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BBC HISTORY - ROBIN SCOTT

19th September 1985

SUMMARY

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BBC HISTORY - ROBIN SCOTT

Camera Roll 1. Sound Roll 1 Scene 1 Take 1. 19th September 1985 Producer: Philip Daly

Frank Gillard: Its the 19th September 1985 and we're filming an interview for BBC History with Mr.Robin Scott in his home in London. Mr. Scott you were invalided out of the Forces, of course, in 1942 and you, as a young man with full qualification - your French expertise and so forth - joined the BBC in the French Service on the 11th November 1942, right in the middle of the War. Tell us about the French Service as it was in those days; what were its aims and aspirations; how big a Service was it; how many hours on the air; what sort of programmes did it do; who were the people involved in it? Give us your recollections.

Robin Scott: I joined the BBC, Bush House, on the day that the French Fleet scuttled itself in Toulon Harbour when the Germans decided, after all, that the time was come to occupy the whole of France and that, of course, followed the invasion by the Allies of North Africa. It was a response to that and in order not to have the Southern ports of France under threat from the the new invasion of North Africa. It was perhaps an auspicious occasion - or an unauspicious occasion and therefore I joined this extraordinary atmosphere of the French Service during the wartime, the BBC French Service, at a time when there was a real anxiety , there was a real event happening and so on, and therefore, of course, nobody took any notice of this young, pale young chap, who joined this very important part of the War machine, as it was, it was of course a propaganda service but it was propaganda which was so well done that it could very justifiably say that it was speaking the truth. We know, of course, that it didn't speak the truth the whole time; it couldn't possibly have done so and, indeed, the whole truth is perhaps never spoken by a Service which is broadcasting abroad in that way, particularly not in wartime.

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Robin Scott: But I think Bush House was conducted in such a way that it raised the BBC and because of the Victory afterwards, it raised the BBC to the position of being the World's leading broadcaster. There's absolutely no doubt about that, and that position that the BBC gained at that time was enormously helpful afterwards, and of course, it provided an example to other broadcasters, and it is something which I shall never forget having worked in that Service, not only during the War years, but afterwards when we had to replace, to a large extent, the totally shattered French Radio system which had been destroyed because Petain's service, of course, had become discredited and also the transmitters had been blown up by the Resistance. But the French Service during the War had already established its reputation, the Resistance was beginning to emerge in France, there was a political situation of course as between the leftwing forces of the Resistance which didn't really come into play until Russia joined the War, in '41, because prior to that they were absolutely sitting on the fence,and the Gaullists, and de Gaulle was always very cleverly involving as much as he could those from the Left to form an eventual Government of National importance, and the French Service itself was not Gaullist, at all. It was a curious mixture of individuals who'd been put together under this - under the strain and the importance of wartime broadcasting - put together by one or two perceptive people in the BBC - Cecilia Reeves,Richard Marriott - who was later to become the Assistant Director of Radio, in the BBC - and who was then in charge of, I think, liaison matters and so on. And it gathered, this small team of British people from '38 onwards and then after the collapse of France, brought together a group of people headed by Michel St.Denis,the very prominent Producer, who had had the Compagnie des Quinze in Paris and then, of course, went on to work

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at the Old Vic, and established an enormous reputation also in London; it had also people like Jean Oberle, boulvardier, writer, cartoonist who had done his own books and had illustrated the magazine Crapouillot and so on. He'd had Maurice van Moppes, extraordinarily bright and witty individual who wrote the words of the slogans which were a feature of the BBC French Service and which were set to music and said such things as"Radio Parisment - Radio Parisment" to the La Cucaracha tune and"Don't go and work for the Germans in Germany. Avoid the enticement of the Germans to go and work for good money in Germany and keep your family going because you'll only become a slave worker"and all that kind of thing, moving gradually of course as the War moved to its end, or at least moved towards the invasion, into active encouragement to the Resistance. So there was an element therefore of fascinating mixture of French politics as it was developing, memories of what had happened at the time of the French collapse, feeling that a new France was bound to emerge, being in the presence, and to some extent in the shadow, of the tall man who worked from Carlton Gardens, General de Gaulle, and yet in a Service which apart from Jean Marin, who was almost as tall as the General himself, and who went on to run the French AFP, the French Press Agency, the equivalent of Reuters, after the War, and indeed, was knighted by the British Government, and like Alastair Cooke and others, I mean he's one of the few foreign Knights, if you like, who can't of course use the title and others in the Service were equally independent - there was Pierre Maillaud who afterwards was the first post-War French Minister of Information and he was a marvellous journalist giving a weekly talk. He worked out of the journal France which continued to exist in London. There was a whole group of French people from disparate backgrounds who it was quite easy for the

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Germans in their propaganda or by counter-propaganda to try and discredit the French Service to describe it as a group of boulevardiers and ne're-do-wells who were working for Churchill's gold.

