

BDOHP Biographical Details and Interview Index

DOBLE, Denis (born 2 October 1936)

Career (with, on right, relevant pages in interview)

Entered Colonial Office (dealt with W. Indies, then Uganda), 1960	pp 2-6
Asst Private Sec. to Commonwealth and Colonial Sec., 1963-64	pp 6-12
Entered Diplomatic Service (East African Dept., Resident Clerk), 1964	pp 12-13,
28-9	
1st Sec., Brussels, 1966	pp 13-21
Lagos, Nigeria, 1968	pp 21-27
South Asian (Pakistan desk), then Defence Depts, FCO, 1972	pp 27-30
1st Sec. (Economic), Islamabad, 1975	pp 30-31
Head of Chancery, Lima, 1978	pp 31-36
East African Dept, FCO, 1982	pp 36
Acting Deputy High Commissioner, Bombay, 1985	pp 36-37
Deputy High Commissioner: Calcutta, 1985	pp 38-40
Kingston, Jamaica, 1987	pp 40-42
Consul-General, Amsterdam, 1991-96	pp 42-48

This is Malcolm McBain interviewing Denis Doble at Edmeads Cottage, Teffont, on 29 March 2004

MM You don't say anything about your schooling or university in the Foreign Office list, so could you please start off by telling us where you went to school, and about your university career, your service in the RAF and so on, and how you came to join the Colonial Office to begin with?

DD I went to Dover Grammar School which was a good, small town grammar school. They didn't send many people to Oxbridge from there, but I did manage to get through to New College, Oxford. I did National Service first, which is really what the college wanted: two years in the RAF, with the second year in Germany which was quite interesting, as it turned out, and then I spent three years at New College reading Modern History. I took the Civil Service exam, with some of my contemporaries from New College. I didn't apply for the Foreign Office, because I didn't regard myself as a talented linguist. I joined the Home Civil Service, but as I was interested in overseas affairs, they put me in the Colonial Office - the Colonial Office being part of the Home Civil Service in 1960. I was the last Assistant Principal, which was of course the rank at that time to join the Colonial Office, because they weren't recruiting after that. Then I spent three and a half years dealing with three parts of the world. The first was the West Indies, at that time it was the West Indies Federation, which really fell apart while I was there, nothing to do with me I think, after the Jamaican referendum. Norman Manley unwisely called a referendum on the Federation in Jamaica, and lost it, and was subsequently succeeded by Bustamante and then of course Trinidad wouldn't stay in the Federation, nor would Barbados, so it broke up rather sadly.

MM I was going to say, why did the idea of the Federation fail?

DD I think there was too much rivalry between the three main countries, Jamaica, Trinidad and Barbados, and there was the small island prejudice against the Federation, particularly in Jamaica, which of course had the biggest population, and that's why they voted against the Federation when the referendum came. The

Colonial Office were hopping mad about the referendum, because Norman Manley called it without consulting them. I think perhaps, like nowadays, you don't want to have a referendum unless you're going to win it. The Colonial Office thought they were going to lose it if they had one, and indeed Manley did lose it, which rather wrecked it, because then Eric Williams in Trinidad got out, and that finished it. Small island rivalry, which still goes on.

MM Was Commonwealth immigration an issue at that time?

DD It was, particularly because the Windrush in 1949 was the first shipment of immigrants from Jamaica, and that continued throughout the fifties; and it was only in, I think 1961, that there was the first legislation by the Conservative Government, which certainly was controversial.

MM In the West Indies you mean?

DD Yes, in the West Indies. Because they felt they were being discriminated against, which of course was true to a point; people were getting concerned about too many coloured immigrants, I think frankly. It was regarded as a piece of semi-racist legislation. It would be so regarded now, but governments have to take account of public opinion.

MM In this country?

DD Yes, yes, in this country, as is the case now of course. I went to Lancaster House for the independence conferences, which was one of the more interesting things I did. I was generally one of the minutes secretaries, taking the minutes for the conference. There were about three of us doing that and I did it for one of the West Indies Federation conferences, and I found that interesting, because I was able to meet quite a lot of the leaders at the time. The Secretary of State was Iain Macleod. Of course he was a very liberal Colonial Secretary, and really pushed ahead the whole business of independence after the "Wind of Change" speech in 1960.

