashed, such as bomb attacks on the Russian Embassy. More recently there was a physical attack on an Indian diplomat and his wife. Embassies have been daubed with painted slogans, their staffs abused by demonstrators or terrified by being subjected to barrages of ceaseless telephone calls. One result of all this activity is the presence of uniformed police standing guard outside embassies and residences. Not all diplomatic offices and homes are guarded, indeed the police are now adept at forecasting likely trouble spots and act accordingly. They move around; sometimes they can be seen outside the American Embassy, for example, and then the South African. It depends on the domestic situation in the diplomats' homelands, or if some contentious international situation is in the news. Some embassies, such as the Russians' and the Israelis' are under constant police guard and have tight security systems; but at others you can walk in the front door unhindered.

Political passions can become inflamed even in Canberra's suburbs. After the Vietnam war ended the North Vietnamese erected a large red banner in Red Hill with *Welcome the complete liberation of South Vietnam*, printed in both English and Vietnamese. Neighbours responded with signs reading *In response to the message across the road Communism does not liberate but dominates. We abhor the takeover of South Vietnam, and We'd rather be dead than red.*

Some foreign missions cause amusement to Canberra's population. The Italians began building an Ambassador's residence on a prominent site in Adelaide Avenue near the Prime Minister's Lodge in 1959, and completed it in 1967. A witty newspaper headline, announcing the completion of construction, said: 'Italian Embassy, like Rome, not built in a day'.

Back in 1953 the Press carried sketches of a proposed Pakistan High Commission chancery and residence and quoted the architect, Mr Emil Sodersten (one of the architects who designed the Australian War Memorial in Canberra) as saying: 'The Chancery will be a mixture of eastern and western architectural ideas. It will be topped by a dome.' Mr Sodersten's ideas

did not become reality, however, and nothing more has been heard of the proposed building and its dome. Today the site is occupied by the New Zealand High Commission while the Pakistanis operate from a red-brick, two-storey house in Forrest. They still have not made much progress in their building activities in Canberra because as long ago as 1959 they laid a foundation stone for a High Commission chancery and residence on a lovely site between the South African and French Embassies, backing on to the Commonwealth Club. The stone was laid to the applause of twenty diplomats and a few Federal Ministers, but today, nearly twenty years later, the site remains scrub and bush. Even the foundation stone has disappeared! My search of the site failed to find it and the Pakistanis have no knowledge of where it might be. They may have to have another foundation stone ceremony because another architect is drawing up plans for buildings on the site; a chancery is planned as the first stage and according to the High Commission its architectural style 'will reflect Pakistan's Islamic heritage'. The Ambassador's residence and another house will be built later.

Sophisticated Canberra people and diplomats smiled to themselves, too, when it was announced that the Vatican planned to build a residence for the Apostolic Pro Nuncio (the diplomatic representative of the Holy See) adjacent to the home of the Russian Ambassador. The Vatican was reported to have paid \$150,000 for the site of about one hectare in Monaro Crescent, Red Hill, and the house it contained. This site has an interesting history because two of the former owners of the lease have been distinguished Australian academics, the historian Manning Clark and the physiologist Sir John Eccles.

Foreign nations have solid real estate investments in Canberra in the way of chanceries and residences including houses and flats for staff.

Like them, Australia itself is a property owner in overseas countries, but a modest one. It is represented in 102 cities scattered throughout the world but owns only twenty-two chancery buildings and offices and 329 houses or flats. It leases 108 offices, leases or rents 879 residential dwellings, and owns twenty-one vacant land sites. So it can be seen that the Australian Government's stated objective of achieving maximum



Model, Australia's new Paris Embassy (Department of Administrative Services)

ownership of its overseas property is a long way off.

Foreign countries such as the United States, Thailand and South Africa have enhanced the beauty of Canberra by constructing embassies in the traditional architectural style of these countries. There is no defined Australian architectural style as such, but certainly this country has added to the architectural delights of several overseas cities through its embassy construction. The most outstanding example of this is the new Paris Embassy, an S-shaped wonder on the Left Bank of the Seine which has involved an overall investment of nearly \$25 million. A chancery with living quarters makes up the buildings on the site, which is about 400 metres from another architectural marvel, the Eiffel Tower. It must be an improvement on the previous embassy residence and chancery, described in 1969 as a rabbit warren having offices 'hardly bigger than broom cupboards' and a staircase built for gnomes.

Australia's Embassy in Djakarta has been called a modern-day diplomatic fortress, testifying to the once stormy days of Indonesian foreign policy when relationships with Australia were

strained, to say the least. It has a steel tank-proof fence, bullet-proof windows, an automatic generating plant, two artesian bores and a spacious commissary, all designed to enable it to stand self-contained and secure even if subjected to days of rioting. Indeed, rioting youths of the militant Nationalist Front once stormed its shell.

If the Djakarta Embassy is a diplomatic fortress then Australia's headquarters in Moscow is something different, a merchant's palace built about 1900 and described by the late Australian architect, Robin Boyd, as a 'treasure for the connoisseur, a vast and delightfully simple confection of white plaster and buried light bulbs'. He called it 'one of the most elegant and distinguished smaller buildings in the city'. Regrettably in 1976 fire in the Moscow embassy caused thousands of dollars worth of damage. Another of Australia's missions, the embassy in Bangkok, is built on pylons in the middle of an artificial lake.

Australia's diplomats around the world generally work or live in handsome buildings which, if nothing else, must enhance our prestige overseas. Sometimes there are difficulties. In 1965 the then High Commissioner in London, Sir Alexander Downer, called a 3,000 pounds sculpture in a new office block for Australia House a 'monstrosity'. It was described as a 'green plaster thing that looks like it was jammed through a wall'.

In Japan, the Australian government ran into trouble with its plan to build a seven-storey apartment block for embassy staff in Tokyo. Neighbours, among them a Buddhist priest, a laundry proprietor and the grandson of a great Meiji revolutionary, waged a two-year campaign against the project before the contractors paid out what was described as 'sunlight, noise and vibration' compensation. Construction finally got under way after a colourful ceremony in which Shinto priests purified the land, having calmed and banished evil spirits.

One of the newer Australian posts is in Peking where one Ambassador counselled against the driving of cars because of the consequences that would follow an accident, even if the Australian were in the right. An Australian parliamentary committee was told that: 'the plain fact is that foreigners are wrong in Chinese eyes . . . '.

Australia's oldest overseas mission is the High Commission

in London, regarded as a sort of social club by Australians in that city. At one time it was a simple matter to enter Australia House, but security has become much tighter since the day bandits walked in the front door and held up the sub-treasury. Then there are the Australians who arrive at a mission overseas, claim they are important back home and know various prominent people. They often arrive about noon and expect a free lunch.

The modern-day gypsies who are diplomats engage in diplomacy because they love it. They delight in the excitement of moving to new countries, savouring fresh experiences; they enjoy influencing negotiations with the representatives of other countries (among them the most powerful on earth), the battle of wits, the sensation of being at the heart of things. They enjoy the trappings of prestige, too, the lovely homes, beautiful cars, the company of like-minded people, the holidays in romantic places, the luncheons, dinners, cocktail parties. Some keep notebooks on the cities and countries in which they serve and categorise them as talking points at dinner parties with fellow diplomats; others keep notes of the names of diplomats from other countries whose company they enjoy; it is quite likely they will meet again in some other spot as they progress around the globe. But not all countries are ideal places in which to serve. Some are called hardship posts because of the difficulties associated with living there, others are highly unstable places in which diplomats can become the innocent victims of political terrorism; some diplomats have lost their lives, others have suffered severe injuries.

Usually diplomats stay three or four years in one spot, returning every so often to what they call 'home' and spending a few years at some desk in their Foreign Office. There they can re-orientate themselves and catch up on the happenings at home at first-hand. After three or four years in the one country the issues about which your home government feels so strongly can become blurred, you can find yourself seeing matters from the point of view of the foreign country rather than your own. Hence the pressing need to move on to some new country, away from possibly disturbing influences, or to have a spell back home.

Diplomats enhance the national capital role of Canberra and inject international zest into the political and social whirl of the city. The chanceries and residences they occupy are not only beautiful buildings and houses but of considerable value to the tourist trade in Canberra, a city lacking a diverse range of job opportunities and which earns large sums from the pockets of visitors. The diplomats, chanceries and houses help to give a cosmopolitan air to a city still growing up and a long way from maturity. Although sixty-one of the world's nations are represented in Canberra many of these operate from houses and commercial office blocks. If all these and others as yet unrepresented were to build chanceries and residences, then Canberra would indeed be a city of embassies.



Diplomats and their work

Embassies and high commissions are foreign observation posts on another country's soil. They are occupied by government personnel whose chief function is helping to ensure that relationships between their own country and the nation in which they reside are not jeopardised in any way. They present their country's policies to the host government and report back home explaining matters such as political, defence and economic developments in the host nation. Diplomats are avid readers of official reports, newspapers, magazines and learned journals and speak often with politicians, government officers, businessmen, academics and staff of other embassies. Much of their social life is dictated by this need to know; 'watch, read, listen, report' is the maxim that governs both their working and social lives.

A French Ambassador of long ago, M. François de Callières, had some advice for diplomats which is as pertinent today as when it was first published in 1716, although there is some suspicion that parts of his homily may have been written with tongue in cheek. A diplomat, he wrote, should have 'an observant mind, a spirit of application which refuses to be distracted by pleasures or frivolous amusements, a sound judgment . . . penetration which enables him to discover the thoughts of men . . . an equable humour . . . (and) sufficient control over himself to resist the longing to speak before he has really thought what he shall say'.

Mr. F.A.Y. Djasai, Ghanaian High Commissioner, presents his credentials to the then Governor-General, Sir John Kerr (Australian Government)

M. de Callieres did not ignore the power of women in diplomatic circles: ' . . . he must on no account neglect any opportunity of placing himself and his master in a favourable light in the eyes of these ladies [of court], for it is well known that the power of feminine charm often extends to cover the weightiest resolutions of state. The greatest events have sometimes followed the toss of a fan or the nod of a head . . . '.

But there was a warning too: 'He must never forget that Love's companions are Indiscretion and Impudence, and that the moment he becomes pledged to the whim of a favoured woman, no matter how wise he may be, he runs a grave risk of being no longer master of his own secrets.'

Gambling and drinking, as well as wenching, were fraught with danger. 'If he is too fond of the gaming table, of the wine glass, and of frivolous amusements, he is not to be entrusted with the discharge of high diplomatic duty . . . '.

If you came from the lower classes and, worse still, were ugly, you found no favour in the eyes of M. de Callières: ' . . . an ambassador should be a man of birth and breeding . . . (and) should have a noble presence and a handsome face . . . An evil looking person . . . will receive many insults and suffer much trouble, . . . '.

Finally he warned against the dangers of being verbose. 'The reply of the Spartans to ambassadors from the Isle of Samos stands as a warning for all times against prolixity: "We have forgotten the beginning of your harangue; we paid no heed to the middle of it, and nothing has given us pleasure in it except the end".'

Words, of course, and the ability to use them are a diplomat's principal weapons. Some envoys, as M. de Callières feared, destroy the power of language by their verbosity; others employ words brilliantly to receive and convey information.

Some embassies in Canberra involve themselves heavily in promoting business dealings between their own nation and Australia, particularly trade. Others handle hundreds of passport and visa applications. All concern themselves with projecting a favourable image of their own country in the host nation. Some are diligent in writing to the newspapers and pointing out what they consider to be shortcomings in news

reports about affairs at home. Still others provide news and background material about trade, scientific, technological and cultural developments in their own country.