Frank Gillard: Tell us who had the say. Was it the English side, or was it the French side, in the French Service?

Robin Scott: The, the question of editorial control was very cleverly managed in fact there is no doubt at all that the political directives whether they came from the Political Warfare Executive or from Political Intelligence, people who were up top in Bush House or across the road in Kingsway Ingersoll House, were respected and had to be respected and that Bush House, the European Service, was a hole in that sense and the editorial meetings were ones where the general policiies were laid down. Nontheless, although those directives were translated within the French Service, principally by the Editor and Head of the French Service who was Darsie Gillie, former correspondent of the Manchester Guardian, they were translated by the French themselves into a much more liberal, Frenchness, a much more - they in fact took the directives and said,"Well, I see thats what you want to do, of course we're all part of the War effort and so forth, but we're not actually here to win the War for England. We're here to win the War for France. And we're not fighting for you. We're fighting for ourselves. And we're not fighting for General de Gaulle, actually. We're fighting for what we believe to be France and we believe the best way to do that is by saying the things which we're going to say tonight". And this is how they set about it and of course what they managed to do was to produce a programme, or a series of prorammes - particularly Les Francais parlent aux Francais, the one which went out at half past nine every night, which was regarded by those listening in France, as unbiased,

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in a sense. It was not preaching one political Party line.

Frank Gillard: Tell us whether you gave the French any air time on their own.

Robin Scott: Yes, indeed. Five minutes every night, was given - the French, the Gaullists, the Carlton Gardens lot, were given five minutes every night, at 25 minutes past nine, and every night after the News the 9.15 News which lasted ten minutes, good news or bad news it was all told or, indeed, that was the impression that was given and I think was almost always the case, the Announcer would say, "Honeur et Patrie - Voici La France Libre." and on would come Maurice Schumann, or on great occasions, the General or a visiting politician who had just escaped from France, Massigli who'd arrived on his submarine, not on his submarine but had been picked up off the South of France, would come on and he was a new and important figure who was to become the future Foreign Minister of France.

cut

Camera Roll 2 Sound Roll 1

Scene 2. Take 1.

Frank Gillard: Tell us about de Gaulle's broadcasts especially the D-Day one.

Robin Scott: De Gaulle, of course, who is associated with having made that famous broadcast on the 18th June 1940, the great rallying speech, that speech unfortunately was never recorded and Cecilia Reeves never forgave herself for not having given the instructions to record it and he himself refused to re-do it, saying "It was an historic day and I can't repeat in the emotion of that time". He didn't broadcast all that often from '42 onwards - only on great events as when the French had distinguished themselves militarily speaking for the first time at Birhakim in North Africa, a very famous defence of Birhakim.

He came - this great gaunt figure - for whom I had the greatest

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admiration - we all admired him, although we were very suspicious to some extent of his politics and knew what was going on and one would take him down to one of these little studios in the basement of Bush House and it was a perfectly straightforward thing and he had an enormous typewriter. His eyes were never very good and he - Carlton Gardens had a special typewriter with jumbo letters and I wish I'd kept one of his scripts because of course they are historic documents in a way. The D-Day speech I remember particularly because, of course, he was as everyone knows, he was excluded to some extent from those final decisions and not totally informed of what was going to happen and the Americans had a lot to do with that, I think, and the whole background of what had happened in North Africa had a fear that he would take over France in some way and want to be the first on French soil and he'd be raising the flag of a Gaullist Government and so that when he arrived eventually on the morning of the 6th June after we'd done all that bit of the Allies have landed and all that carefully rehearsed thing, he was in fact, obviously seething with anger as he went down to the studio. I think that Duff was there, Duff Cooper, and various others, but I can remember taking him into the studio and sitting him down and I can see our little group walking down the corridor still, on that morning, sensing this man who was to become a great figure of post-War France, was in fact very angry with the Allies but was determined to show that he was in charge and that famous speech which starts "La Bataille supreme est engage - supreme force has begun - his marvellous phrases that he came out with. And those were historic moments which one's proud to have been part of to some extent.

Frank Gillard: Darsie Gillie?

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Robin Scott: Darsie Gillie, this extraordinary man, who'd had been the journalist, one of the Foreign Correspondents of the Guardian up to the War was in fact in Warsaw, rather like Hugh Greene, he was a journalist at heart and had been a reporter of the rising threat in Europe and was a Liberal and great expert on Poland, on Canada and other places and was a loved leader of that disparate group of Frenchmen and British people who created a legend in those who listened at the other end in France by the million, and a legend which will go on for a very long time and certainly for as long as there are alive people who derived hope and inspiration from what was said from London.

Frank Gillard: Tell us about the agony of decision kicking the corridor walls.