MM By Harold Macmillan?

DD Harold Macmillan, yes.

MM In South Africa?

DD Yes, yes.

MM Now that impinged on the Colonial Office, I take it?

DD Oh absolutely. Macleod had a lot of problems, of course, from the right-wing Conservatives and from a lot of the right-wing settlers in countries like Kenya. I was for a period acting as Resident Clerk in the Colonial Office (I've been Resident Clerk three times). I remember one particular late night telegram I had to send off. Iain Macleod rang me up, and it was all about Frederick Cavendish Bentinck in Kenya, really trying to see him off. He was leading a particularly aggressive group of Kenyan settlers, and it was very difficult for Macleod. And then I dealt with Uganda, where again I was minutes secretary for the Independence Conference.

MM That was in 1961 wasn't it? Uganda?

DD Yes, it was 61-62. I did that after the West Indies, and I met Ben Kiwanuka, who was the Chief Minister who took Uganda into independence in 1962. But because there was an election immediately after independence, not before for some reason, Milton Obote took over, and that on the whole didn't spell good news for Uganda. He really did down the Kabaka of Buganda; the Baganda were in a privileged position before, under the British, and they lost out really badly, indeed I think Uganda lost out really badly, but Milton Obote was a bit of a firebrand and stayed there for quite some time until he was displaced by Idi Amin. It was pretty obvious to us that he was going to win after the election, and we were really rather concerned about the way things were going, but there wasn't very much one could do to influence that. I mean democracy is democracy. Walter Coutts was the Governor who chaired the conference.

MM So what was the attitude of the Colonial Office towards independence?

DD Well, it was very liberal, surprisingly, there wasn't really much opposition to it, because there were quite a lot of people who'd been in the Colonial Service overseas and were brought back to serve in the Colonial Office; but the Colonial Service always regarded the Colonial Office as a bit of an enemy, because we were too liberal. We were driven by the politicians in Whitehall. The Colonial Service was always very suspicious of Colonial Office people; they said they'd never visited the colonies and didn't know very much about them, the usual business. The counter to this was that quite a lot of officers were brought into the Office from the Service, known as retreads; in other words, they had another go at being a civil servant at home, and so it was mixed, really, the personnel there. But I think we were very liberal, and we were very hurt by the outlook of the CRO, who took the view that Colonial Office people couldn't really serve in CRO posts, and there was a lot of feeling about that, because quite a lot of CRO people were over-promoted to take jobs as High Commissioners and Deputy High Commissioners, which should have gone to some very good Colonial Office people, most of whom ended up in Home Civil Service Ministries. One or two of course joined the Diplomatic Service, not very many, people like Brian Barder, and Arthur Galsworthy and some like that who did very well in our Service. But most of them had families at home and went in to the ministries and Home Civil Service where they did very well; some became Permanent Secretaries. Peter Kitcatt became the Speaker's Secretary. I think the CRO's attitude was very unfortunate, and that led to the Plowden Report, and the combination of the CRO and Colonial Office with the Foreign Office. They were saying the personnel at the CRO, the senior people, were not really up to it; there was a lot of talent in the Foreign Office, which was then used in former Colonial Office posts.

MM The Colonial Office was merged with the CRO, wasn't it?

DD For a while, yes, it became the Commonwealth Office in 1966.

MM Oh it was as late as that?

DD I think it was.

MM That's before the date of the amalgamation of the CRO with the Foreign Office.

DD The formation of the Diplomatic Service was in 1965. The Colonial Office finally disappeared in 1966; the Commonwealth Office was merged with the Foreign Office in 1968. I remember there was a party marking the final end of the Colonial Office. The whole thing was pretty controversial; I remember that George Thomson was given a job in the cabinet of Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster from 1966/67 to be particularly nice to the Commonwealth countries. George Thomson had that job for one year, before he became Commonwealth Secretary, so there was an awkward transitional process. I was actually top of the Second Secretaries in the Diplomatic Service List from 1965, because I'd done slightly more years in the Colonial Office than my contemporaries in the Foreign Office. One other thing which combined, before the Offices formally combined, were the Resident Clerks.