Another function of embassies is looking after the interests of nationals from home who may be in difficulty in Australia; they may be in trouble with the police, destitute, sick or victims of crime. An indication of the importance of this type of consular activity and the way it consumes time can be gained from figures from Australia's own posts overseas. In 1975, for example, Australian consular officials helped over 100,000 Australian travellers. Their problems covered difficulties caused by language, lost or stolen property, illnesses, accidents, arrests and, in a few cases, repatriation back to Australia.

Most, and possibly all, of the countries with embassies or high commissions in Canberra are represented in at least some of the State capitals. Some of these consulates may be autonomous, but generally they are controlled by the embassy in Canberra. Their functions are similar to those of the embassies but they are not permitted to have independent dealings with the Federal Government. Usually they restrict themselves to contacts with the State governments and people such as businessmen; consular activities take up a good deal of their time.

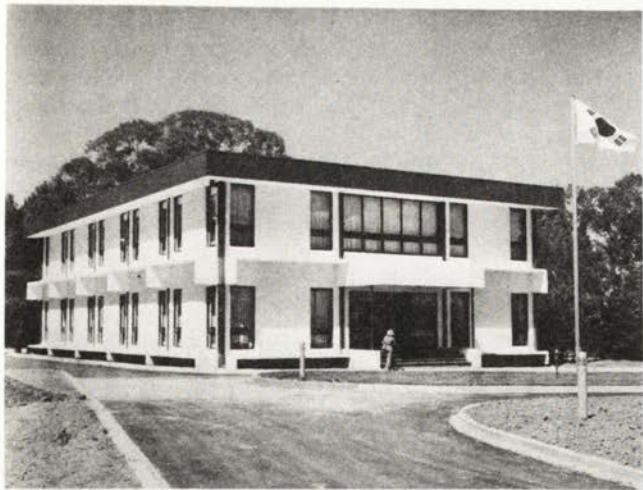
Embassy Belt

Walking is the ideal way in which to appreciate all that Canberra's Embassy Belt has to offer, although perhaps few people would agree with me. Most tourists glide past in cars or buses catching fleeting glimpses of large buildings in unfamiliar (to Australian eyes) architectural styles. Some of these structures are obscured by spreading trees, making a true appreciation of their worth even more difficult to the vehicle borne.

Tourists who use their legs, however, can obtain a better view of the embassies and, if they have an informed guide with them, can listen without interruption to his discourse. And in any case, the ramble only takes about 90 minutes. Worth viewing, too, at a leisurely pace are the different views of Canberra, its lake and surrounding hills, that open out as the walk progresses.

Let us begin where Empire Circuit enters busy Adelaide Avenue. Park your car up on the hill in Empire Circuit near the Japanese Ambassador's residence and walk back a hundred metres or so to look at the flat-roofed chancery of the Japanese Embassy almost butting on to Adelaide Avenue. Directly opposite is the Thai Embassy and residence, splendid buildings in Thai architectural style and benefiting by being built on higher ground than the Japanese Embassy. White gates lead into the Thai Ambassador's residence and one wonders what the noise level must be like inside with traffic belting by on Adelaide Avenue only a few metres away.

Adjoining the Japanese Embassy and connected to it by a Japanese-style garden of sloping lawn, lofty trees and ornamental pond is the residence of His Excellency, The Ambassador for Japan. A neatly clipped hedge marks the boundary of the spreading grounds of the residence, but we can still look in and



Chancery Offices, Korean Embassy

satisfy some of our curiosity. Over the road a driveway leads into the new white-walled Embassy for the Republic of Korea.

Continue on down Empire Circuit, past the intersection with Turrana Street, and on your right is the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany (the western one). It is generally an undistinguished building, but over the road is the Royal Netherlands Embassy, built of pale brick and curving like a half-moon. Directly opposite and down further are empty blocks, undulating, eucalypt-dotted, knee-deep in grass. A few sheep are all that is needed to complete this picture of a tranquil Australian pastoral scene.

Cross Arkana Street and continue down Empire Circuit with suburban houses hugging the rising land on your left. Over Hunter Street is the Canberra Mosque with its tall minaret and golden dome. This vantage point on a rise gives a splendid view of the Captain Cook Memorial Jet, bursting upwards from the bed of Lake Burley Griffin and framed by the spreading limbs of eucalypts, possibly even growing there when this great explorer of the sea discovered the east coast of Australia. Behind the jet

rises the grey-brown bulk of Mt Ainslie, named after James Ainslie, the first overseer of Duntroon Station and wounded survivor of the Battle of Waterloo. A later feat of bravery by this war veteran was his capture of the bushranger John Tennant and his fellow desperado, John Ricks.

Cross over Perth Avenue and lovely views of Lake Burley Griffin and Black Mountain begin to open out. Over on the opposite hillside is the brown-beamed Indonesian Embassy and its accompanying columns of stone figures from Indonesia which warrant a closer inspection, either during your stroll or on another occasion.

If the day is fine and the grass dry, leave Empire Circuit at this point and cross over rough parkland to where Forster Crescent and Darwin Avenue meet. This valley is of historic interest in that it was the site of a bustling shanty town called Westlake built to house workmen engaged in the building of Canberra. Even today reminders of this village can be seen in the shape of various domestic plants and trees. Westlake, like the nearby Royal Canberra Golf Club course drowned by Lake Burley Griffin, has disappeared. But the Causeway, a similar area some distance away, is thriving under a rebuilding program. Children from Westlake used to dive for lost golf balls in



These cottages in the old Westlake area have long since disappeared (Canberra Times)

the Molonglo River and act as caddies for the members. Sometimes urchins would lie in wait in bushes on dogleg holes, pounce on balls hit by out-of-sight golfers, and then innocently sell them to other members back at the clubhouse.

Continue on down Forster Crescent, with empty bush on your left, and enjoy more views of Lake Burley Griffin, Commonwealth Avenue Bridge, the Captain Cook jet and city buildings jutting above thousands of trees. The whole panorama is backed by the brooding bulk of Mt Ainslie. Beneath you, small craft lie at anchor in Lotus Bay, the rippling waters of the lake lapping about their hulls.

High up on your right is the Commonwealth Club, a handsome low-slung building, haunt of Public Service high fliers, politicians, judges, diplomats, barristers, military men, graziers and other notable folk of similar ilk. Next to it is Casey House, which houses the 'Office of Government Ceremonial and Hospitality', part of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. Built in common red brick, it looks decidedly ugly. This government building was constructed about forty years ago with the idea that the Federal Treasurer should have a similar residence to that of The Lodge occupied by the Prime Minister. It was named after Mr R.G. Casey, later Lord Casey, a prominent politician and Governor-General who lived in it for a time. Lady Casey still has a painting of the house, its surroundings, the children and their ponies. She painted it in 1938 and a year later 'added the clouds of impending war' to the work.

Walk under an underpass carrying Flynn Drive across Forster Crescent and stroll on down past the backyards of the Malaysian, Canadian, New Zealand and British High Commissions. New Zealand's building is smart and modern, dramatic even, contrasting with the dreary architectural styles of two of its fellow members of the old white Commonwealth Club, Canada and Britain. On the left is empty parkland and behind it, across the lake, Black Mountain, the new telecommunications tower on its summit piercing the clouds and reducing the scale of this once-proud peak to the size of a pimple on the Limestone Plains. The slim, pointed tower rises 195 metres to the heavens and will have a revolving restaurant as well as various radio and TV transmitting facilities. It looks quite splendid, if one can disre-

gard its ruinous effect on the scale of Black Mountain.

Enter Coronation Drive and marvel at the concentration of players of the Canberra Croquet Club, butting their wooden balls to and fro while the roar of Commonwealth Avenue traffic all but drowns out conversation. The Croquet Club was founded in 1928 and started life on one lawn at the old Hotel Canberra. It was founded to give the wives of Federal parliamentarians something to do while their husbands were occupied in Parliament House, which is why it was located near the House and at the hotel where many of them stayed. The hotel is now an office-block annexe to Parliament House and the Croquet Club occupies three lawns, flat green surfaces that must comprise one of Canberra's most valuable blocks of land, probably worth millions of dollars if it were ever placed on the market. The Croquet Club was one of the city's strongest bastions of female chauvinism, until 1976 when members voted to alter the constitution and admit male members for the first time. Today it has about forty-five members, of whom five are male. An interesting point is that its flagpole was one of those used when Parliament was first opened in Canberra in 1927. The husband of one of the croquet players, perhaps mindful of the future historic value of this humble length of wood, obtained it and presented it to the club.

After leaving the croquet players, turn right into Commonwealth Avenue and walk on, past the British High Commission and the Kiwis next door. A footpath curving through the grounds of the Canadian High Commission gives access to State Circle and a little further on is the Malaysian High Commission, opened by that venerable figure, Tunku Abdul Rahman, in 1959.

For those with a feeling for history, it pays to make a small detour here to a utilitarian concrete shed sitting inconspicuously in a hollow across the road. A signpost with broken lettering tells you that: 'The first surveys of this city were conducted from a camp established here on 2 March 1909. This building was erected in 1911 for the safekeeping of survey records.' An iron chain strung between pipes surrounds this tinroofed pillbox, a reminder yet again of the newness of Canberra.

Coming up State Circle once more you obtain a marvellous



Historic old shed opposite Malaysian High Commission (Author)

view of the South African Embassy, a beautiful example of Cape architecture, white and massive, high on a hill. Of all the embassies in Canberra, this is probably the most spectacular. Fittingly the small street giving access to the embassy and also Casey House is named Rhodes Place, after the English-born South African financier and statesman, Cecil Rhodes. His name also survives in Rhodesia and the Rhodes scholarships at Oxford University. Oddly enough Rhodes is the only person among the thousands commemorated in Canberra's street names who had no direct link with Australia.

Black iron gates flanked by white pillars give access to the South African Embassy. The left-hand pillar bears the coat-of-arms with the motto *Ex unitate vires* (Strength from unity). The coat-of-arms includes symbols alluding to the four provinces. The Cape is represented by the figure of Hope; Natal by two wild beasts; the Orange Free State by the orange tree, and the Transvaal by the trek waggon. A red lion, a springbok, an oryx and the national flower, the protea, also figure on the coat-of-arms.

Protestors against apartheid make the South African Embassy a frequent target. On the day I called protestors occupied a small tent near the entrance and banners proclaiming *Remember Sharpeville* and *Toot your horn against apartheid* were strung up to attract the attention of the drivers of wave upon wave of vehicles hurtling down State Circle. Some, I noticed, did blast their horns in response to the protestors' banners.

Continue walking up State Circle and turn right into Perth Avenue. Ahead of you, in a commanding position on a hillside, is the American Embassy, next to South Africa's the most pleasing of all the Canberra embassies with its distinctive Colonial Virginia style. On your right is the rear of the South African Ambassador's residence. Ignore the entrance to Moonah Place and walk on up Perth Avenue where a neat iron and brick fence guards the rolling grounds of the American Embassy and the Ambassador's residence. Perhaps a tennis party is in full swing with shouts and laughter bursting down from the hilltop.

By now you have reached the flat-topped, nondescript offices of the French Embassy and you notice its 1914-1918 Memorial 'To those Australians who fell on French soil. In memory of their sacrifice for the freedom of all peoples'. The Memorial consists of a pillar surmounted by a motif of gilded bronze 'representing Memory carrying a torch recalling the lasting nature of this memory'. Inscribed on the memorial are familiar names from an increasingly remote past: Armentieres, Amiens, the Somme, Mont St Quentin. It was unveiled in 1961 by the then Australian Prime Minister, Robert Menzies, and General Z. Pechkoff, described as a special envoy of the President of France.

Past the French offices are the handsome grounds and buildings of the French Ambassador's residence, glimpsed through trees. Stone entrance gates bear the French coat-of-arms on either side.

You are now back at Darwin Avenue where you can walk down for a closer look at the Indonesian Embassy and, next door, the Embassy of Finland under construction. After viewing these, head back towards the Canberra Mosque silhouetted above the trees. Black Mountain is on your right now, above Lake Burley Griffin. Cross Perth Avenue, enter Empire Circuit, cross Hunter Street and turn into Arkana Street on your left.