Robin Scott: Darsie had one habit and that meant he was in two minds one day as to whether to actually ask De Gaulle to take a phrase out of one of his speeches. In fact it was the Birhakim speech and at the end of the speech I remember looking at the text and saying, "I don't know whether I can let the General say this. Should I say something?" He wasn't really asking my opinion because he was perfectly capable of making up his own mind, and "Should I say to the General that its perhaps not wise for him to say at the end of his speech 'Somebody had today to praise our soldiers in these circumstances. I, the General, have done it'. Should we take out 'I, the General, have done it' ?" ..... De Gaulle. And in the end, of course, it was discreetly taken out. But Darsie would go up and down the corridor under these parititions in Bush House, we were on one side of the fourth floor in the Centre Block and the German Service was on the other and there was a sort of no-man's land between them although there was a certain friendly exchange between Lindley Fraser and Darsie, and so on, but on the whole the twain didn't meet very much and he would kick

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the corridor whilst he was making up his mind and go down and do a mark all the time, on the corridor, banging like that, and grumbling to himself. He was a wonderful chap!

Frank Gillard: Well, your career, you remained in the French Service and you saw it through into peace-time - you stayed there for 9 years and then you went into Television in the mid-fifties, in 1954. Tell us about the great leader of the Television Service, McGivern?

Robin Scott: Cecil McGivern - I suppose every Producer who joined Television got to know Cecil very quickly. Television was small enough - a small enough team to have a person in charge of the programme side who knew everybody. I mean, there was obviously only one network. There was, in a sense, only one service, although there were O.Bs and there were Plays and Entertainment and so on. But it was Cecil who gave style to the Service and felt individually responsible for everything. His background had been one of a scriptwriter and producer in Radio - he'd done some splendid radio productions, and of course he'd worked scriptwriting for the cinema and for documentaries as well. He was a person who had the greatest respect for professionalism. He- I mean he taught all of us, I think, certain basic things. You know, the importance of how you start a programme and how you finish a programme and that what came in between had to express what you wanted to express, of course, but you had to catch the attention, you had to be absolutely sure of your intentions and the way to do that was the proper mixture of sound and vision, was to make it quite plain what kind of thing you wanted to explain, show, do, whatever it was and that it was proper as with any good essay to round off what you had done, or so in the proper way. The kind of education which, I, as a Talks Assistant which is the title I had when I first joined the BBC, also learnt, the same kind of education that one gets when one does a course of English or when one learns in school how to write an essay,

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and Cecil represented that discipline, the discipline of the use of the English language and the use of the medium of television to express something that was worth doing, whether it was an entertainment programme, a documentary, a play, whatever it was, and he was an enormously powerful and respected leader. He in a sense disintegrated eventually I think bcause of his over concentration, his over-involvement. A fault which, I suppose, is part of all people who work in the medium of television and radio, perhaps not so much in the eighties as it was in the fifties, where there was a total dedication on the part of everybody and I mean absolutely everybody, for salaries which were fixed and which didn't, universally didn't entail any overtime. There was a total involvement and dedication to something to which was developing, which was exciting, which was new. Cecil was part of that and he became too involved in a way and his final disintegration being fined because into the habit of drinking a little too much, keeping some important Americans waiting, and then the way he finally finished up when Bernstein helped him out and took him to Granada and then his final death, setting fire to himself, in bed, smoking and in fact dying of burns, all that is a horrifying story in a way but he was a man who I always associated with the real, always associate with the real quality of good television and how to inspire people to do it.

Frank Gillard: Go on and tell us what he said when you became Paris Rep?

Robin Scott: When I became Paris Representative and was appointed in 1958 in April or May of 1958 and Cecil said "We're going to have a party, Robin. We'll have a party and we'll come to my office in S.9. which was his favourite place in Lime Grove. The place where the Drinks Cupboard was! And he said, "We'll have to invite those people from over in Bush House, Cyril Connor and others and I

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suppose one or two people from Radio - Yes, all right, but I shall make it perfectly plain this, your appointment, is a Television appointment and at last we can say goodbye I hope as far as Television is concerned to being run by Bush House in particular or by Broadcasting House for that matter. And, of course, it wasn't a very good way to send me off to a job where I actually depended very much on getting the confidence of people in Broadcasting House and Bush House who were rather more my masters, actually, that the Television Service, in real administrative terms.

Frank Gillard: Who actually paid for it?

Robin Scott: Who actually paid for it.

cut

Camera Roll 3. Sound Roll 2.

Scene 3, Take 1.

Frank Gillard: After being Paris Rep. you went out of the BBC for a time - a short time - and then you came back into the Television Service, and then back into Radio to a major job. Tell us about that?