MM Yes, you mentioned Resident Clerks and you were a Resident Clerk for the Colonial Office?

DD Yes, I was for a while in Church House, in Great Smith Street, as it was then. I did talk to people like Iain Macleod, and Reggie Maudling, who was Colonial Secretary briefly. But then I became a Resident Clerk in the CRO, when I moved over to Whitehall, because I was appointed Assistant Private Secretary to Duncan Sandys in 1964. He had four Private Secretaries, two Private Secretaries and two Assistants, two Colonial Office and two CRO. The fifth one was Frieda Smith, who was his girlfriend; so five of us sat in a rather uneasy relationship by the Downing Street Map Room, as it is now, which was Duncan Sandys' own office. Of course he was a rather strange individual; slightly eccentric in many ways. He worked absolutely all hours, and you really received an accolade if you were there when the cleaners came in at 5 in the morning, which did happen to me at least once. Sometimes Sandys, who I think tried to imitate Churchill, by working strange hours and taking a nap in the office. He would sometimes go home, and would reappear at

7.30 a.m. with a hand-written draft of a letter, which wasn't in his handwriting, but had been dictated to his new young Belgian wife, Marie-Claire.

MM Had she displaced Frieda?

DD Er, yes. But he was being nice to Frieda and keeping her on. Of course his first wife, who was Churchill's daughter, had committed suicide earlier. I think Frieda probably came on the scene after that, and then he married this young, well-connected Belgian lady, whom I still see at the Anglo-Netherlands Society, because she was a lot younger than he was, obviously. She hand-wrote letters, presumably in bed at some early hour in the morning. Another event at that time was the Duchess of Argyll scandal, and the whole business of the "headless" man. He was involved in that too. Part of his anatomy was photographed, which apparently cleared him.

MM Oh, he was involved in that as well?

DD Yes, he was one of the suspects.

MM Oh, I know he was one of the suspects, but was it ever proved?

DD No, I don't think it was him; Douglas Fairbanks Jnr was another suspect. Various theories have emerged over the years, with one or two other people mentioned. I think he was exonerated, but he definitely had an affair with the Duchess of Argyll at the time, no question about it, before he married Marie-Claire. I think there was an interval between Diana Churchill and the young Belgian. And Frieda was kept on out of friendship.

MM Was she the cause of any problems in the Private Office?

DD Indeed yes; we suspected, and it was true, that she reported on us to him, so we were told to be very careful what we said; it would get back to him if we were heard criticising him or others. So that was one problem.

MM Well, what would he do about it?

DD Well, he might summon one of the Private Secretaries and say he had heard this or that. It happened once or twice. But on the whole I found her a good colleague, myself, quite kind to the younger staff there; she would give us advice on how to deal with this rather strange beast. You know, one often had to clear things with him on behalf of the Office; when he was going out of the door, he always took you with him down the steps and swept you into his car. On one occasion, I was taken off to Streatham, where he was going to a constituency meeting, just to clear some points with him. It meant that the car could be used for official purposes as well as party purposes, which was of a certain use, if you see what I mean.

MM Ah, yes. And you'd get the car to bring you back?

DD Yes, but I had to wait until the end of the meeting; I came back with him.

MM Right.

DD And then I'd go to the station when he was going to Sheffield, for instance, and he'd sweep me on to the platform and the train while he was still trying to sort out a point. And then I jumped off the train just before it pulled out. In those days the stationmaster turned up with a top hat, if it was to receive a cabinet minister; this was in 1964 and they were still doing that!