Climb a small hill and on your left is the unpretentious office of the Royal Belgian Embassy; behind it and slightly to the right is the Ambassador's lolly pink and white-shuttered residence.

The compound of the American Embassy is next door so walk on a little, turn left into Moonah Place, and find the embassy rising before you on your left. Below it, a road leads into the Philippines Embassy, obscured by pines and eucalypts. Retrace your steps a short distance and enter Turrana Street. Further up this street a policeman in a guard box keeps a watchful eye on traffic moving past the Israeli Embassy with the distinctive emblem of the State of Israel on one wall.

On the left is the Royal Swedish Embassy, hidden in large grounds, and, past it on the left, the new Polish Embassy. Its brick and concrete construction gives it a solid, massive appearance.

Near this point Turrana Street enters Empire Circuit and a couple of hundred metres away is your car outside the Japanese Ambassador's residence.

International Row

Canberra's 'International Row', Mugga Way, is a road with a split personality. About half the street, first settled in the mid-twenties, consists of huge tree-dotted blocks, in their remoteness hinting of a more gracious, quiet, sedate mode of living. The houses, however, are mostly undistinguished, although some are very large; a few are shabby and unkempt. The second half of the street, settled in the early 1960s, has smaller blocks and the houses are smarter, even ostentatious. Lawns are trim, the trees more modest in size, not as overwhelming. There is an impression of openness here, less emphasis on the need for the seclusion provided by the spreading pines, poplars, willows and eucalypts and massive hedges of 'old' Mugga Way.

Locals dub Mugga Way 'International Row' because of the large number of diplomats who either live or work in the street. The representatives of no fewer than fifteen nations have offices or homes along Mugga Way, sometimes both. National flags droop from flagpoles in front of the homes and offices, and Mercedes and Volvos are conspicuous in the driveways.

The 'Mugga' of Mugga Way is an Aboriginal name long associated with the area while the nomenclature of the streets running off Mugga Way is quite interesting in itself: Baudin, Moresby, Torres, Flinders, La Perouse and Vancouver commemorate long-dead explorers or navigators associated with Australia; Alexander, Francis, Reliance, Zeehan and Tamar some of the notable ships in Australia's early history.

Mugga Way has an inconspicuous beginning, starting as a kink in the intersection of Melbourne Avenue and Strickland, Gawler and Ferguson Crescents, then swinging hard left and running along Red Hill (a name probably suggested by the red



Quiet moment in tree-lined Mugga Way

soil of the area) as far as Hindmarsh Drive. Its total length is 3.4 kilometres and for those inclined to leave their cars it can be walked comfortably in one and a half hours.

Walking is the best way to appreciate Mugga Way. The thickly bush-clad grounds in the 'old' section abound in rosellas, magpies and galahs and there is a feeling of stateliness, grandeur even, in the size of the blocks (the biggest is 1.11 hectares, many are about half a hectare). As the road climbs higher sweeping views of the plain on which Canberra is built open out; blue hills rise in the far distance, Lake Burley Griffin winks in the sunshine. Hedges taller than a man hide some of the houses from view while others depend for privacy on the merging together of clumps of tall shrubs. Some of these barriers spread over the footpath, so a pedestrian should watch his step. Behind the street rise the slopes of Red Hill on which cattle sometimes graze.

Actually pedestrians are as rare as driveway Holdens along Mugga Way. Road traffic is almost ceaseless (a traffic count of 5,000 vehicles a day in the 'old' section was registered in June

1975) and this restless thrum is one of the few disadvantages of living in this princely street. Up higher near Hindmarsh Drive, the traffic count along Mugga Way was 2,500, but the roar from busy Hindmarsh is relentless.

With some of the residences, national emblems denote the country of the occupier. Thus New Zealand's residence has a black kiwi at both entrances to its large property, while Canada's has a maple leaf. Some missions in Mugga Way run offices from their premises but they will be relocating these chanceries over the next ten years following an instruction from the Australian Government that chanceries located in private dwellings are breaking the lease purpose clause governing use of the land and must be moved.

The character of the street may change further too if medium-density housing proposals for large, undeveloped blocks of empty land on the top side of Mugga Way go ahead. Some small, shabby houses on large blocks in 'old' Mugga Way appear to be resigned to being plundered by the subdivider while on one smaller residential block near the start of the Way the only building, an old shed, lurches drunkenly, waiting for a gale to blow it down completely.

The government agency responsible for the development of Canberra, the National Capital Development Commission, opposes the cutting up of large blocks in Mugga Way and adjoining streets. It does agree, however, that depending on the size of the block more than one residential unit could be built on it under the Strata Title system rather than by formal subdivision. A firm decision has yet to be made, but such a policy would help preserve the character of the 'old' area while giving some relief to residents facing huge rates and maintenance bills. Another possibility is that organisations could buy up some of the larger houses for institutional use although this could conflict with other residents' wishes and may require alterations to leases governing the use of the particular blocks of land.

The fact that the government wants diplomats to stop working from residential premises indicates that a change in lease purpose to allow institutional use of some buildings could be contradictory and difficult to achieve.

It is a curious thing, but Mugga Way, although an unusual

street by Canberra standards because of the people who live in it and the size of some of its blocks, paradoxically reflects the city itself. The architecture of most of the houses occupying some of the richest and choicest real estate in the National Capital is bland and unexciting although some of the newer homes do have a pretentious air about them. The atmosphere of the older area, where mansions hide behind their barriers of hedges and trees, does give an impression of the secret and mysterious world of the influential, the rich, the powerful.

But further up, the visitor, if he ignored the location and the magic name, Mugga Way, could be in any one of a dozen Canberra suburbs. There is an air of cosy domesticity about it all, an impression of 'Well, we've made it'; none of the reputed Beautiful People of diplomacy and big business are to be seen. Dare I say it, but Mugga Way reflects Canberra itself, rather dull and bourgeois, but pleasantly so.

Police on guard

Police guard boxes of wood and dark-tinted glass are now a familiar sight at several embassies in Canberra and also at the Prime Minister's Lodge. But they are of a comparatively recent origin and grew out of agitation by the police for better facilities for those on guard duty.

The Australian Government, under the terms of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, has a responsibility to protect representatives of foreign powers living in Australia, but it was not until 1968 that it was found necessary to place police guards on an embassy in Canberra. This was at the time of the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia when guards were placed on the Russian Embassy. There have been several incidents at this embassy and there are now two guard boxes at the front, a small police station at the rear, and another guard box at the Russian Ambassador's residence. Other guard boxes are at the Israeli Embassy, the Yugoslav Embassy, and the residence of the Yugoslav Ambassador.

The Police Station at the rear of the Russian Embassy is Canberra's smallest and contains a muster room, a kitchen and a toilet. It is used mainly by police guarding the embassy, but is available for other police needs in emergencies.

The guard boxes are of small construction and pleasant design and provide shelter and warmth for the police on duty who, before they were introduced, had to stand out in all weathers or seek the comfort of cars, often unavailable. Restlessness among the police erupted into agitation for adequate facilities in 1970 and as some consolation they were paid an extra \$1 an hour in 1971. Travelling toilets were introduced in that year but were withdrawn, the police being affronted at the suggestion that



Police guardbox, Israeli Embassy (Author)

they should use such a facility. The first of the guard boxes were introduced in late 1972 and although they do not contain toilet facilities, reduced shifts have taken care of that difficulty!

Opinion on the effectiveness of the guards varies. Embassy people appreciate their presence and claim that just by being present they are a deterrent to wrong-doers. Some police, however, say that the guards only satisfy a diplomatic requirement and that their chances of actually stopping someone bent on trouble are practically nil.

The boxes can be moved if required and police are placed on guard at other embassies if the changing political situation warrants this protection.

Embassies by night

Embassies and high commissions in Canberra take on a new dimension at night. Buildings which can appear grim and forbidding by day, such as the British High Commission, become softer, gentler at night. This transformation is caused by the clever use of floodlighting and for the tourist and the visitor it can only be a matter for regret that many of the diplomatic buildings remain in darkness.

The most spectacular of all the floodlit missions is the South African Embassy. For motorists coming up State Circle it makes a dramatic picture standing out high on a hill, white, sharp and clean against the blackness of the sky. Up close, from outside the spiked gates of the embassy, the dozens of brown-shuttered windows provide a pleasant contrast with the purity of the whiteness of the walls.

Subdued lighting of the British and Canadian High Commissions reduces the starkness of the outlines of these buildings, while between them the New Zealand High Commission glows fiercely, a golden sun in the middle of the night. The Swedish Embassy is exceedingly beautiful from a distance, while from its gates the black arms of eucalypts stand out vividly against the pale orange of its walls.

The United States Embassy is a poetic study in orange, white and black. Even by day these buildings have an age-old mellowness about them caused by their design and the maturing red bricks, and at night this impression is heightened by the artistry of the floodlighting.

Use of floodlights, apart from enhancing Canberra's beauty, provides another security measure and this is particularly evident at the Israeli and Indonesian missions. The Israeli Em-

bassy, lacking in style by day, makes a romantic picture at night, with trees and shrubs silhouetted against the building and the sky. The grounds are well-lit and offer no concealed avenue for an intruder. Across the road the soft lighting of the Polish Embassy cannot disguise the strength of its massive construction.

The blazing orange lights in the front of the Indonesian Embassy turn night into day, while the back is floodlit also. A thick cloak of eucalypts hovers protectively over the rear of the embassy while rows of statues from Bali, illuminated by tiny lights, make a charming, intriguing picture.

The Thai, Japanese and Italian Embassies are among those that remain in darkness and this is a pity because each building is quite distinctive and if floodlit could only add to the loveliness of Canberra by night.

Where they are

Sixty-one nations or States are represented in Canberra and have appointed Ambassadors or High Commissioners to Australia. Nine other countries are represented by diplomats also accredited to other nations such as Japan and India and living in those countries.

Addresses of the missions represented in Canberra and of their Ambassadors or High Commissioners, and the names of non-resident missions, are:

Afghanistan:

(represented from Tokyo)

Argentina

Chancery:

12 Daly Street, Deakin

Residence:

58 Mugga Way, Red Hill

Austria

Chancery:

107 Endeavour Street, Red Hill

Residence:

19 Talbot Street, Forrest

Bangladesh

Chancery:

43 Hampton Circuit,
Yarralumla

Residence:

63 Mugga Way, Red Hill

Belgium

Chancery:

19 Arkana Street, Yarralumla

Residence:

19 Arkana Street, Yarralumla

Brazil

Chancery:

Canberra House, 40 Marcus
Clarke St, Canberra City

Residence:

95 Flinders Way, Red Hill

Britain

Chancery:

Commonwealth Avenue,
Canberra

Residence:

Westminster House, 76
Empire Circuit, Deakin

Bulgaria

(represented from Jakarta)

Burma

Chancery:

85 Mugga Way, Red Hill

Residence:

57 Mugga Way, Red Hill

Canada

Chancery:

Commonwealth Avenue,

Canberra

Residence:

32 Mugga Way, Red Hill

Chile

Chancery:

93 Endeavour Street, Red Hill

Residence:

34 Parkhill Street, Pearce

China

Chancery:

247 Federal Highway,

Watson, Canberra

Residence:

247 Federal Highway,

Watson, Canberra

Cyprus

Chancery:

37 Beagle Street, Red Hill

Czechoslovakia

(represented from Jakarta)

Denmark

Chancery:

24 Beagle Street, Red Hill

Residence:

9 Baudin Street, Forrest

Egypt

Chancery:

125 Monaro Crescent, Red

Hill

Residence:

93 Flinders Way, Red Hill

Fiji

Chancery:

9 Beagle Street, Red Hill

Residence:

97 Mugga Way, Red Hill

Finland

Chancery:

83 Endeavour Street, Red Hill

Residence:

54 Endeavour Street, Red Hill

France

Chancery:

6 Darwin Avenue, Yarralumla

Residence:

6 Darwin Avenue, Yarralumla

German Democratic

Republic

Chancery:

12 Beagle Street, Red Hill

Residence:

66 Pridham Street, Farrer

Federal Republic of

Germany

Chancery:

119 Empire Circuit,

Yarralumla

Residence:

8 Turrana Street, Yarralumla

Ghana

Chancery:

44 Endeavour Street, Red Hill

Residence:

3 Stonehaven Crescent, Red Hill

Greece

Chancery:

22 Arthur Circle, Forrest

Residence:

19 Tennyson Crescent,
Forrest

Guatemala

(represented from Tokyo)

Holy See

Office:

St Anne's Convent, Key
Street, Campbell

Residence:

St Anne's Convent, Key
Street, Campbell

Hungary

Chancery:

79 Hopetoun Circuit,
Yarralumla

Residence:

4 Penrhyn Street, Red Hill

India

Chancery:

92 Mugga Way, Red Hill

Residence:

34 Mugga Way, Red Hill

Indonesia

Chancery:

8 Darwin Avenue, Yarralumla

Residence:

16 Monaro Crescent, Red Hill

Iran

Chancery:

14 Torres Street, Red Hill

Residence:

18 Mugga Way, Red Hill

Iraq

(represented from Tokyo)

Ireland

Chancery:

2nd floor, Bank House, Civic
Square, Canberra City

Residence:

263 La Perouse Street, Red
Hill

Israel

Chancery:

6 Turrana Street, Yarralumla

Residence:

6 Turrana Street, Yarralumla

Italy

Chancery:

12 Grey Street, Deakin

Residence:

78 National Circuit, Deakin

Japan

Chancery:

112 Empire Circuit,
Yarralumla

Residence:

114 Empire Circuit,
Yarralumla

Jordan

Chancery:

20 Roebuck Street, Red Hill

Residence:

6 Timbarra Crescent,
O'Malley**Korea**

Chancery:

113 Empire Circuit,
Yarralumla

Residence:

38 Mugga Way, Red Hill

Kuwait

(represented from Tokyo)

Laos

Chancery:

113 Kitchener Street, Garran

Residence:

26 Flanagan Street, Garran
(*Chargé d'Affaires a.i.*)**Lebanon**

Chancery:

1 Arkana Street, Yarralumla

Residence:

1 Stonehaven Crescent, Red
Hill**Malaysia**

Chancery:

71 State Circle, Yarralumla

Residence:

Malaysia House, 2 Talbot St,
Forrest**Malta**

Chancery:

261 La Perouse Street, Red
Hill

Residence:

6 Melbourne Avenue, Deakin

Mauritius

Chancery:

c/- Canberra Rex Hotel,
Northbourne Ave, Braddon

Residence:

44 Mugga Way, Red Hill

Mexico

Chancery:

1 Beagle Street, Red Hill

Residence:

9 Melbourne Avenue, Forrest

**Mongolian People's
Republic**

(represented from Tokyo)

Nepal

(represented from Tokyo)

Netherlands, The

Chancery:

120 Empire Circuit,
Yarralumla

Residence:

16 Mugga Way, Red Hill

New Zealand

Chancery:

Commonwealth Avenue,
Canberra

Residence:

21 Mugga Way, Red Hill

Nigeria

Chancery:

27 State Circle, Deakin

Residence:

25 Endeavour Street, Red Hill

Norway

Chancery:

3 Zeehan Street, Red Hill

Residence:

80 Mugga Way, Red Hill

Pakistan

Chancery:

59 Franklin Street, Forrest

Residence:

15 Canterbury Crescent,
Deakin**Papua New Guinea**

Chancery:

97 Endeavour Street, Red Hill

Residence:

20 Brassey Street, Deakin

Peru

Chancery:

104 La Perouse Street,
Griffith

Residence:

8 Daly Street, Deakin

Philippines

Chancery:

1 Moonah Place, Yarralumla

Residence:

1 Moonah Place, Yarralumla

Poland

Chancery:

7 Turrana Street, Yarralumla

Residence:

7 Turrana Street, Yarralumla

Portugal

Chancery:

13 Charlotte Street, Red Hill

Residence:

5 Mugga Way, Forrest

Romania

Chancery:

3 Tyagarah Street, O'Malley

Residence:

3 Tyagarah Street, O'Malley
(*Chargé d'Affaires a. i.*)**Senegal**

(represented from New Delhi)

Singapore

Chancery:

81 Mugga Way, Red Hill

Residence:

8 Mugga Way, Red Hill

South Africa

Chancery:

Cnr State Circle, Rhodes
Place, Yarralumla

Residence:

South Africa House, State
Circle, Canberra**Soviet Union**

Chancery:

78 Canberra Avenue, Griffith

Residence:

91 Flinders Way, Red Hill

Spain

Chancery:

8 Timbarra Crescent,

O'Malley

Residence:

27 Endeavour Street, Red Hill

Sri Lanka

Chancery:

35 Empire Circuit, Forrest

Residence:

Sri Lanka House, 85 Empire
Circuit, Deakin

Sweden

Chancery:

Turrana Street, Yarralumla

Residence:

Turrana Street, Yarralumla

Switzerland

Chancery:

7 Melbourne Avenue, Forrest

Residence:

7 Melbourne Avenue, Forrest

Thailand

Chancery:

111 Empire Circuit,

Yarralumla

Residence:

111 Empire Circuit,

Yarralumla

Turkey

Chancery:

60 Mugga Way, Red Hill

Residence:

60 Mugga Way, Red Hill

United States

Chancery:

Moonah Place, Yarralumla

Residence:

Moonah Place, Yarralumla

Uruguay

Chancery:

22 Bougainville Street,

Manuka

Residence:

8 Woodgate Street, Farrer
(*Chargé d'Affaires a.i.*)

Vietnam

Chancery:

92 Endeavour Street, Red Hill

Residence:

92 Endeavour Street, Red Hill

Yugoslavia

Chancery:

11 Nuyts Street, Red Hill

Residence:

31 Fishburn Street, Red Hill

Looking at the embassies

United States of America

Approaching the front door of this embassy is a simple matter. There are no gates, no guards. But for all that a visitor should be aware that he is under unremitting surveillance. Somewhat incongruously for this charming building, dating in style from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a television security camera from the second half of the twentieth century is recording his movements from the right-hand side of the front door. He is also under the stony gaze of the first President of the United States, George Washington, whose bust looks down from a niche above the entrance.

Once inside the building the visitor must state his name and business to a US Marine, usually young, fresh-faced, alert, one of a smartly-uniformed detachment on guard at the embassy twenty-four hours a day.

The United States Government chose an English Georgian style of architecture (modified and adapted for use in the southern parts of the United States) for its Australian mission, because it wanted to show Australians something typically American that would nevertheless blend well with the atmosphere of Canberra. It has succeeded handsomely. The stately buildings were inspired by those designed by Sir Christopher Wren for Williamsburg, the capital of the colony of Virginia from 1699 to 1780. In those years Williamsburg ranked with Boston, Philadelphia and Charleston (South Carolina) as a cultural, social and political centre in the New World.

Australian marble in black and white squares, quarried on the New South Wales coast and in other parts of the country, was

Sweeping driveway, United States Ambassador's residence





George Washington's bust looks down on callers at the United States Embassy

used in the construction of the main entrance and hallways. Other floors are of Australian tallow wood. Most of the embassy bricks, now mellowing with increasing age, were kilned in Canberra, but additional bricks from the same source were not available in 1959 when the chancery was expanded by constructing wings on either side of the centre building. So matching bricks were imported from the United States, from a source near Williamsburg.

The most interesting room in the mission is the office of the Ambassador himself, although it and the other offices are not open for viewing by tourists. For the Canberra office of the Australian representative of the most powerful nation on earth, it is surprisingly small, modest even. Tiny windows and heavy curtains give it a darkened, subdued air. Behind the Ambassador's desk hang 'Old Glory' and the State Department flag, and there are the usual bookshelves and easy chairs. Personal mementoes include a matrix of the front page of the *Atlanta Journal*, on which the Ambassador's appointment was an-

nounced. Outside the office, black and white official portraits of former holders of the position line the walls.

About 100 Americans work for the United States mission in Canberra, most of them at the embassy although a few officers are scattered about the city. The embassy controls other offices in Australia, a consulate-general in Sydney and Melbourne, a consulate in Perth and Brisbane, and is regarded as a medium-sized mission by American standards.

One of its sections, the United States Information Service, now occupies ground floor space in the National Press Club in the nearby district of Barton, having left behind cramped quarters at the embassy. The Service deals with an average of 350 inquiries a month. Although the USIS does not have a lending library, it does have a large reference library on United States government and politics. It also possesses an extensive range of journals and audio-visual equipment, but does not have any information for prospective tourists.



Security camera, United States Embassy (Author)

Israel

The Israeli Embassy in Turrana Street, Yarralumla, is a modest building but it does have one or two features that take it out of the ordinary. The first is that the emphasis on security is tighter here than at any other embassy in Canberra; the other is the striking emblem of the State of Israel proudly fixed to the front wall of the Embassy.

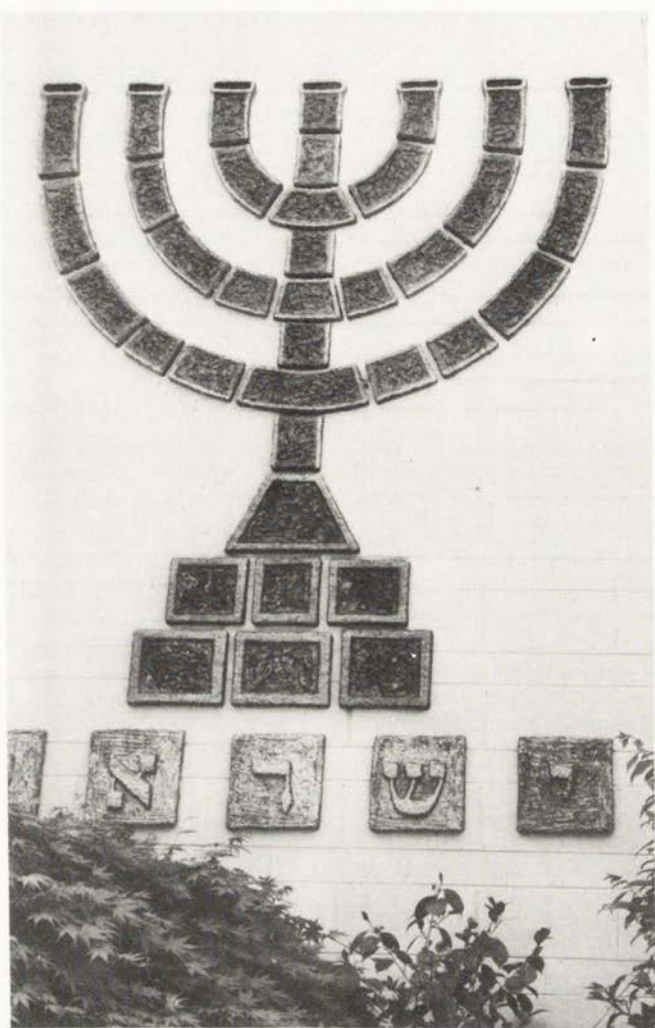
This emblem portrays a traditional menorah or candelabra although the Canberra version is not surrounded by the usual olive branches, the symbol of peace. The emblem is a symbol of the Jewish heritage and representations of it are affixed to each of the overseas missions established by the Israelis since the Jewish State was created after World War II.

