

the  
**OVERSEAS  
PENSIONER**

◆  
*Number 114, October 2017*

*Overseas Service*



*Pensioners' Association*

**OSPA'S FAREWELL YEAR**  
**The Final Journal**

1960 – 2017

# Project VOICES

## - a status report after 10 months

by Dr Valentin Seidler

In recent issues of the *Overseas Pensioner*, I directly addressed former overseas officers and readers of this journal. I hoped to raise interest for a series of interviews with former colonial officers and, even more, to motivate OSPA members to participate. Since then Project VOICES has grown in size and quality.<sup>i</sup> This final article aims to inform readers where we stand at the moment and how project VOICES will proceed once the OSPA office has closed down.

Since the beginning of the interviews early this year 60 interviews have been conducted, almost all of them via the telephone.<sup>ii</sup> Officers have come from all nationalities with diverse services and career paths. We are still receiving new registrations for interviews from former HMOCS officers. Many of them have been invited by colleagues who have already been interviewed. As it stands today we expect to complete up to 110 interviews. We have also begun to collect personal memoirs, documents or private photos. A recent cooperation with the Austrian Filmmuseum, the largest film library in Austria, permits us to digitize private films and return a digital copy to the owner.<sup>iii</sup> The aim has remained the same: to create an online digital library of personal memoirs and accounts of individual colonial officers. The website will serve a wide audience from scholars to the general public.

*What are the next steps once OSPA has closed down?*

2017: In all likelihood, the interviews will continue until the end of this year. Alongside that the digitizing of the submitted documents, memoirs, photos and films is ongoing as and when we receive material.

2018: We hope to be able to return the documents to those who have asked for them by mid 2018. All other documents will be stored with the History Department of the University of Vienna where they will be available to students and researchers. The transcription of the recorded interviews will also begin mid 2018 and probably take 12 to 18 months. Each participant will receive a copy of the transcript.

2018 and 2019: Once most of the interviews are transcribed and your documents have been digitized we can start building the VOICES online digital library. Visitors to the VOICES website will be able to search for individual profiles as well as for specific subjects or themes across the individual entries. VOICES will cooperate with existing archives and universities in the UK and abroad to potentially reach a world-wide audience.

## *When will VOICES stop recording interviews?*

We are aware that this is our last chance of recording your personal story. You are a witness of a most important historic period with long-lasting social, political and economic impacts. If you have already given an interview, please pass on the word and inform former colleagues who have not heard of us yet. We have now a formidable team in place and we will interview everyone who registers by December 31, 2017. Even if you do not want to record an interview, we will gladly receive your personal documents, photos or films to publish them or to use them for research.<sup>iv</sup>

I remain deeply grateful to all officers that have participated and to the tireless staff of the OSPA office in Tonbridge. I also thank our team in Vienna for their hard work and dedication. Without your support, this project would not have taken place.

Dr. Valentin Seidler

Visitor at the University of Warwick

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<sup>i</sup> This research program was designed at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton upon the invitation of Prof. Dani Rodrik (now at Harvard University). It is financed by grants from the Austrian Academy of Science and the Austrian Science Fund in Vienna (Erwin Schrödinger Grant #J3848-G28)

<sup>ii</sup> An interview usually takes two hours which can be split up to allow for breaks. We can send the questions in advance to allow prepare for the talk. Of course interviews are fully anonymized if that is requested.

<sup>iii</sup> The Austrian Filmmuseum can be visited online at [https://www.filmmuseum.at/en\\_1](https://www.filmmuseum.at/en_1)

<sup>iv</sup> If you are interested in participating in the interviews please contact Ms Veronika Hammerle, our project assistant at [voices@univie.ac.at](mailto:voices@univie.ac.at)

If would like to share your documents, memoirs or other material, please bear in mind that you must have the ownership rights to this material. Before you send documents, please contact Ms Hammerle in advance.

Our postal address is:

Project VOICES

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