He spent a lot of time with the Civic Trust, which was his invention when he was Minister for Housing and Local Government; this has achieved a great deal for towns around Britain in improving their centres. He spent so much more time on colonial work, which of course is much more complicated, drafting constitutions and letters etc, than on Commonwealth work, and the CRO got extremely annoyed. Joe Garner, who was the PUS (I mean Sir Saville Garner), and the first Head of the Diplomatic Service, insisted on leaving at 6.30 pm willy-nilly. He wasn't going to stay all night. This upset Sandys, but Garner was so fed up with his endless meetings on colonial matters that he took umbrage. The CRO were slightly sidelined time wise. I can

recall that we had many nocturnal meetings on Malta before it became independent, with Borg Olivier, who was then the Chief Minister, mainly about the defence arrangements, and the extent to which Britain would be allowed to use Malta for defence purposes and whether British ships would have nuclear weapons on them. I remember particularly the twenty-six drafts of a letter (we counted them); this was Sandys being unable to make up his mind. We had many meetings on Cyprus, which was another controversial area. I remember greeting the Greek Foreign Minister at 1.00 in the morning at the bottom of the staircase below the Private Office, and bringing him up in a rather bemused state to talk about Cyprus, accompanied by his Ambassador. So these nocturnal goings on were really rather strange, and not terribly productive. He spent so long on subjects and was so elephantine in his dealings that a lot of the goodwill he might have earned went rather by the board. It was particularly so in the case of Aden, which I had dealt with in the Colonial Office, after Uganda. That was the third subject I had before I became Assistant Private Secretary, and so I took a particular interest in Aden when I was in the Private Office. Sandys followed the rather benighted policy of subordinating the nationalists in Aden to the feudal Sheikhs in the interior. That was a disaster, because the nationalists in Aden, who were generally supported by Nasser, eventually gained control, and drove out the British, if you remember; we had to march out of the Crater, led by Mad Mike Mitchell, in a rather humiliating way. This was after Sandys had gone, but Sandys really was the cause of that. He had followed that policy, which was really formulated by Sir Kennedy Trevaskis, who was the Governor of Aden at the time; he was a very old-fashioned colonialist, in my view. I went with Sandys to Aden on a visit once, and we flew by helicopter around the Radfan area to the north of Aden, in the area of the Sheikhs. We saw at first hand the RAF's policy of 'proscription', which was not generally known to the world back then. This entailed razing crops to the ground in the hope of terrorising the rebels into submission, and it was a pretty nasty policy, a real throwback to colonial times, and it didn't work. It all rebounded against us.

MM You mean we were razing crops?

DD Yes, yes, the RAF were doing it from RAF Khormaksar.

MM How were they doing it?

DD Well, I think they dropped some firebombs and they used a certain kind of spraying, if I remember. It was mainly through fire and poison. And helicopters were used as well. But, it was the sort of policy one might have used in the 19th century. So these things were going on in Aden. The Foreign Office didn't like any of this, I might say, but Duncan Sandys was able to bully Rab Butler (R A Butler) in Cabinet meetings.

MM Rab Butler being the...

DD Foreign Secretary. One thing the CRO, or at least the Colonial Office, did like about Sandys was that he did tend to get his way in Cabinet. You know civil servants like their Ministers to succeed in Cabinet. They're always hopping mad about failure. I remember Tom Bridges (Lord Bridges) was one of Rab's Private Secretaries,

MM Foreign Office Private Secretary?

DD Yes, yes, and Richard Parsons was there as a young man as well, and they were always very annoyed about the fact that Sandys bullied Rab in Cabinet; and he tried to bully Alec Douglas-Home, who of course by that time had become Prime Minister, perhaps with a certain amount of success; but he was not very popular in the Party and didn't really play much of a role in Opposition after the Labour Government of Harold Wilson came in. Ted Heath was elected as Leader, and Sandys didn't really feature in the Shadow Cabinet very much, partly because he had burnt his boats. I think he thought he might become party Leader at some point but he wasn't really bright enough. He was very energetic and very hard-working...

MM And very domineering...

DD And very domineering. Yes he was. He was also pursuing really quite dubious policies. The other event that occurred at that time were the mutinies in East Africa.

If you remember, after Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania became independent, there were three mutinies, and Sandys was able to get requests from the East African governments for our troops to quell the mutinies. But he spent some time trying to get a request out of Zanzibar, which was then independent, and for the British to go in and sort out Okello, who was the left-wing leader at the time. Tim Crosthwaite, who was the High Commissioner, tried to persuade the Zanzibar government, but it didn't quite work. And I remember one meeting I was present at with Sandys and David Bruce, who was then the American Ambassador, when they were trying to work out the strategy. The Americans were quite keen, if it could be fixed; I was the only one present at that time and did a short minute of the meeting, which was very secret. These things were going on in this post-colonial era, when Sandys was still trying to run matters.