Robin Scott: I was absolutely delighted when I was invited to take an interest in the possibility of being made the new Chief of Service which was to become a new Radio Channel which was to take over from the pirate radio stations. We're in 1967 and I had been working as an O.B. Producer. I had been back in television after Paris and a little venture into private television work running an O.B. Unit which I set up in Europe with friends like Richard Dimbleby and Wynford Vaughan Thomas, were in my group, and I had in fact applied - I had wanted to get out of being a Producer/Director. I was interested in going higher in the BBC executive world and in showing what I could perhaps do as a decision maker rather than an executant of making programmes, and I had in fact applied to be the Assistant Head of Gramophone Department in Radio and to

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work alongside an old friend, Mark White, with whom I'd done many years before, a series of jazz programmes. And, although I didn't get that job, I think that I impressed one or two people on the Board for that job, in particular Dick Marriott, who must have then spoken to Frank Gillard, and Frank I knew in any case from years before when I had done a programme for him out of Bush House when he was running the West Region, long before he became Managing/Director of Radio and so, when it came to news that there would be a new BBC Radio Service - funnily enough there was a chap called Charlie Max Muller, who was a great character and who I'd met doing Outside Broadcasts because he was doing the Radio side and he was often doing the television side - Royal Visits abroad and things like that - very exciting times, also, and Charlie, shaking keys in his pocket - he had a great habit of shaking his keys all the time, saying, Ha, Ha, talking like that, saying "I think I know the chap who is going to be the next Supremo of the new Radio Service". And I looked in absolute amazement at him and so I was all the more delighted when I got the invitation to come to a Private Board. And those were the days when the Governors did not make appointments at that level - of course, they do now - and indeed, they started to a few years later, but at that time I was in Frank Gillard's office and there was Frank and there was Dick Marriott and there was Michael Standing and Lance Thirkell, - I think that was the group - and they between them decided that I was the chap that should be given the responsibility of working out some kind of way of creating another Channel of radio which would compete with any pirate Radio Stations that were left or perhaps replace all of them - they were a very varied lot ranging all the way from sort of top forty stations like Radio London to 390 which was middle

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of the road and so on. And the Maverick one's like Radio Caroline. So when I was given that job I was over the moon. I should perhaps say that when I was in the Army and convalescing before I even joined Bush House, I did have a curious yen that one day I would like to run what was then the Forces Programme. It became the Light Programme - I felt somehow that I could do that. That to be an entrepreneur in that sense was something that I was capable of doing. So when I got this marvellous opportunity, nothing could have been more exciting and so I spent night after night - I didn't have very much time - I joined at Easter. I remember listening to Caroline. It was the Easter the Anniversary of the Easter Uprising and Ronan O'Reilly who ran Caroline, and his father, I think, had been killed during the Easter Uprising. So he was celebrating - having his own private celebrations - anti-British thing was going on on Caroline - and I started then and there to listen to all the pirate stations because I knew that I had to take - and they were so popular, it wasn't just forbidden fruit, they were offering something which clearly we had to offer, in the BBC. And I gradually worked out after doing schedule after schedule - working, making bricks without very much straw because obviously the heart of any popular Rock station or whatever it was going to be, is gramophone records, you can't have chaps coming back into the Studios and recreating their record hits. You can to some extent, but with multi-tracking becoming more and more a feature even then - I'm talking about the late sixties - of the Pop Record industry, it was clearly not going to be possible to do that; it needed records and I knew and I realised more and more, to my horror,that I didn't have those means at my disposal and that there had to be

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a compromise. And so to some extent, when finally the Service was launched on September 30th, and of course I can vividly remember that morning and the countdown and cueing-in - Tony Blackburn to start the Service, with Johnny Beerling, who is now running Radio 1, he's just been appointed. And the enormous excitement the enormous buildup, the colossal Press coverage, unprecedented in broadcasting in this country, and I say there were special editions in the Evening News and things like that, and this enormously exciting event and the fact is that that final schedule, although it was a compromise, and although it was a con to some extent on the public, because we

cut (battery ran out)

Camera Roll 3. Sound Roll2

Scene 4. Take 1.

Robin Scott: It was enormously exciting, that morning of September 30th, at 7 o'clock in the morning. I think the word confidence trick is being too insulting actually to what we did. It wasn't a con, but it was a compromise and it was a compromise because, of course, two Services, Radios 1 and 2 because I took the old Forces or Light Programme and I'd had to create a double service but which occasionally was one, simply because of the lack of means and money, although I took money out of certain Variety Shows which of course cost money, and I reduced the number of Variety Shows, I - certain Shows came to an end whilst in the runup period to Radio 1 whilst it was still the Light Programme, things like Wilfrid Pickles's HAVE A GO and so on, and Wilfrid was given a sort of salver and he and Mabel came along and we had a little 'do' and all the rest of it. Those kind of things and MUSIC WHILE YOU WORK went much to the distress of certain factories. There was a bit of a battle about that. And of course we had this

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fight with the Musician's Union because we'd decided that we'd go for jingles and we'd go for the jingles which were made, in fact, by a firm in Dallas, in Texas, SAM,