The menorah in Canberra is a stylised replica of that seized by the Romans when they destroyed the Second Temple in Jerusalem in the year A.D. 70 while crushing a great revolt by the Jewish population. The Romans erected the Arch of Titus in Rome following the conquest of Judaea and included in it a panel showing the menorah as part of the spoils in a triumphal procession.

The Israeli Embassy is one of several in Canberra to have Commonwealth police guard boxes outside and on the day I called I was challenged immediately I moved from my car. A strict security routine followed and I was told all visitors have to undergo the same procedure unless they are known to embassy staff. It was a sobering experience and revealed that even in this country law-abiding representatives of other nations can be forced to go about their business in fear and apprehension. The Israelis themselves were embarrassed and apologetic about the security measures, but there was no doubt at all that they considered them necessary.

The embassy in Canberra is small in personnel as well as in size of building and has only three representatives from Israel itself. Their chief dealings with the Australian Government

concern foreign policy issues. Trade matters are handled by a consulate in Sydney where there is also a tourist office.



National symbol, Israeli Embassy

Sweden

It is fitting that the Royal Swedish Embassy should have been one of the first overseas missions established in Canberra because a Swedish naturalist, Dr Daniel Carl Solander, was a prominent member of Captain Cook's expedition to eastern Australia in May 1770. So it can be seen that this small country of about 8.5 million people and 90,000 lakes has had links with Australia since the earliest days. Solander has been honoured in Canberra by having a street named after him, Solander Place in Yarralumla, the same suburb as that in which the embassy is located.

Australia is a valuable market for Swedish goods and has also proved attractive to Swedish settlers. Migration from Sweden to Australia began more than 125 years ago and today there are around 7,000 migrants of Swedish descent living in Australia.

Work on building the embassy in Canberra began on a 3 hectare site in 1947 but, because of the post-war shortage of materials and labour, was not completed until 1951. The building was really a triumph of co-operation because more than thirty Swedish firms contributed to the furniture and fittings, the design of the building was developed by Australian architects from Swedish sketch plans, Australian and Swedish materials were used in the construction, a small carving was executed by a Danish carver settled in Australia, and stonework laid under the direction of an old Scotsman.

The final result was worth waiting for, because in 1952 the building won a prominent architectural award, the Sir John Sulman award, the first building in Canberra to be so honoured and the first owned by a foreign power.

Another interesting point about this structure is that the Commonwealth Government, besieged by post-war difficulties, insisted that accommodation be provided on the site for

Swedish Embassy (National Capital Development Commission)



every member of the embassy staff. Proposals for several separate buildings were abandoned because of high costs and instead a single, very long, but beautifully proportioned building was constructed. This comprises the Ambassador's residence, the chancery with three staff flats above it, and the Secretary's residence. The caretaker lives in a small cottage nearby. Growth in links between the two countries, however, has caught up with this imaginative structure and extensions and reconstruction of the interior are planned.

Swedish materials are prominent in the furnishings and fittings at the embassy with one of the most striking pieces being a carved green Kolmorden fireplace. Doors in satin-finished stainless steel came from the famous steel product town of Eskilstuna in Sweden, and two sets of etched glass doors — the main entrance doors picturing Sweden, the Atlantic Ocean, the Pacific Ocean and Australia, and a charming and delicate pair of doors with vignettes of Swedish culture — were designed and made by the noted glassware firm of Orrefors in Sweden. Other fittings and furniture in the embassy underline the quality of Swedish craftsmanship and its harmonious relationship with Australian materials, particularly in the floors where Australian timbers and decorated square bricks were used with skill and feeling.

This graceful building is hidden from the general gaze by eucalypts and conifers, some of which have reached massive size. Privacy is further enhanced by the fact that access can only be gained along a hedge-lined driveway. The embassy says with disarming candour that many of the existing trees were retained because escalating building costs left nothing for landscaping. The old Department of the Interior which administered Canberra for some years came to the rescue, however, and provided thousands of plants including trees and hedges free of cost. Today the result in terms of beauty and serenity amply repays this generosity.

China

The Chinese Embassy in Canberra is unusual by the diplomatic standards of the national capital in that it is housed in a former motel although at first the Ambassador followed tradition by having his residence in Red Hill. He now lives at the embassy.

The embassy was formerly the Commodore Motel located on the Federal Highway in the suburb of Watson. It backs onto another motel and on one side adjoins a drive-in theatre whose screen pokes above the trees not far from the embassy's front gate. A brick and iron fence runs along the front of the embassy while on the city side a wire-mesh fence topped by barbed wire separates the embassy from a strip of empty ground.

The Chinese lived in the Canberra Rex Hotel for some time



China's Embassy is located in a former motel

before reportedly paying \$1 million for the Commodore Motel in 1973. It was said to have 105 suites, a large dining room, heated swimming pool, tennis court, a children's play area, and 'isolated recreation grounds'.

Apparently the Chinese were not altogether satisfied with their purchase because in 1974 newspapers reported that the Minister for the Capital Territory would not approve the acquisition of a hotel-motel, the Parkroyal near the centre of Canberra, as a new site for the Chinese Embassy. A spokesman for the embassy, however, denied that it was interested in buying the hotel-motel. The Minister's objection to the attempted purchase was based on the ground that there was a shortage of tourist accommodation in Canberra, and that the use of another hotel by a diplomatic mission would aggravate the shortage.

It is difficult to ascertain whether the Chinese wanted to buy the Parkroyal or not because of all the embassies I approached in the course of preparing this book, only the Chinese refused to be interviewed for it. They were sent a copy of this text and only wanted one small change made.

Before they bought the Commodore Motel the Chinese did consider purchasing an apartment complex in the suburb of Mawson facetiously called the 'Great Wall of China' by locals because of its grey concrete-brick walls.

The Chinese Embassy is set in pleasant surroundings in Watson, easier on the eye perhaps than those of the new Australian Embassy in Peking where the district, sometimes referred to as the Diplomatic Ghetto, is said to be 'antiseptic in character' with buildings 'all in a similar noncommittal style'. Australia's Embassy is on the extreme edge of the San Li Tun district, next to a commune.

New Zealand High Commission

New Zealand diplomats regard Canberra as a plum post and understandably so. The two countries are English-speaking bastions in the South Pacific sharing a common ancestry. There are no language difficulties and there is a common interest in a similar cultural heritage and sports such as rugby union, rugby league, cricket, tennis and squash. Then there is New Zealand's proximity to Australia, meaning that diplomats can make easy trips home or have relatives and friends visit them without difficulty.

New Zealand was one of the first nations to open a diplomatic mission in Canberra, in 1943 when the war against Japan had brought the two nations even closer together, but it was not until November 1973 that its own handsome high commission



New Zealand High Commission (Author)

building in Commonwealth Avenue was opened by the then New Zealand Prime Minister, Mr Kirk.

Its setting next to the staid, barrack-like offices of the Canadian and British High Commissions give even more emphasis to its dramatic, modern style of architecture although a brochure on the building says it 'has been designed to be in harmony with its neighbours'. It is certainly not in harmony, thank goodness. White precast concrete columns support the copper-clad roof and bronze-tinted glass in the many-windowed building helps reduce solar heat and glare as do unusual 1.5 metre deep 'fins' which provide vertical shading. At night the clever use of lighting gives it a warm, golden look.

New Zealand materials, especially timber and marble, were used in the construction of the interior of the building and a deep, dark-brown New Zealand carpet covers the floor in the reception area which includes a substantial New Zealand-orientated library. At the rear there are pleasant views across Lake Burley Griffin to Black Mountain.

The Canberra high commission is one of New Zealand's largest overseas missions, ranking with London, Washington and Tokyo. This is understandable in view of the close political, trade and defence links between the two countries and the substantial tourist traffic flowing both ways. The other New Zealand offices in this country are, while largely autonomous, under the control of the high commission in Canberra.

New Zealand owns a number of houses in Canberra, among them the High Commissioner's residence in Mugga Way, for which it paid in 1943 what is a ludicrously small sum these days, \$11,000. It has the lease of a site on the corner of Empire Circuit and Ankara Street in Yarralumla for a new residence, but although the New Zealand Government has developed plans for a modern-style residence on the site, economic reasons have delayed a start on construction.

Belgium

Belgium's diplomatic links with Australia go back as far as 1850 when it opened a consulate-general's office in Sydney, but it was not until 1961 that its official chancery was opened in Canberra. A year before that the residence was completed on a 4 hectare site on a hill behind the chancery in Yarralumla.

Trade is the chief prop of the Australian-Belgium relationship and has been for a century or more. In the 1860s Belgian wool-buying firms set up offices in Australia and helped open up the European continent as a market for Australian wool. These links were enhanced in 1879-80 when a large group of Belgian manufacturers took part in the international exhibitions in Sydney and Melbourne.

These days Belgium is still a substantial buyer of Australian



Neat gardens surround the Belgian Ambassador's residence

wool and also takes raw sugar, sheepskins and various minerals. In return Australia buys such things as machinery, glass, chemicals, photographic equipment and textiles.

Belgium is proud of the fact that it is Australia's main supplier of a girl's 'best friend', diamonds, and oddly enough ranks high on the list of suppliers of imitation ivory balls for billiards, snooker and kelly pool, among other sporting equipment.

Its chancery building is a modest structure but the Ambassador's residence is another matter and is, like so many other residences of the heads of foreign missions, a showplace of his country's culture.

Richly coloured tapestries decorate the white walls together with paintings in water colours and oils. The most striking of these is 'The coast near Ostend' which hangs in the drawing-room. It was painted in the nineteenth century by the Belgian painter François Musin (1820-1888) and is a marvellous study of fishing boats, sea and coastline. Its brilliant colours and general impression of light and freshness contrast quite dramatically with the dark and sombre tones of another large painting, 'Dog Market' by the Brussels painter Joseph Stevens (1819-1892).

Furniture in the reception rooms and main bedroom was specially made in Belgium for the embassy and carpets in the hall, study and dining room were made in the Belgian town of Tournai. Crystal and bronze chandeliers and wall brackets are also Belgian products.

The residence is a combination of modern and Flemish architectural styles and has an air of peaceful charm about it. This impression is enhanced by the windows of small panel glass and white shutters which are such a distinctive feature of many Belgian houses in the cities and countryside. Shutters are widely used in Belgium to give protection against the bitter cold of winter and the sun of summer whereas at the embassy they are decorative.

The Belgian mission is a small one of only three nationals, but there are consulates in all of the State capitals while trade representatives operate in three of the States and interest themselves in the other three. There is also a tourist office in Sydney.

South Africa

Canberra is fortunate to possess such an example of graceful architecture as the South African Embassy because normally South Africa does not build overseas. The chancery and residence, both of them buildings of charm and dignity, occupy a prominent site in Yarralumla with the white-walled chancery dominating the hillside above busy State Circle.

Demonstrators mingle frequently outside the embassy and have invaded the grounds on at least one occasion. This was in 1971 when protestors daubed 'smash apartheid' across the front wall of the chancery. With this in mind, then, it is astonishingly easy to enter the grounds and walk in the front door. Security seems to be quite lax in comparison with measures taken at some of the other embassies.

Inside the chancery a cabinet in the foyer displays South African coins, pottery and bead work and there is a replica of the Cullinan Diamond, the biggest diamond ever found. It weighed 3,106 carats in its rough state when discovered in 1905 in the



Chancery, South African Embassy (Author)

Premier mine in the Transvaal. The diamond was bought by the Transvaal government and presented to King Edward VII. Cut into nine larger stones and about 100 smaller ones it now forms part of the British regalia. One of the stones, the pear-shaped Star of Africa, of 530 carats, is set in the English sceptre. Another, the 317-carat Cullinan II, a square brilliant, is the most valuable stone in the Imperial state crown.

Old Cape Dutch furniture in the foyer of the South African chancery includes a solid wooden bench and this room and the offices are large and airy with high ceilings. Plaques on walls in the library commemorate surface vessels and submarines of the South African Navy.