MM And of course the government in Zanzibar, after the revolution, had become quite extreme.

DD I think that's true, yes, I mean it was a pretty nasty regime and it did need sorting out, but this was the way they were trying to bring it about. And, as I say, the Churchill thing carried on. I remember in Aden he used to dictate to me in his underpants you know, early in the morning. Churchill tended to dictate to his secretaries in his night-clothes; there were these stories. And he used to have naps in the office; Frieda would settle him down and he'd have a half-hour nap, so that he could continue late at night, which again was Churchillian. Frieda used to supervise, so there was this sort of conscious attempt to ape Churchill.

MM Strange man.

DD Oh yes, very strange. And he died in the mid-seventies, but it was a very interesting experience for me, needless to say. I only got one trip with him. The senior Private Secretaries went on most of the trips, but I just went to Aden once, and I had been there before with the Colonial Office when I was Secretary to the Port Commission. I was there for about five weeks and we compiled a report on sorting

out the port, with various eminent gentlemen; but that was shelved when the revolt occurred, so nothing happened once the balloon went up. So that was that, really.

MM Well, nothing would have happened anyway. That port in particular was losing importance as sea travel diminished and as container ships and tankers became ever bigger.

DD Yes I think it was losing importance; Djibouti was coming up. Djibouti was much more peaceful, and ships didn't need to bypass it. And then the election came in 1964, which Harold Wilson won by two votes, I think, and he had Arthur Bottomley, who was a trade unionist as Commonwealth Secretary. I stayed there for a little while, still in Downing Street, working for him. I think Greenwood became Colonial Secretary back in Church House, where I wasn't involved then. The thing about Arthur Bottomley was that he, in total contrast to Duncan Sandys, signed every piece of paper that was put in front of him (perhaps without reading it) and almost certainly without querying it. And he wasn't really much of a Commonwealth Secretary. I think Wilson gave him the job because he supported him through the trade unions. There was clearly no need for me after that. He just needed the couple of Private Secretaries, so I was then shunted off to the CRO.

MM Oh you came to the CRO?

DD I did; because they said "Well, do you want to transfer to the new Diplomatic Service?" and I said "Yes, I did", and after two interviews - I had to have interviews and things - with a CRO chap who was Ken East, and with a Foreign Office chap who was a man called Elliott (he was drowned off Israel when he was Ambassador). Anyway, they were both very pleasant, and I had quite extended interviews, and they said "OK", so I transferred to the Diplomatic Service. I worked for a while at the CRO with John Hennings on Africa for a bit.

MM Now what years were those?

DD Well that was the end of 1964, just after Labour came in, because I didn't stay in Bottomley's office, until early '66.

MM Right.

DD And I was in the Diplomatic Service at that time, working mainly on East Africa.

MM You were in the East African Department?

DD Yes that's right, the other head of Department was Michael Scott. Hennings was doing development policy in an East and West Africa Department; there was a curious hybrid department, which was then broken up and merged with East African Department. And then I was posted to Brussels.

MM Brussels?

DD Yes

MM From the CRO?

DD Yes, and the reason for that was, at the time they decided to change over Foreign Office people with CRO people as a deliberate policy; they said "Well, here's a chap who's been Private Secretary, good value, you know, must be a good egg, we'll send him to Europe", to the Embassy in Brussels, which I didn't altogether welcome. I was really rather looking forward to going somewhere like Delhi, or Nairobi, which was more my interest of course. I remember particularly Robin Renwick being rather annoyed because I'd been given Brussels, and he'd been "shunted off" to Delhi, as he put it, as the Foreign Office chap, cross-posted. In fact he enjoyed Delhi, he told me afterwards, and he had an interesting time. But he was a bit annoyed that I got Brussels, and the other who was annoyed was Hugh Arbuthnott, whom I know well; CRO chaps pinching these rather sought after "chandelier jobs", as they called them. So that was why I went to Brussels, which is why I didn't refuse it. I wanted to go

further afield. I had hoped to do the same in National Service but I only got as far as Germany.