AND ITS THE SAME Company which I believe the BBC is still using and it was the same firm which made the jingles for Radio London. And of course we had, inevitably, and I had Jim Fisher a bright, young Australian, and Kenny Everitt who was enormously clever and has gone on to make a name and fame for himself in Television as well as Radio, and Kenny and Jim were my jingle makers and they together, with me, we created those boringly banal slogans like "Radio 1 is wonderful" - which is inevitable of course and the Musicians Union didn't like that at all and there was a famous meeting with Michael Standing in the Chair and Hardy Ratcliffe and his colleagues, and Hardy had the twitch you know, he was a real tough guy: he was much tougher than his successor, John Morton, and much more difficult. And Hardy's first question was "Can I have your assurance, Mr. Standing, that those appalling American jingles which have been made without the use of our Members, will not be used any more?" And Michael said, "I er, I don't think we can give you that assurance, Hardy" And so Hardy looked at his colleagues and said "Well, I don't think, gentlemen, there is any need to continue this discussion." Shortest Union meeting I've ever been at. And of course, nothing happened, we went on using the jingles and they've been used ever since.

Frank Gillard: There was, in fact, nowhere in Britain where they could be made?

Robin Scott: There wasn't, because there was no deal under which we could make them. And.

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Camera Roll 4. Sound Roll 2.

Scene 5. Take 1.

Robin Scott: It was, of course, not just Radio 1 that we were concerned with, but Radio 2, and a vast body of listeners, regular listeners, to everything ranging from MRS DALE to Light Music, who had to be catered for and so one had to be thinking to what extent one could do that and they also had to suffer to an extent when the two Serivces came together and were Radios 1 and 2 before they then separated again. And the important time, the obviously crucial time, when one had to win both audiences in a sense was the period after breakfast which is still a high listening time, but largely housewives and people at home, and the problem was to find somebody who could work for both audiences and it was in effect the most difficult decision, it wasn't all that difficult to decide that Tony Blackburn should be the first D-J and have the Breakfast Show and so on. I think that decision has been proved absolutely right by whats happened since. The next decision was the more crucial one in a sense, what to do between 10 and 12, and there was only one person in my mind who came through looking at all the figures, listening right across the board to everybody else including himself, was Jimmy Young and Jimmy had marvellously responded to that and was perfectly aware that he was - having had one or two great hit songs and so on, but he wasn't of this new rock generation, at all, but miraculously and marvellously, he was a great communicator, he managed to hold the vast majority of that audience which had switched on earlier to Radio 1, and to satisfy the middle of the road housewives and everybody else,people listening in factories and cars and so on and gradually of course we introduced those things like cookery things and the telephone interviews and so on. And for me

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Jimmy is certainly the person who made possible, or largely responsible, I think, for the success of Radios 1 and 2 and the enormously increased audience which resulted from that. It wasn't - there were some amusing times; it wasn't altogether totally agreeable to be operating that Service. It would be, as it were, a little Pirate Ship on the back end, not the prow end, but very much at the stern of Broadcasting House at the extension where I brought in self-operating studios for the, not for the first time there had been self-op. but totally self-op. for the D-Js, the morning D-Js and by degrees, even people like Jimmy Young, much against the wishes of the Producing lot at the Aeolian Hall and so forth, who were taught to self-operate as well, put in the cassettes, run the discs, and so on. The atmosphere was not always an easy one, there was a feeling that Broadcasting House had been invaded in some way by a rather disreputable crowd who didn't dress perhaps in the appropriate way. I'm not saying that in those days people were still going around wearing dinner jackets to read the NEWS or that girls had to wear silk stockings and gloves and hats and things as in Reith's time but when disc jockeys had T-shirts with "DOWN WITH RADIO 4" on them and one or two others were seen by the Press wearing with what looked like sort of oriental rugs with their heads peeping out of a hole at the top, and the Press was trying to stir this up all the time. There was a certain feeling in Broadcasting House, I think, that the place had gone to the dogs or at least somepeople thought that. But then of course they begun to realise that the BBC, unless it had a popular side to it, and unless it was in fact responding to the needs of listeners, it was death to the organisation and it had to go forward in that way and it had to bring young listeners into recognising that the BBC could do as well if not better - a rock

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John Peel who was a great personal friend of mine still and John did a programme, or once a week he did a programme, called NIGHTRIDE which I'd originally conceived as modelling on a French programme which was run by Europe No. 1. and which was destined for those who find it difficult to go to sleep or that - truck drivers, and all the rest of it. And what he did there was a little bit what he'd done on Radio London, he'd done a show called PERFUME GARDEN - it wasn't quite that, but it was a very eclectic mixture of rock people, interviews, and occasionally touched on politics and one night, I remember, he interviewed John Wells and of course it was all live and John Wells, a satirist, a great writer and marvellous fellow, John, who of course works for Private Eye as well now, and John had done a piece about the Biafran War and was very pro-Biafran lot and of course Harold Wilson's Government was supporting the Nigerian side. And there'd been a complaint by some M.P. or other who'd rang Charles Hill. And said, "Oh, Charles, why do you put up with this kind of thing," you know - funnily enough, not from a Labour M.P. but from a Conservative M.P. And we were summoned, John and I and I had to take the tape along and play it in Charles Hill's office and then we were taken to see Sir John Hunt - a sort of - you know, and dressed down as it were -"John Hunt. We'd better go and see John Hunt. He'll tell you the facts of the situation" And John Peel and I were paraded before Sir John Hunt and sort of dressed down. That was it, that was the end of it. And on another occasion there was a complaint because John Peel had interviewed John Lennon and Yoko Ono and Yoko had described childbirth you know, and had been moderately explicit,nothing very terrible, and again a complaint. And I wheeled the tape machine

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music service, given the means to do it.

