

Deepening business links

By **SIR PETER HEAP KCMG AND JAIME GORNSZTEJN**

OUTGOING AND INCOMING CHAIRMAN, RESPECTIVELY, THE BRAZILIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN GREAT BRITAIN



PETER HEAP is stepping down after 14 years as Chairman of the Brazilian Chamber of Commerce in Great Britain and will in future hold the title of Chairman Emeritus. A former diplomat, he was Britain's Ambassador to Brazil from 1992-95.



JAIME GORNSZTEJN succeeded Sir Peter Heap as Chairman of the Chamber in September 2009. He joined BNDES in 1993 having worked in venture capital, corporate and project finance. He was appointed Head of BNDES UK in February of this year.

It is with huge pleasure that the Brazilian Chamber of Commerce in Great Britain joins the welcome of President Lula on this important visit to London and has cooperated on this special FIRST report on Brazil.

The Brazilian Chamber of Commerce here has a long history. A perspicacious Brazilian Ambassador in London in the 1940s, during the war in fact, prompted the founding of both the Brazilian Chamber of Commerce and the Anglo-Brazilian society. Both thrive today and thus have a longer pedigree than most other equivalent bilateral organisations today.

The role of the Chamber is to help develop trade and investment between our two countries and it is good to see that these, in both directions, are nearly always on an upward path. In recent years, it is Brazil's exports to the UK that have risen faster than Britain's exports to Brazil, but both are growing. And Britain has provided some recent very significant investments in Brazil, particularly in the areas of energy and mining. But exporting is a bit like school reports. However much you do, and however successful you are, the verdict on the bottom line is always "could do better", and certainly there is still massive scope for both Britain and Brazil to trade more with each other. Neither country is well enough known in the other. And that is a major part of what the Chamber tries to do – to raise the level of awareness in each country of the business opportunities in its counterpart. Although the Brazilian Chamber in London gives more emphasis to helping Brazilian firms in the UK, the British Chamber of Commerce in Brazil places its emphasis on helping companies there. But both recognise that trade is a two way street and try to work together to promote trade and investment in either direction.

We also work quite closely with the Brazilian Chamber of Commerce in New York, from whom we have borrowed a number of ideas. One of them is our annual gala dinner which we have done now for eleven years, but which Brazil's New York chamber has done for much longer. Not only has our gala dinner, like theirs, become one of the bigger and more successful social and trade oriented events of its kind in the London Calendar, it also provides an opportunity for both governments to salute at a very high level the companies from both countries to whom we give awards for significant achievements for furthering trade and investment. At this year's dinner, in May, Lord Mandelson represented

the British Government and spoke about the importance of the commercial relationship between us, and Edison Lobão, Brazil's Minister of Energy and Mines spoke for the Brazilian Government.

We have not yet had a Brazilian President as our Guest of Honour but we have come close. President Cardoso had agreed to come but at the last minute had to cancel because of an unexpected emergency but he still sent Pedro Milan, his Finance Minister, as a late substitute. I stress these not simply to name drop but because the attendance of senior British Cabinet ministers at these events, and the fact that equally senior ministers from Brazil also attend, indicates the importance both governments attach to our trade relationship. And the roll call of the companies whose chairmen have received awards is not bad either. It includes HSBC, Rolls Royce, BP, Lloyd's of London, Odebrecht, TAM, Embraer, BG and other household names.

But not all trade and investments are to be seen in goods and services. Since Brazil is rather good at it, let us not forget that football was a British pastime taken by us to Brazil. As Douglas Hurd, once Foreign Secretary, put it rather nicely during a visit to Brazil – "we invented football and then we gave it to you and it has been very well looked after ever since."

As well as President Lula's well deserved receipt of the Chatham House Prize, this week also sees two other very different but similarly auspicious events. A chamber led trade mission leaves for Brazil this coming weekend, and BNDES, the Brazilian Development Bank, will inaugurate its London office. The arrival of the Bank in the world's leading international financial centre represents yet another step forward in the expansion of the institution's activities, which now extend far beyond Brazil's own borders. At the same time it underlines the high opinion in which the City and UK financial services are held in Brazil.

With its new London office, BNDES will increase its visibility in the international financial community and will be able to assist Brazilian companies that are in the process of internationalisation, or those seeking opportunities on the international market. At the same time, the Bank will act as a bridge between international investors and the wide range of investment opportunities in Brazil, in sectors ranging from infrastructure, industry and agribusiness. An excellent time, then to raise a toast to President Lula, to Brazil, and to the future expansion of UK-Brazilian trade and investment. **F**