MM So what were you doing in Brussels?

DD Well, I was Second Secretary in Chancery from 1966 to 68; looking back on it, it was a rather old fashioned Embassy, under Roddy Barclay, who had been Chief Clerk and Ambassador in Denmark before; this was his last post. He was quite kind to me, but rather stiff and very correct. I think he felt I was not quite the chap for Europe; he had some sort of prejudice against me, I felt.

MM How about French language?

DD Well, my French was not bad. I'd done French A-level. The Head of Chancery was Caryl Ramsden, who had been Private Secretary at Number 10 with Macmillan, but he hadn't lasted very long. He'd been there for a year, and I found him a bit of a snob. I mean he hobnobbed with the Royal Family on the golf course ... that sort of thing. I think he was really keen to socialise with them, rather than with the up and coming politicians, which was what I thought he should have done. I did a bit of talent spotting, and I found Tindemans, who later became the Belgian Prime Minister, and who was Flemish. I took him out to lunch a few times, and I cultivated Stevie Davignon, who became a Commissioner in Europe later on and Pierre Harmel's Private Secretary shortly afterwards. Stevie Davignon was the sort of chap who was keen to know the main Embassies and that sort of thing, but no, I found him quite friendly, I met him in Brussels.

MM And he became Private Secretary to whom?

DD Pierre Harmel, who was the Foreign Minister at the time. I thought I didn't do too badly with the politicians, which was my job really, rather than consort with the aristocracy. Plenty of other people doing that. The main event that occurred there was our attempt to join the Common Market, which was during the second round of negotiations. Harold Wilson and George Brown came together, they did a European

tour in '66; they had talks at Val Duchesse with the Belgians, and there were one or two funny incidents. I remember the party was waiting to go off for talks, in the Residence in Brussels, and George Brown wasn't there; and Harold Wilson said "Where's George?" and the Ambassador said "Well, Doble, you'd better go and find him," and I was sent upstairs to the registry and George Brown was up there having a gin and tonic, and he said "Have a gin and tonic, my dear boy! Have a gin and tonic!", and I said "Well, the Prime Minister is waiting for you downstairs, Sir." He came down fairly soon afterwards, but it was that sort of typical George Brown incident, which I was involved with. George Brown also thought parts of the residence were a little shabby, and asked Roddy Barclay if he would like them refurbished. He was met with a polite refusal. I was involved in some of the arrangements too. And of course that ended in General de Gaulle's second "non". Ted Heath managed to get us in, in the third round in 1972 a few years later, but that was the second abortive attempt, and I was involved a bit in that.

MM You were involved in that?

DD Well, I was involved in the arrangements, I wasn't involved in the talks. I mean they went round all the European capitals. The Wilson-Brown act!

MM What was the view of the Belgians?

DD Well, the Belgians were very supportive, on the whole, in our time. We felt we were much more in with them than the French, partly because of the war, the legacy of the war was still very strong then.

MM Still is!

DD Yes, and the French were very arrogant towards the Belgians. They regarded them very much as second-rate; they were rather silly I think in the way in which they treated the Belgians, but I think there was a certain snobbery element. They regarded French as the snobbish language, and of course Brussels then was almost entirely French speaking amongst the educated classes. The other classes of course spoke

Flemish, and as you know the Flemings then gained political influence, the legislature changed, the Flemings gained much more influence. But I think we had a lot of political clout, but we couldn't really shift the French, and the Belgians didn't really shift the French either. There was one particular correspondent for *La Libre Belgique*, which was almost the main Belgian paper, who was very, very pro-French and continually annoyed us by writing rather strong anti-British, rather prejudiced articles. The Ambassador tried desperately to do something about it, but couldn't really and that was a bit of a thorn in our flesh. Any little thing that he could criticise about Britain he did.

MM What were their main criticisms at that time?