Frank Gillard: Lets move on, to your next appointment, because you weren't terribly long in Radio. You were back in Television in about 18 months. Tell us about that?

Robin Scott: Yes, and the Televison Service. And the BBC which was to some extent; it was changing of course. I mean it had already in the late '50s woken up to competition in a big way. Michael Peacock's taking over of the BBC Telelvision and the introduction of new types of entertainment, all that had happened in the late 1950's the STEPTOES, and so on. What was changing, I think, also of course and Hugh Greene was to a great extent responsible for that was the general climate in which people operated and a feeling that professionalism, that show business was really acceptable as part of a broadcasting service which didn't derive just for the need to educate and inform but that entertainment was absolutely vital. After all, BBC Radio before the War had been pretty dull in my memory and BBC Television in the '50's wasn't all that exciting except when OB.s went out and did adventures and exciting things. What was also changing, I think, was the Governance of the BBC, the arrival of Charles Hill which as David Attenborough has said was rather like Rommel taking over the Eighth Army. And I would hark back just for a moment to an incident, a couple of incidents, when I was still running Radios 1 and 2 when in fact I was summoned twice by Charles Hill to his office in Broadcasting House without in fact there being, although Kenneth Lamb, the Secretary, was involved in one of those occasions, certainly neither Frank Gillard, my boss, or Dick Marriott, or indeed the Director-General, were involved, this was a straight summons and, in sense, straight interference by the Chairman. And there were two broadcasting occasions and strangely enough both of them affected, concerned

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into Charles Hill's office and he listened and said "Yes, well I think thats all right, Robin. I think we can let that go. Seems to me a fairly harmless sort of, not very medical description of the event, but I don't think its very deeply shocking"..... But what the important thing there was that the Chairman had in fact interfered, as it were, with the process of executive control of broadcasting and it was a hint, perhaps, of the kind of **interfer**ence which lay ahead.

Frank Gillard: Tell us about the state of BBC 2 when you took it over and what your plans for it were.

Robin Scott: Well, BBC 2 was actually already, had acquired this marvellous reputation under David (Attenborough) David was going up to be Director of Programmes and Huw Wheldon was taking over as what was to be Managing Director, and the idea was that with Huw at the top and with David, and with Paul Fox and myself - David Paul and I constituted what Huw Wheldon described as his troika and we were, I think, a marvellously happy group together and I found BBC 2 in pretty good shape.

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Camera Roll 5. Sound Roll 3.

Scene 6. Take 1.

Robin Scott: I found BBC 2 in very good shape. That sounds a little bit patronising, its not meant ot be. David Attenborough, after all created it, in a sense, picked up where Michael Peacock had left off, in a sense, although Michael had created a service which was very educative and to some extent, educational and what David did, by degrees, was to introduce more popular elements into it and to help to create, with Aubrey's department (Aubrey Singer) starting Science and then Arts and then bringing in Music, and so on.

Robin Scott: to create such marvellous series as HORIZON and MAN ALIVE - Desmond Willcox and Bill Morton - and things like that which are still around. MAN ALIVE is not but HORIZON certainly is and - there were certain wonderful things on which to develop the Service. Huw Wheldon said to me, "Don't need to change anything, don't need to change anything". And I didn't say anything but I had every intention of changing certain things of course. There were too many serious programmes - the mixture, the diet, was a little bit heavy and that again was part of the inheritance, David's inheritance. And thats partly because entertainment programmes cost a lot of money - they cost far more than documentaries to produce - and because the services existed, Science & Features, Arts Features, the Documentary Department and so forth - existed to provide those sort of semi-serious,interesting programmes, but not the sort of programmes that one should have too many of if one is going to have a mixed diet. Also, after all, there were on BBC 1 on the Network, Paul Fox's Network, with whom I worked extremely closely, there were a certain number of serious programmes there and they needed alternatives. Now David operated the service on two principles - that there should be always as many junction points as possible in the course of an evening where you could offer an alternative choice between the two networks and that BBC 2 should not only cater for minorities in the small sense of the word, minorities, but those minorities which when you add them up come to a very substantial people in the population whether they be the gardeners or those interested in motor cars or .... or, of course, those interested in other forms of drama, and it was also one of the things which BBC 2 excelled in - the classic serial, I inherited that as a running thing - marvellous classic serials, and I developed that, and I expanded that, and I gave at times, I suppose, a disproportionate amount of my budget