South Africa has a trade commission in Melbourne and a tourist organisation in Sydney and despite the demonstrators with their abuse there is an impression that its diplomats appreciate the Canberra/Australia posting. One said the city was similar to South Africa's capital Pretoria 'a quiet easy-going dignified city', like Canberra seemingly built in a huge garden. In an unusual step for a diplomat, a retiring South African Ambassador, Mr J.B. Mills, even wrote to the local newspaper expressing his regret at having to leave Canberra after six years. 'It was so long a spell that I was verily in danger of talking, acting and speaking like a native Canberran,' he said.

Mr Mills obviously had a happy time in Canberra, but perhaps he owes this to the gods who may have taken heed of a toast by a former High Commissioner, Mr J.K. Uys, who at a ceremony when the embassy residence was built, declared: 'To whoever may live in this house, may they be happy in it'.

The residence adjoins the chancery and in its architectural style resembles an old Cape Town Dutch farmhouse of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The exterior walls are rendered and painted white and chimney stacks are prominent at either end of the red terracotta tile roof. Teak-louvred shutters protect the small panes of some of the windows, and the front door is of carved timber. Tall french windows lead from the reception hall to a wistaria-covered 'stoep' or verandah, running the full length of the house. Inside the residence a staircase of Queensland maple with a colonial-style turned balustrade is quite splendid.

Soviet Union

If the representatives of the Soviet Union posted to Canberra live with the fear of violence always in their minds then there is a good reason for it: the embassy in Canberra Avenue, Griffith, where many of them live as well as work, has been the target of several terrifying attacks in recent years although luckily no-one has been hurt.

The worst incident occurred on the night of 18 January 1971 when, in a triple bombing of the embassy, windows were blown out, curtains shredded by flying glass, and panelling and brick steps damaged. The explosions were caused by crude hand-made bombs stuffed with gelignite and were heard over a radius of five miles.

The year 1969 was a particularly bad one for the embassy because three violent attacks were made on it. On 3 March a large part of a cypress hedge 3 metres high surrounding the compound was destroyed by petrol bombs; on 18 April an attempt was made to set fire to the hedge at the rear of the compound, and on 16 October a gelignite bomb thrown at the embassy cracked several windows.

After the March 1969 bombing the Russians sought permission to seal off the compound by erecting a high brick wall similar to that surrounding the Prime Minister's Lodge, but the request was refused.

These days the Russian Embassy compound and its buildings give an impression of being inadequate, of having been left behind by the times. Certainly the compound does not reflect the status of one of the world's superpowers. It conveys the feeling that it has been pressed rather reluctantly into service and would much prefer to revert to its former role of boarding house with perhaps some parts of the large block being cut up for additional homes.

There could be plans for moving the embassy because a year ago the Press reported that the Soviet Union had tried to buy a

'choice block of land', set aside for a new Prime Minister's Lodge, as a site for a new embassy. The land is in Yarralumla not far from the American Embassy and overlooks Lake Burley Griffin. The Russians were not successful in that attempt and had been offered a nearby block where, according to the newspaper account, they were expected to build a chancery and Ambassador's residence.

The most diplomatic way of describing the present compound and its buildings is to say that generally they are undistinguished. The embassy headquarters is located in what was called Griffith House when it was bought in 1943 (its lease purpose of guesthouse remains unaltered) and today the overall site of 1 hectare houses several blocks of flats as well as a chancery. A wire fence surrounds the compound and slim-trunked conifers and thick hedges give privacy and to some extent act as a buffer to the incessant din of traffic speeding by on busy Canberra Avenue.

Most of the eighteen diplomatic staff and three trade representatives live at the compound but the Ambassador has his own residence in Red Hill and some staff rent accommodation.

The Ambassador's residence in the higher and better part of narrow, tree-lined Flinders Way presents a blank facade to the world. Pale green walls and windows cell-like in their tiny panes stare vacantly out on to the green playing fields of Canberra Grammar School across the road. The grounds of the residence are large and neatly manicured and to the wife of one Ambassador, rather splendid: she described it as a 'lovely big house, so light and airy and sunny. And the grounds, they are so beautiful it is like living in a park'.

Next door to the Ambassador's residence, and higher up the street again, the low-slung residence of the Egyptian Ambassador to Australia looks puny on an enormous block where it appears to have been erected as an afterthought.

A police guardbox stands outside the Russian Ambassador's residence and on the day I called by the young officer on duty confessed to being rather bored. But he remained watchful and wanted to know what I was doing, he had seen my car drive past and was intrigued when I drove back and parked outside the residence and began taking notes. I assured him I was not a

potential bomb thrower and he told me correspondence courses and ABC radio programs helped to pass the time.

The Russians are renowned for keeping to themselves and as long ago as 1951 Canberra people were calling the hedge surrounding the embassy compound the 'Iron Curtain'. Unlike most other embassies in Canberra the Soviet Union employs no local staff.

As with some of the other embassies it is necessary to announce your arrival into an intercom. Inside the front door a narrow foyer leads into a reception room devoid of any paintings or artifacts from the Soviet Union, another indication that this embassy is somewhat different from many others in Canberra where bits and pieces of art and culture are on display in the reception areas.

The Russians in Canberra concern themselves with trade, commercial, scientific, cultural and political matters and the embassy also issues visas to tourists (in 1976 several thousand Australians visited Russia). The trade imbalance is a sore point with the mission whose representatives quickly point out that Australia sells many more millions of dollars worth of exports to Russia (chiefly wheat, wool, meat and some minerals) than it spends on imports from that country. Metal-cutting machine tools, bearings, chemicals and various manufactured consumer goods are among the things we buy from Russia.



The Russian Embassy, target of bomb attacks in the past

Thailand

The distinctive Thai Embassy and Ambassador's residence startle visitors accustomed to western architecture. They sit oddly on a rise overlooking Empire Circuit and Adelaide Avenue, their roofs of golden orange and white tiles giving an air of tropical lushness to the Embassy Belt. More than any other embassy building, they reveal by their architectural style that the people who work and live there are foreign to Australia.

The sloping roofline of each building rises to a sharp point and the corners sweep upwards. Eaves project far beyond the walls of the buildings, a typical architectural style in tropical countries and designed to protect the building from the elements. At both ends of the ridges on the roofs a small horn-like ornamental *cho fa* is said to mean a bunch of sky. Its origin is



Thai Ambassador's residence

obscure, although it has been suggested that it is derived from the horned mask placed for magical or animistic purposes on the roofs of native houses in Indonesia and some parts of the Pacific Islands. It is a characteristic architectural decoration on the roofs of sacred Siamese Buddhist buildings.

The chancery in Canberra is similar in some respects to the Wat Benchama Bophit, the Marble Temple, built by King Chulalongkorn in 1899 and said to be one of the finest examples of Thai architecture. This temple in Bangkok is built of white Italian marble and houses a famous collection of images of Buddha.

In contrast with the stimulating exterior of the chancery, its interior is austere. Those offices able to be seen are sparsely furnished, the walls white. Except for a few tourist posters and some exquisite Thai carvings, masks and stoneware, there is little to suggest that this is Thailand's headquarters in Australia.

Pure Australian wool carpets in gold and moss green were laid throughout the Ambassador's residence and, a happy conjunction of the talents of both nations, were made in Thailand. The curtains are all of Thai silk and the teak furniture was also imported from Thailand.

The time and date for laying the foundation stone of the residence in 1970 were actually set by a Thai astrologer who calculated that between 12.15 p.m. and 1 p.m. on 11 March 1970 was the most 'auspicious time' for laying the stone. Prayers were said at the ceremony and flower petals sprinkled on a marble plaque engraved with astrological symbols which was buried in the foundations.

France

The French Embassy in Canberra, while carrying out all the other duties of a foreign mission, acts as a major clearing house for information and cultural materials flowing to many parts of Australia and the Pacific. It gives more emphasis to this type of activity than perhaps any other embassy or high commission in Canberra, with a great deal of what it distributes stressing the acknowledged high level of civilisation achieved by the French.

A large section of the chancery building is given over to the distribution of materials, particularly of films. Rack after rack in two large rooms in the chancery contain scores of films dealing with French life and culture. These, and other things such as records, pictures, photographs, transparencies and books, circulate in an ever-widening circle to universities, colleges, schools, libraries, private associations and individuals.



War memorial, French Embassy

The embassy explains that there is an emphasis on this type of service in every French mission abroad because the home government believes that French culture, language and civilisation in general should be fostered and made known around the world. Doubtless all countries look upon the spread of their own culture as an important phase of their diplomatic service, but few believe in it quite as ardently as the French.

Oddly enough, however, there is little to indicate to the casual visitor to the French chancery that he has in fact stepped into a little bit of France on Australian soil. The small foyer and the corridor leading from it are bare of pictures of France, save for one of the French President, Giscard D'Estaing, against a Tricolour backdrop.

This is not the case in the Ambassador's residence, however, where there is a conscious emphasis on French culture in the reception areas and dining room. Brightly coloured tapestries decorate the walls, together with modern paintings, some of them chosen to illustrate the diversity of the French landscape. Porcelains from the renowned Sèvres factory, some in the traditional Sèvres blue, are displayed throughout the large and airy reception rooms.

Sèvres porcelain became famous in the eighteenth century under the patronage of the remarkable Madame de Pompadour, who for nearly twenty years was the *maitresse en titre* (officially recognised mistress) of the French king, Louis XV. She was beautiful, clever, artistic, and together with the sensual king (who had a wife and other mistresses as well), patronised all forms of decorative art: painters, sculptors cabinetmakers and craftsmen worked under the royal eye and during this period the Sèvres factory was built.

Three tapestries in the dining room and main drawing room of the French Ambassador's residence were designed by contemporary artists and came from the Gobelins factory in Paris. This factory began as a family dyeworks but in 1667 was officially given the title of 'Royal Factory of Furnishings to the Crown'. A fourth tapestry, from another famous centre of tapestry making, Aubusson, where the industry began as a cottage industry centuries ago, hangs above a table in the hall. (As a matter of interest three other Aubusson tapestries, designed by a French

artist, Mathieu Mategot, hang in the foyer of the National Library, a few kilometres from the French Embassy. The tapestries are of vivid golds, reds and blues, are 5 metres high and 3 metres wide, and depict aspects of life in Australia.)

This emphasis of the embassy on French culture is continued on the front wall of the residence where more than a dozen sculptured plaques depict the arts and trades of France. The spacious grounds are immaculate and the general impression is that yes, the world could do worse than adopt some of the better aspects of French civilisation.

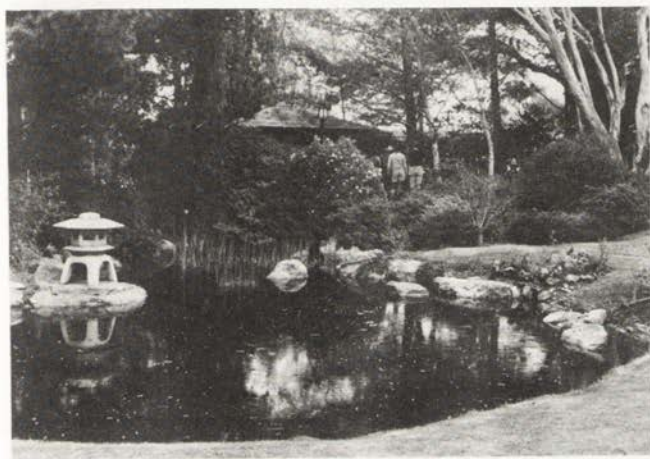
A French architect came to Australia to select the site of the residence and chancery and it is interesting to recall that his choice was amply vindicated by the wife of one French Ambassador to Australia. She considered that the view from the long flagstone-paved main terrace of the residence was the best in Canberra, encompassing, as it does, Lake Burley Griffin and all of the northside valley surrounded by hills.

