

SIR PETER MOON

Sir Peter James Scott Moon, KCVO, CMG, a former ambassador to Kuwait and high commissioner in Tanzania and Singapore, died on July 10 aged 63. He was born on April 1, 1928.

PETER Moon belonged to the first generation recruited by the newly established Commonwealth Relations Office to serve as diplomats in the "new" Commonwealth emerging in the post-war era. Initially his work was bound up with Commonwealth relations but it subsequently broadened into the wider perspectives of the United Nations and then the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

Moon's most outstanding characteristics were a forthright manner coupled with a sharply perceptive intellect. He never kept silent if he judged that either the rationale or direction of policies was inconsistent with the facts. Sacred cows enjoyed no immunity from his criticism but he was invariably constructive and courteous and noted for sound judgement and commonsense. He inspired loyalty in his juniors.

His first diplomatic post, in 1956, was second secretary in South Africa, and his next was first secretary in Colombo. Then after a successful home spell as a private secretary to Duncan Sandys, a demanding foreign secretary, he joined the British Mission to the United Nations under Lord Caradon. Early promotion to counsellor in the newly formed Foreign and Commonwealth Office came in 1969 followed by appointment as FCO private secretary at 10 Downing Street where he served prime ministers Harold Wilson and Edward Heath. His immediate senior in the Private Office was Robert Armstrong and it was clear to contemporaries



that Peter Moon was a coming man. This appeared confirmed by his next appointment to the Nato defence college followed by secondment to the Nato international staff in Brussels until 1975. His bilingualism and complete adaptability to continental modes ensured a very successful assignment. However, his next, as counsellor in Cairo, seemed to some an illogical progression given his background. Promotion to head of mission (in Tanzania) came in 1978 and in the following year he was both appointed CMG and knighted (KCVO) during the Queen's

African tour. He took an intense interest in aid matters and his colleagues throughout Africa welcomed the circulation of his robust and penetrating dispatches. He was transferred to Singapore in 1982 which he found stimulating but after a shortish tenure there he was — somewhat to his surprise as a non-Arabist — appointed ambassador in Kuwait. He chose to retire from there in 1987.

During the recent Gulf crisis he refused to prognosticate in public, although approached repeatedly by the media, but his private com-

ments on the likely course of events proved both perceptive and accurate.

After marriage to Lucille Worms (a talented French amateur painter) in 1955 Moon's life was an engaging combination of English and French cultures and conversation chez Moon moved effortlessly from one language to the other. The couple's gift for hospitality flourished in Africa, Asia, North America and continental Europe. Despite his very English style Moon was a cosmopolitan, a trait inherited by his daughters who have all settled abroad.

On retirement the Moons established homes in both England and France and he and Lucille were frequently on the move, visiting their children overseas or commuting between Kensington and Brittany. Their lifestyle was Anglo-French embodying the best of both cultures.

Born in 1928 in Warwickshire, Peter Moon was educated at Uppingham where he left the mark of an all-rounder. At 18 he opted for the Royal Navy and served happily afloat as a seaman in the Mediterranean fleet. On his demobilisation in 1948 he went up to Worcester College, Oxford to read PPE. He thoroughly enjoyed Oxford, was elected to Vincent's and never lost his relish for cricket (becoming a member of the MCC), hockey and golf. He entered the Home Office in 1952 but quickly decided he was more suited to an overseas career, transferring to the CRO in 1954. There he persisted with the law studies he had begun in the Home Office and completed Bar Finals whilst a resident clerk at the CRO.

His wife and three daughters survive him.