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on BBC 2 to developing drama of various kinds. Drama which occasionally shocked as the CASANOVA series did which, of course, was an enormous popular success but which caused a lot of eyebrows to rise, including Mrs. Whitehouse's, although Hugh Greene, who never had any correspondence with her or even never replied to her letters, he ignored her, was I think wrong and that you can't ignore - you can ignore Mrs. Whitehouse, perhaps, personally,although I think she is a marvellous lady, I adore her, but you can't ignore the people who are behind her and they are not all straight-laced and narrow minded and old-fashioned people, they are part of the middle-mass of this country. So I added a certain number of new drama programmes and of course, during my time, added follow-ups to CIVILISATION which David had brought into being with Kenneth Clarke and followed that with Alastair Cooke's AMERICA and then Bronowski's series which, I think, was probably one of the jewels in the crown in the sense of BBC 2 during those years, some five years or so. Again, which came out of Aubrey Singer's Features Department - and a bubbling outfit it was - You see, the job of a Controller of a Network and I hear, now, in '85 that there is a move to get rid of the Controller and the notion that programmes are produced, as it were, by some kind of machine, production machine, and that they can be placed once made on either one network or another, but that the network has no particular style; I was one of those, and I still believe it very strongly, that a network must have a style and of course it must have its entertainment. I had the TWO RONNIES and I had the MORECAMBE AND WISE and I had - I mean the series which is now a great success on BBC 1 OPEN ALL HOURS started on BBC 2 as a pilot and David had had MATCH OF THE DAY and that had been taken by BBC 1 as being considered - well, as an audience puller - and I had to accept that because David would say,

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"Paul needs this for Saturday evening or Saturday night. I hate to deprive you of it, but blah, blah, blah.." And I would let certain things go with enormous regret and with (laughter) some feeling of having been robbed. But of course the Service as a whole required that BBC 1 should be the main, competitive, network. And BBC 2 was an alternative to that. But also in its own right, it had to create its own successes and the argument has always been when you are operating two networks, should your planning of a network be vertical in a sense that programmes follow each other and create this curious succession of delight, imagination, education, information, and so on, but hold the viewer in some kind of way, and introduce him to new things because you cushion a new series between two proven successes, should BBC 2 be planned in that vertical way or should it be constantly responding to BBC1 and providing alternatives? And the answer is, of course, that the truth lies somewhere in between and when I followed THE SIX WIVES OF HENRY VIII with ELIZABETH R and arranged with Paul that he should run the repeat of SIX WIVES OF HENRY VIII and then I would come in next week, bang in with the first of ELIZABETH R, and I knew that I would pull an enormous audience across to BBC 2 and I'd thought in my wisdom that one of the best alternatives to Sport on Wednesday night was a really good historical drama. Not a bit of it, of course, it split the households in two because Wednesday nights, from time to time, are the nights when you get the live Football League replays and mid-week matches and so forth. And it so happed that ELIZABETH R turned up first episode on a night when just such a match of some importance was being run on BBC 1 so Dad wanted to watch that and Mum was determined to watch ELIZABETH R. So the talk-back programme of the time had to invite me on and I had to explain myself and I had been in a sense a

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naughty boy. I'd offered something too strong as an alternative. Although it was a perfectly valid alternative to sport, it was too great a pull and it split the families. And what did I have to do? Well, we immediately put in a repeat of ELIZABETH R and everybody was happy.

Frank Gillard: How easy was it for a Controller to get his way with his Network. To take the initiative, to introduce new ideas?

Robin Scott: Well, the Controller and Director of Service, never actually lays his own ideas on the service because he's put himself in the position there of actually owning and backing a horse which is running inhis own race and what he has to do is obviously to pick other winners, the winners that are offered by others and its a question of deciding between this or that series and there would at the Editorial and Offers Meetings in the late summer, early autumn before each next year - each next financial year - obviously dozens and dozens of ideas coming up from the Production Departments Some of them associated with individual Producers, some of them associated with the Heads of the Departments and it was a matter of deciding partly whether we can afford such series and which ones to back and I said, "Thank God, I didn't back any losers" because its a very easy thing to do.

Frank Gillard: But could you if you saw a yawning gap in your programmes, could you say to Aubrey Singer, Head of Science and Features, "I must have a Medical series"?

Robin Scott: Yes, indeed. And I did that, in fact, just such a medical series it was brought into being, but not entirely on my recommendation but came out of Science and Features - Phil Daly's lot - but there were new series particularly in Entertainment which I certainly initiated with the Light Entertainment Department.

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Camera Roll 6. SoundRoll 3.

Scene 7 Take 1

Frank Gillard: Your last three years you were Deputy-Managing Director of the Television Service and right up there at the top. You were able to sense the feeling of the Service. Tell us how you felt it was going in relation to the BBC corporately?