DD Well, I think that we were considered to be not European enough, which would of course be the French view that we were unsuitable for Europe, and that we looked towards the United States and towards the Commonwealth, which we did to a considerable extent, and that was reflected in British public opinion as well, so every time there were anti-European articles in the British press, he tended to pick them up, you know about legislation, and rather like some of the stories we still get, but of course there was plenty of scope for him to relay this sort of anti-European attitude in Britain. I think politicians were ahead of the population, indeed Ted Heath was ahead of the population at the time, and he managed to get it through.

MM And he still is!

DD Well yes, that's right. It still rumbles on. But I think the British politicians were right to take us in, and I feel quite strongly about that, and the Belgians were supportive. Of course we had a lot of military celebrations and anniversaries all the time, as you can imagine, and the Menin Gate happened all the time.

MM Now the Menin Gate happened at night?

DD Er ... the sounding of the bugle, at the Menin Gate, the last post where it was played every night. With all the lists of those who had fallen, mainly in the First World War battles.

MM Where is the Menin Gate?

DD At Ypres. And I think that still goes on.

MM And is Ypres in Belgium?

DD Yes it is. And the main activity was Passchendaele, as opposed to the Somme in France; Passchendaele was just over the Belgian border, and was a dreadful long drawn out battle rather like the Somme; it's that I think which is mainly commemorated at the Menin Gate at Ypres. So it was all this nostalgia, well, nostalgia's not the word, but looking back towards the First World War. I remember going to Benjamin Britten's War Requiem, which had recently been composed, in the cathedral at Ypres, a very moving performance, this kind of thing happened. And we had Lord Mountbatten who came for Zeebrugge, the 50th anniversary, 1968, of the Iron Horse in 1918, which was a famous raid.

MM Raid, that's the word.

DD And Mountbatten came on the fiftieth anniversary to celebrate it; I went down to Ostend airport to meet him, before he went on to meet the Ambassador and others who were waiting at Zeebrugge. He transferred from his helicopter and I was waiting with a young army officer and a naval officer. Unfortunately, he arrived twenty minutes early, in his helicopter, and fortunately we were there, and he got off the plane and glared at us and said "Some bugger's got me here twenty minutes early", which was really very unkind of him. It had nothing to do with us, but that was how he was, and he didn't talk to us at all, he just skulked around until he could be taken off by car to Zeebrugge. I think that was the only time I ever met Mountbatten. And that was a part of the defence thing. There were these anniversaries going on all the time, which was all part of the Anglo-Belgian relationship, I suppose. The Duke of

Edinburgh came through as well. He came on an equestrian conference and I was given the job of taking his baggage and his secretary up by car to Rotterdam, because his plane couldn't take off from Brussels because of the fog. We were driven up to Rotterdam, and unfortunately the end of the story is that the Belgians took him off in a large Mercedes at great speed, which was very silly of them, because I drove behind in an Embassy car, where the driver wouldn't do more than about 60mph, with the baggage, and with Tanya Tolstoy, who was his very attractive secretary, the one bonus for me, and I said "This is awful. He's going to be very annoyed when we get there" and she said "No, no, he'll be sitting having a whisky, don't worry it'll be all right!" I couldn't get the drivers to go faster, and when I got to Rotterdam airport he was pacing up and down on the tarmac. He looked at me and said "What the devil do you mean keeping me waiting like this?", so I got out, rather mud-on-my-face, and it really wasn't my fault; but I was left with the task of taking the baggage up afterwards, you know. And the Ambassador made rather a lot of fuss about that, I thought extremely unfairly, but there we are.

MM At your expense?

DD Yes. So much for my meetings with the Duke of Edinburgh. I met him on a couple of other occasions, but then ... again, it was the sort of Mountbatten attitude of taking it out on juniors, who really weren't responsible for the arrangements. And Tanya Tolstoy was wrong, because he was very annoyed indeed. She got it wrong. There you are! There was a British Week, when British weeks were fashionable; it involved a huge organisation. It took about 18 months to organise, the whole Secretariat, when we used to do it that way. And Princess Margaret and Lord Snowdon were the main guests for it. I remember Lord Snowdon expressing some surprise at the Ambassador's remarks, saying that he didn't much like the modern painting show, which had been put on by the British Council, he'd rather have had a selection of Turner water-colours, which annoyed Snowdon, who felt that he really had to show off the new painters, as you can imagine. And Princess Margaret unfortunately was sick for the first part of it and came rather late, so we had to put up with Lord Snowdon on his own for about three days, and he clearly wasn't enjoying himself very much, but Margaret came for the last two to three days. I'm not sure that