The French mission in Canberra has about thirty people on the payroll, some of them locally recruited staff, and there are other representatives of the nation in the Australian State capitals. As French missions go, the Canberra embassy is slightly larger than average size but considerably smaller than the big missions in Washington and London.

Japan

There is a tea-house in Canberra that is seldom, if ever, used for its traditional purpose. This is a pity because it is situated in a delightful setting, a formal Japanese garden between the Japanese Embassy and the residence of that country's Ambassador to Australia. However it does have another purpose, to enable visitors to rest and enjoy the view of the garden and its surroundings, and to enable Japanese diplomats to show visitors what a traditional Japanese tea-house looks like.

The tea-house is made of roughly hewn posts and beams, has wooden benches and a metal roof, and is set in a grove of pines, poplars and willows. Many Australian trees and shrubs were planted in the garden, but most of the species used are also found in Japan.



Ornamental pond in Japanese garden linking Ambassador's residence and chancery. Roof of the tea-house is in the background.

The grove is called 'Shō-in-tei': 'shō' means a pine tree and is a Japanese symbol of the traditional virtues of tolerance and fidelity; 'in' is a descriptive word for a soft breeze through a grove, and 'tei' means arbor. 'Sho-in', a breeze through a pine grove, is said to sound similar to a bubbling kettle prepared for the tea ceremony.

A notice at the tea-house says that the arbor 'is presented with the hope that a cup of tea offered here will contribute to bring much closer the friendly ties between Australia and Japan, serving as a bridge of amity and goodwill over ten thousand leagues of the sea'.

The garden comprises two typical styles of a traditional Japanese garden with the first having a pond into which a small stream flows. The pond is stocked with some of Canberra's biggest goldfish, plump, ponderous fish 15 or 20 centimetres long. The rocks, stone bridge, lanterns and pagoda of the Canberra version are typical features of a Japanese garden where the intention is to provide aesthetic satisfaction as well as repose.

The second part of the garden is an abstract composition symbolising nature and the universe. White sand or gravel presents a gracefully textured surface, perhaps a pool, a stream or a vast ocean depending on the imagination of the observer. The rocks represent islands.

Both the chancery (similar in style to the Japanese Foreign Ministry's head office in Tokyo) and the residence were built in harmony with each other, and although not representative of any specific style or phase in Japanese architecture, combine within themselves various types of traditional architecture. They preserve many of the features and materials found in characteristic Japanese buildings.

The embassy buildings were constructed of reinforced concrete, but exposed beams, pillars and handrails at the residence give the effect and atmosphere of a traditional wooden house.

Wide windows are today, as in the past, a characteristic of Japanese buildings, their original purpose having been to blend interior space with the exterior. This effect was further achieved at the Ambassador's residence by extending the eaves, while the



Japanese Ambassador's residence

floor was so arranged that the external garden was brought in under the eaves.

The terraces with their elaborate handrailing extending from the residence date from the tenth century, as do the lattice screens or grilles seen on either side of the front entrance porch of the chancery. The alcoves, seen in the salon and dining hall of the residence, originated in the fourteenth century and are used exclusively to display scrolls bearing a painting or calligraphy, or some art object.

Other features are sliding screens (latticed wooden frames covered with thin paper and used in place of windows), which allow light to filter in but keep out the wind, and coffered ceilings copied from the ceilings found in Shinto shrines, Buddhist temples and palace buildings. Usually they are square in shape but here they are rectangular. The walls are covered with paper or cloth reproductions of ancient Japanese material.

About twenty Japanese work in the Canberra Embassy which also employs fifteen local staff. The embassy is not in the top five of Japanese overseas missions; these are Washington (the biggest), Peking, Moscow, Paris and London, but is numbered in the next ten. The growth in Australia-Japan relationships is such that the Japanese are considering extending the chancery in the next five years. There are consulate-generals in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth but these representatives are not authorised to deal with the Commonwealth Government.

Poland

The Polish Embassy, one of the newest additions to Canberra's diplomatic skyline, sits solid and massive on the brow of a hill in the Embassy Belt. The building was designed in Australia, three designs having been submitted to Warsaw in 1974 before the version constructed here was chosen.

The chancery is large enough to cater for future growth but is smaller than it appears, being only one storey high at the rear where it wraps around the crown of the hill. The off-white colour of the brick and precast concrete, requested by the National Capital Development Commission, provides a pleasing contrast through the darker gum trees.

Thin rooflines, long sunhoods and an overhanging first floor give the building its appearance of handsome strength while this type of construction also serves in a practical way to prevent sun entering during the hot half of the year.

Windows deep and narrow and the use of light-coloured, hemlock ceiling timbers give the entrance foyer an airy, open appearance. The receptionist here controls movement to all sections of the building and extensive walls serve as a gallery for Polish arts and crafts. Stairs lead to a large reception hall to the east, capable of seating 150 people, and during functions the offices to the west can be completely isolated. Flats at the ends of both wings provide security for the complex.

Behind the chancery is the two-storey residence designed in the same style and using the same shaped precast concrete panels. The salon has a timber ceiling matching the chancery's entrance foyer.

Behind the Polish Embassy is another new structure, the Chancery of the Korean Republic, gleaming white in the sun. Unfortunately its location at the end of a long driveway means that it can only be glimpsed from the distant road.

New Polish Embassy



The Netherlands

The Dutch have had the longest authenticated association of any country with Australia; their seafarers made the first known discovery of the long sought-for Southern Continent in 1606, although they stumbled on it by accident thinking that what they called Cape Keerweer was part of New Guinea. It was actually on the north coast of *Terra Australis Incognita* or *Magellenica*, the Great Southern Land of ancient geographers and explorers.

Today one of their diplomats in Australia is a member of a joint committee of Commonwealth, Western Australia and The Netherlands representatives charged with deciding what should be done with wrecks of Dutch sailing ships found off the Western Australia coast, and the relics they contain.

The Netherlands' mission in Australia is a small one but it keeps developments in this country's domestic and foreign affairs under close scrutiny. Much attention is devoted to the countries neighbouring Australia, in particular South-east Asia and Pacific nations. For centuries Indonesia, or the Dutch East Indies, as our northern neighbour was then called, was a colony of The Netherlands, whose merchant ships sailed the world helping to found a great trading nation.

Holland, literally the Hollow Land because of the extraordinarily flat nature of the country, opened its first diplomatic post in Australia in 1947 and constructed its present embassy in Canberra in the mid 1950s. The chancery is a pleasant, unobtrusive building whose only unusual feature is its curving half-moon shape.

Tall trees dwarf the Netherlands Embassy



Italy

When news finally came through in 1966 that a contract had been let for the completion of the Italian Ambassador's residence in Canberra, newspapers reported that an excited counsellor at the embassy had to be dissuaded from holding a celebration party on the girders, deserted since 1962.

Foundations were laid in 1959 but the building was not finished until 1967. For years grass and scrub growing around the steel and concrete skeleton had turned the choice block near the Prime Minister's Lodge into an eyesore, and provided a source of merriment for Canberra's population.

One bizarre story advanced for the delay was that Dame Pattie Menzies' favourite view from the Lodge was of the sun setting over the Brindabella Ranges and that if the building were completed she would no longer be able to enjoy this. Sir Robert Menzies was taxed with this and, as a newspaper reported, denied it with 'one of his best off-the cuff-dismissive answers'. Another reason given was that numerous ambassadors had made alterations to the plan.

Whatever the real cause of the delay the building today is a marvel of modern design incorporating ideas taken from ancient Roman villas. Two internal courtyards, decorated with greenery and ornamental waters and paved with Italian ceramic tiles, are said to be modelled on the classical 'impluvia' of the Roman villas of 2,000 years ago around which the families of the time lived.

But the building's most remarkable feature is the skilful use of lovely white marble; no less than 465 square metres paves the

This chandelier at the Italian Ambassador's residence is from Murano in Venice and contains 900 pieces of glass. The square walnut table is from the seventeenth century and was made by artisans of the Upper Adige Valley (northern Italy). The screen is of a scene in Venice.



main entrance hall and adjoining rooms while on the upper floor 560 square metres has been used to pave more than half the entire area. The Carrara marble was shipped to Australia from the Appenine Mountains of central Italy which supplied much of the marble for Michelangelo's statues and buildings.

A hanging-style marble stairway marks the private entrance to the Ambassador's quarters and more marble has been used in the bathrooms. Murano, the traditional home of glass in Venice, supplied glass chandeliers, some as large as 1.8 metres in diameter, and these blend with medieval bronze bas-relief and individual pieces of Italian period furniture.

Gardens and a tennis court link the residence and the chancery, completed in 1975. Once again there is a strong emphasis on Italy's cultural heritage in the firm architectural lines of the building and its many reproductions of works by famous painters such as Raphael and Bassano. Italian cities and scenes from the countryside figure prominently among the paintings in the reception area on the first floor. Papua New Guinea artifacts introduce a more primitive note to the decor: there is a stone axe presented to the embassy on Papua New Guinea's Independence Day and a large brown and grey painting on pressed bark occupies part of one wall.



Chancery building, Italian Embassy

British High Commission

It is a pity that the official headquarters of the nation that has contributed most to Australia's history and development should be such a commonplace building on one of Canberra's main thoroughfares. The British High Commission sits heavily on Commonwealth Avenue, barrack-like in its ordinariness, a drab monument to the British Ministry of Public Buildings and Works, its builders in 1953. Opposite are the glum façades of government office blocks and up the road a bit further the Canadian High Commission, a similar monument to indifferent architecture. This gloom is not relieved by the interior of the British High Commission where the walls of long, high-ceilinged corridors painted dull cream stretch away from an undistinguished foyer.



The British High Commission occupies a prominent site on Commonwealth Avenue

The residence of the British High Commissioner constructed on more than 1.5 hectares of hilltop land, in Empire Circuit, Deakin, gives an altogether different impression of style and grace. Rolling lawns dotted with enormous eucalypts rise to the house, long and low with a green-tiled roof. The British coat-of-arms figures on the pillars at the entrance gates and the Union Jack flutters from a flagpole on the hill. Next door are the grounds of Canberra Girls' Grammar School. The High Commissioner's residence was known as Canberra House for many years but when a new commercial office block in the city was given this name the British decided to choose a new and more appropriate one, Westminster House.

The name of Canberra House has an association with the city almost as old as Canberra itself. The first reference to it appears in 1925 as the name of a house in Acton occupied by the Federal Capital Commissioner, Sir John Butters. This house had been known for some years as The Residency; it was described as being a 'striking, two-storey brick structure' in 1920 and had been built in 1913 for Colonel David Miller, the newly-appointed Administrator of the Federal Capital Territory, whose position carried with it the privilege of the holder being addressed as 'Your Excellency'. While waiting for the residency to be built, he and his wife lived in a tent.

In 1936 the building was leased to the United Kingdom High Commission for use as the High Commissioner's residence. When the British built the Deakin house in 1953, the then Department of the Interior agreed to a request by the High Commissioner that 'on grounds of convenience and, to a certain extent, of sentiment', the name should be transferred to the new house. The department also gave an undertaking not to use the name Canberra House on any building under its control.

The old building was occupied by the Commonwealth Club for a time and these days serves as a staff centre for the Australian National University. It has a lovely setting overlooking Lake Burley Griffin but has a neglected air about it which, for one of the few old buildings in a city lacking many tangible links with its past, is a shame.

The British High Commission is one of the busiest diplomatic concerns in Canberra and employs 109 people (58 from the

United Kingdom, 51 locals). One of the High Commissioner's major responsibilities is the smooth functioning of commercial relations between Britain and Australia and he is also concerned with political, defence and economic questions of interest to both countries. The issue of British passports, entry certificates and visas forms a large part of the high commission's activities. About 40,000 passports are issued each year from the building in Commonwealth Avenue.