Robin Scott: Ah, yes, it was Alasdair Milne's notion, I had been Controller of Development for three years from '74 to '77 and it was Alasdair's wish that I should be his Deputy across the board. What it actually meant, of course, was that he really wanted to run everything and that I should act as his mouthpiece when necessary, and so on. He was away a good deal and so I ran the Service very often on my own and there were a good many labour difficulties and strikes here and there and so on which were not much fun to deal with. There were also, of course, political editorial problems, and it reinforced what I already knew that in the BBC and, I guess to a large extent in other television organisations, you either came up through the show-biz, programme-making stream, or you came up through Current Affairs or News and there, also, was a funny sort of marriage because they were all, of course, journalists, but doing slightly different things, and it was not within the brief in a sense of a Managing Director or Director of Programmes, whatever, to take editorial decisions particularly on highly sensitive matters like Northern Ireland and that split, in a sense, was affirmed when it was the Governors who so decided that Charles Curran's successor, Trethowan, should not have that day to day management of the Current Affairs side of things as had had Charles who very definitely told the News and Current Affairs Meeting what he felt the situation was here, there and everywhere and had very definite personal views about things, I felt, and I got to know Charles very well, about South Africa, about Gibraltar, about Northern Ireland

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about contacts between the Government and the IRA, harking back of course when Willie Whitelaw set up that meeting between those with whom Margaret Thatcher and I would have no truck, and representatives of the Government, so that there was a definite separation within the BBC of power - a splitting of power - and of course it actually produced all the wrong results. It did not, in fact, make life easier for those in charge of the Service or of programmes. It merely made life more difficult, partly because I think there wasn't sufficient contact, that Huw Wheldon and Charles Curran had this sort of relationship whereby Huw ran his own Service and Huw being very much a military person ran it in his own marvellous jocular style where he was a great leader and one followed him, and so on, but there were certain areas where he was not strong. He was not strong in that particular area and he was not strong in actual organisation and planning and that he delegated, he didn't want to know very much about it. But it did produce bad results as we saw when the INLA Interview at the tailend of the last programme of the old not TWENTYFOUR HOURS, but the show that followed it, the TONIGHT show, and it looked like a sort of, you know, fingers up exercise to the Television Service even thoughit had been approved, you see, by others - Director of News and Current Affairs and, indeed by the Director-General but to Alasdair Milne and myself, watching it, I rang Alasdair and said, "How could that go out? Did you know..." He knew nothing about it. I mean, that is an absurdity and a similar thing happened, of course with the Carrigmore incident and it highlighted a separation between the editorial process and programme-making process which is bad for the BBC and we all know in the end common sense dictates actually what you should not broadcast in terms of taste, in terms of encouragement to violence and sedition and so on, there are basic

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rules about that which sensible people know how to deal with. It does not require a curious kind of baroque edifice, paraphernalia of current affairs jargon and meetings and all the rest of it and definition of this and that and so on. Its got much too complicated and, so in the end you have Governors' meetings like the one which followed the INLA incident and the Carrigmore incident where the Governors say, "Heads must roll" in the atmosphere, and so forth, and as has happened recently over that documentary on the extreme positions occupied by the two persons in Northern Ireland you get situations where people get over-excited and feel that they have a responsibility in terms of the nation, in terms of the truth, in terms of people, and so on and everything gets suddenly out of proportion.

Frank Gillard: Tell us now about the Television Development Committee?

Robin Scott: Well. I ran Television Development Committee as its Chairman for some five or six years and it was a very interesting, very exciting part, facet, of my work because a lot of my work consisted of running the Television Service as Head of Establishment and so on, and as acting as Deputy Managing Director, later. And dealing of course with European and World affairs as the sort of Television Service's Foreign Representative in the EBU and so on. The TDC, the Television Development Committee, was responsible for deciding how to use the Capital Budget of the BBC Television Service which was a big chunk, of course, of the BBC's Capital Budget as a whole, and therefore we were concerned with making recommendations which became decisions almost automatically about which new buildings were to be done first, whether new Cutting Rooms were to be installed at Bristol. My predecessor, Joanna Spicer and her team had decided on the Pebble Mill project, which turned out to be a winner. We were concerned with a whole range of things, including of course the development of Stage V at Television Centre, including even at

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that time the possibility of the White City site might be bought and that the whole of the BBC might be gradually moved towards that. It then went off the market but of course recently came on again and the BBC grabbed it. And we were therefore concerned with the policy, developing policy in programme terms because if you put in facilities they've got ot be used, they've got to be used in a proper, viable, logistical way and I was fortunate to have very good Engineering planners, people like Derek Grubb and Michael Checkland who of course now is the Deputy Director General of the BBC, people who understood that the BBC had to move into an area of management where costs, people and programme output had to be properly related to the central policy of the organisation.

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