

This book, therefore, rests on curiously uneven foundations. In addition to the wide and miscellaneous reading of a good many years, supplemented by what reading was necessary to give lecture courses on twentieth-century history to the graduate students of the New School for Social Research, I have drawn on the accumulated knowledge, memories and opinions of someone who has lived through the Short Twentieth Century, as what the social anthropologists call a 'participant observer', or simply as an open-eyed traveller, or what my ancestors would have called a *kibbitzer*, in quite a lot of countries. The historical value of such experiences does not depend on being present on great historic occasions, or having known or even met prominent history-makers or statesmen. As a matter of fact, my experience as an occasional journalist enquiring into this or that country, chiefly in Latin America, has been that interviews with presidents or other decision-makers are usually unrewarding, for the obvious reason that most of what such people say is for the public record. The people from whom illumination comes are those who can, or want to, speak freely, preferably if they have no responsibility for great affairs. Nevertheless, though necessarily partial and misleading, to have known people and places has helped me enormously. It may be no more than the sight of the same city at an interval of thirty years – Valencia or Palermo – which alone brings home the speed and scale of social transformation in the third quarter of the present century. It may be simply a memory of something said in conversations long ago and stored away, sometimes for no clear reason, for future use. If the historian can make some sense of this century it is in large part because of watching and listening. I hope I have communicated to readers something of what I have learned through doing so.

The book also, and necessarily, rests on the information drawn from colleagues, students, and anyone else whom I buttonholed while I was working on it. In some cases the debt is systematic. The chapter on the sciences was submitted to my friends Alan Mackay FRS, who is not only a crystallographer but an encyclopedist, and John Maddox. Some of what I have written about economic development was read by my colleague at the New School, Lance Taylor, formerly of MIT, and much more was based on reading the papers, listening to the discussions and generally keeping my ears open during the conferences organized on various macro-economic problems at the World Institute for Development Economic Research of the UN University (UNU/WIDER) in Helsinki when it was transformed into a major international centre of research and discussion under the direction of Dr Lal Jayawardena. In general, the summers I was able to spend at that admirable institution as a McDonnell Douglas visiting scholar were invaluable to me, not least through its