Befitting his status in the national capital of what was once a collection of British colonies, the British High Commissioner goes about his business in a Rolls Royce Silver Shadow, which proudly bears the distinctive number plate DC1.

Indonesia

The Indonesian mission is one of the few embassies in Canberra whose front door is locked; visitors must announce themselves by speaking into an intercom. According to staff, these security measures were adopted following the occupation of the embassy for two hours at the height of the Timor dispute. Another curiosity, puzzling at first, is that the front door is actually at the back.

This embassy is unusual in another respect in that it is the only one in Canberra to have a display room of marvellous cultural exhibits. Outside this room, which is separate from the embassy proper, are a large number of statues of mythical figures from Bali. These statues and the display room compen-



Legendary figures, chancery, Indonesian Embassy (National Capital Development Commission)

sate for the rather bland embassy building which, in comparison, appears to be just another modern office structure somewhat lacking in architectural distinction. A commentator once peevishly described it in these discouraging terms: 'One gets the impression that the building was built for utility and hard wear rather than as a thing of architectural beauty'.

Visitors reach the display room, or 'Wisma Wisata Budaya', by walking up steep narrow steps to the left of the main building. These steps lead up to a tall stone gateway similar to the entrance to the Besakih temple in Bali, and are flanked by four columns of Balinese statues, twenty-four in all, representing characters from two ancient Indian epic poems, the 'Ramayana' and the 'Mahabharata'. More statues surround the terrace on which the display room is built.

These Hindu stories have been an inexhaustible source of inspiration for Indonesian arts and crafts, music, literature, theatre and dance and, although more than 80 per cent of the Indonesian people are now Moslems, most of those on the island of Bali still follow the Hindu Balinese religion.

The display room is built in the style of a traditional Indonesian '*pendopo*', but with a roof structure commonly found on Balinese temples or old Javanese mosques. It is surrounded by a water-lily pond with small statues and fountains and some goldfish.

Indonesia's state emblem, or coat-of-arms, catches the eye of a visitor who enters the display room. A large, powerful, mythical bird known as the 'Garuda' holds a shield on which are depicted the five symbols of Indonesia's national ideology, while below is inscribed a motto in Indonesian meaning 'Unity in diversity'. This dates back to the tenth century and is most appropriate for Indonesia, a colourful unity of many ethnic groupings occupying thousands of islands and with differing customs, languages and religions.

Among the exhibits on display are Gamelan musical instruments from Central Java, leather shadow puppets, colourful costumes worn by the actors of the epic poems mentioned earlier, woodcarvings, silverware and leatherware, and traditional instruments and tools for batik painting and printing together with samples of batik cloth.



Close-up of legendary figure, Indonesian Embassy

The colour, fine craftsmanship, painstaking detail and sheer beauty of Indonesia's cultural riches are among the dominant impressions one is left with after visiting the display room, incidentally, the only one attached to an Indonesian overseas mission. But these examples can be only the tiniest sample of what the full cultural heritage of this country must encompass.

Of similar interest are the statues flanking the terrace and descending the steps. They are of demons, kings, warriors, wives . . . one, Kresna, is, in the stories of the 'Mahabharata' (said to be the longest single poem in the world's literature, with 90,000 stanzas), the kingly owner of a Widjajakusama flower which has the legendary power to bring a dead person back to life. Another, Srikandi, is a great heroine and an expert archer, while Hidimbi is in fact an ogress but has the power to change her appearance into a fair lady.

Switzerland

There is a romantic yet melancholy story attached to the early migration to Australia of people from Switzerland, that pocket-sized northern European country of mountains and lakes. Back in the mid 1820s Charles La Trobe, an English-born gentleman of French descent, became a tutor in the French-Swiss family of the Count Albert de Pourtales in Neuchatel in Switzerland. La Trobe revelled in the excitement of mountaineering and exploring while in the Count's employ, and then in 1832, with the young Count Albert, toured North America. He returned to Switzerland in 1835, married a French-Swiss girl Sophie Montmollin, and in 1837 gained employment with the British government in reporting on the best ways of educating West Indian slaves who had just gained their freedom. In



Swiss Embassy, low and functional on a Forrest hilltop

January 1839 he was appointed Superintendent of the Port Phillip district and journeyed with his young wife to distant and little-known Australia. Later he became the new colony of Victoria's first Lieutenant-Governor.

Sophie's departure for the Antipodes created a sensation in the small community of Neuchatel where she belonged to one of the oldest and richest families. Her example was followed by eleven young Swiss from the same Canton of Neuchatel who settled near each other in the Geelong district where they planted Victoria's first vineyards.

La Trobe stayed on in his post of Lieutenant-Governor until 1854 when he relinquished the position and left Australia. Sophie and his two younger children had gone ahead of him but a week before he was scheduled to leave he read in a newspaper that Sophie, who had been ill for some years, had died in Switzerland three months earlier. In a curious twist to his marital fortunes La Trobe married again in 1855, to Sophie's widowed sister, Rose De Meuron.

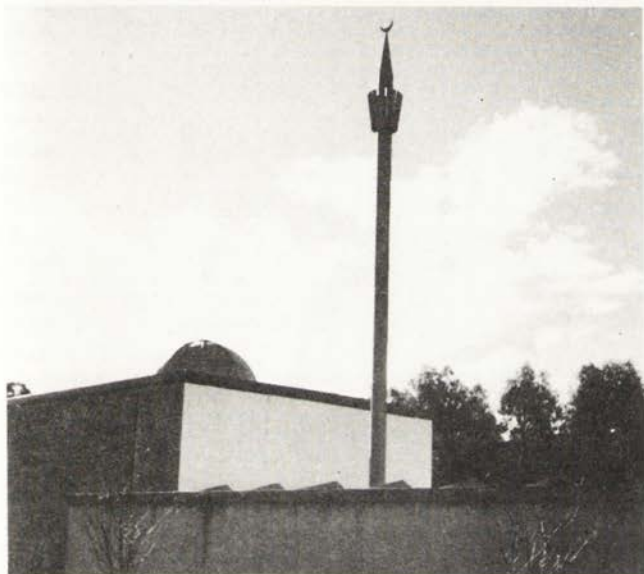
Swiss have continued migrating to Australia since those early days and today there are some 10,000 in this country, including about 300 in the ACT. A link with their homeland is provided by the solid Swiss Embassy, built on a hilltop in Forrest and commanding some of the loveliest views in the national capital. It cost about \$1 million in 1973-74 and its design — low, functional — caused some disappointment among local Swiss who wanted a building constructed like a Swiss chalet. In front of the embassy stands a lofty flagpole from which flutters the Swiss flag (a white cross on a red background) able, because of its position, to be seen from some distance away.

Between the Ambassador's residence and the chancery is a curious wheel-like sculpture constructed of marble sent from seven different quarries in Switzerland. The marble is cut in such a way that it makes up the figures 1291, the year when the Swiss nation as we know it today came into being.

The Swiss have a long record of diplomatic representation in Australia, having opened a consulate in Sydney in 1855 and a vice-consulate in Melbourne in 1856. The Canberra embassy was established in 1961 and there are also Swiss representatives in Brisbane, Hobart, Adelaide and Perth.

Canberra Mosque

Three countries — Indonesia, Pakistan and Malaysia — represented by embassies in Canberra, combined to build the Canberra Mosque, a now familiar part of the streetscape of the Embassy Belt. The foundation stone was laid in 1960 by the Indonesian Ambassador, Dr A.Y. Helmi, so it can be seen that the Mosque is quite old when compared with some buildings in the embassy area.



Mosque and minaret

Architecturally the Mosque is a dull building. It is long, low, grey, and only a golden dome on top of the prayer room relieves its drabness. The Mosque's spindly minaret is symbolic of similar, but larger, versions in Islamic countries. But unlike these, the Canberra Mosque's Moslem crier, or muezzin, except on special occasions, does not wail out the hours of prayer.

The prayer room is large and almost devoid of furniture except for a bookcase, a table and a carved wooden pulpit donated by the Indonesian Government. Two large carpets were gifts from the Pakistan and Iranian governments, and small oblong prayer mats were donated by Indonesians.

People from the Egyptian and Bangladesh missions joined the Mosque committee recently and Jordan, Turkey and Iran have been invited to join. The Canberra Mosque is not only a house of prayer but also a meeting place and at times up to 600 people have gathered there.

National Days

4 January	Burma (Independence Day)	21 April	Israel (Independence Day)
26 January	India (Republic Day)	25 April	Portugal (Portugal Day)
6 February	New Zealand (New Zealand Day)	29 April	Japan (Emperor's Birthday)
25 February	Kuwait (National Day)	30 April	Netherlands (Queen's Birthday)
6 March	Ghana (Independence Day)	30 April	Sweden (King's Birthday)
17 March	Ireland (St Patrick's Day)	9 May	Czechoslovakia (National Day)
23 March	Pakistan (Republic Day)	17 May	Norway (Constitution Day)
25 March	Greece (Independence Day)	22 May	Sri Lanka (Republic Day)
26 March	Bangladesh (National Day)	25 May	Argentina (National Day)
4 April	Hungary (National Day)	31 May	Republic of South Africa (Republic Day)
4 April	Senegal (National Day)	2 June	Italy (Foundation of the Republic)
16 April	Denmark (Queen's Birthday)	12 June	Philippines (Independence Day)

24 June Spain (His Majesty
 the King's Feast Day)
 30 June Holy See (Pope
 Paul VI Coronation Day)
 1 July Canada
 (Confederation)
 4 July United States of
 America (Independence Day)
 11 July Mongolia (National
 Day)
 14 July France (Bastille
 Day)
 14 July Iraq (National Day)
 17 July Afghanistan
 (National Day)
 21 July Belgium (National
 Day)
 22 July Poland (National
 Day)
 23 July Arab Republic of
 Egypt (National Day)
 28 July Peru (Independence
 Day)
 1 August Switzerland
 (Foundation of the Swiss
 Confederation)
 9 August Singapore
 (National Day)
 15 August Republic of
 Korea (Independence Day)
 17 August Indonesia
 (Proclamation of
 Independence)
 23 August Romania
 (National Day)
 25 August Uruguay
 (Independence Day)

31 August Malaysia
 (Malaysia Day)
 2 September Socialist
 Republic of Viet Nam
 (Proclamation of
 Independence)
 7 September Brazil
 (Independence Day)
 9 September Bulgaria
 (National Day)
 15 September Guatemala
 (National Day)
 16 September Mexico
 (Proclamation of
 Independence)
 16 September Papua-New
 Guinea (Independence Day)
 18 September Chile
 (Independence Day)
 1 October People's
 Republic of China (National
 Day)
 1 October Nigeria
 (National Day)
 1 October Cyprus (National
 Day)
 7 October German
 Democratic Republic
 (Foundation Day)
 10 October Fiji (National
 Day)
 26 October Austria
 (National Day)
 26 October Iran
 (Shahanshah's Birthday)
 29 October Turkey
 (Republic Day)

7 November Soviet Union
(Anniversary of the October
Socialist Revolution)

22 November Lebanon
(National Day)

29 November Yugoslavia
(Republic Day)

2 December Laos (National
Day)

5 December Thailand
(King's Birthday)

6 December Finland
(Independence Day)

13 December Malta
(National Day)

28 December Nepal (King's
Birthday)

The sixty-one embassies in Canberra are the national and cultural showplaces of each country represented in the federal capital. They are richly varied in their architecture: traditional Thai, colonial American, simply French and strikingly New Zealand.

Many of these embassies, and seventeen in detail, are described and pictured in this book, which gives their locations and a useful map to help the reader find them.

Canberra Companions are published by the Australian National University Press as a contribution to the cultural, educational and recreational life of the immediate area served by the University. Titles available or in preparation include:

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