she enjoyed it much either. I think it was a time when they were both not getting on very well, this was 1966; there was a lot of tension between them and so on. But the British Week (the Lord Mayor of London came, and the President of the Board of Trade, Tony Crosland) was a huge effort. And really I don't think it had the results that it should have had, financially, and British Weeks were discontinued in that way, I think about the end of the 1970s, and the Brussels Week was one of the reasons why. The Brussels Week was very expensive to mount and...

MM And didn't produce anything.

DD No, and we had smaller versions of British Weeks after that, but not the sort of huge effort that had been put into that. I also met Geoffrey Robinson, who was there as a young researcher for the Labour Party and who subsequently became a Cabinet Minister and got into trouble with Mandelson, over the loan, and became a very rich man through his business exploits. He did have relationships with Belgian ladies; in fact there is a story of one particular Belgian lady who left him a lot of money. I imagine that was partly why he was in Belgium. But he did stay a night with me, Geoffrey Robinson, in my flat, he was then doing research for the Labour Party and he was clearly very bright. I took him to an American reception, and he had a big argument with some of the Americans, but I was impressed with the way he kept his end up, I must say.

MM Wasn't he something to do with Jaguar cars?

DD Yes, he became the head of Jaguar and he was M.P for Coventry, and that was his main thing. He also had a lot of other activities on the go. I met him fairly recently at the memorial service for Denis Thatcher, and reminded him of the Brussels visit. He gave me his card. Of course he's not in the Government now, but he's still pursuing his business interests, as far as I know. But he happened to have come through, and the other chap I might mention is Bryan Gould, who was Second Secretary Commercial there with me, and that was his one spell in the Diplomatic Service, his one post abroad, which he talks about in his autobiography. Of course he became a very senior Labour politician, which is what he wanted to be all along. But

he married Gilly my Secretary, my Chancery Secretary, who I noticed disappeared for long periods of time, they were then courting and got married, and are still married and living in New Zealand, after he retired from British politics.

MM He went into New Zealand politics, didn't he?

DD Well, I don't think he did really; he went to Worcester College, Oxford, from Brussels to lecture in Law, which he was offered because he had a very good Law degree from New Zealand; and then he became an MP for Southampton, after that, and got into Parliament. Oh, and he was also on TV interviewing people. He worked his way up through the Labour Party, but I think fell foul of Peter Mandelson. He did stand against John Smith for the leadership, when Kinnock pulled out in 1992, but he didn't really have much chance. But after that, when Blair and Brown came on the scene, very much organised by Mandelson, Bryan Gould dropped out and decided he hadn't got much of a future. He also got leukaemia and had treatment for it, which I discovered again from his autobiography, and went off to New Zealand to be Vice-Chancellor of Waikato University, and still is, as far as I know. But he was a good colleague of mine (although a left-wing New Zealander), but it was the only stint he did in the Diplomatic Service. Also there was a man called Hinchliffe, whom I might just mention, who was in the registry in Brussels, whom I knew well; I used to supervise him and did his reports, and he was caught in Khartoum a couple of years later selling secrets to the Russians. I was somehow surprised that I was never interviewed about Hinchliffe, because I knew him quite well, but they'd obviously got enough evidence to convict him of this. He wasn't a spy, he had monetary problems in Khartoum; there wasn't a hint of any of that in Brussels, although I did find him a rather reclusive, rather quiet sort of chap, but that doesn't make him a spy, after all. But I was never asked about him, which I found slightly surprising. And he got ten years. He used to sell despatches; you know, green print as it was. It wasn't anything that great. And I did wear Diplomatic Uniform for the first time in my career, to the Palace receptions and so on

MM Well, it was a monarchy.

DD Yes it was one of those posts; it was a European Kingdom. Well then after that I reverted to CRO territory, you might say, in fact the Head of Personnel said "I'm sending you to Lagos", he said, "I think it's probably a more suitable post for you"; which was a bit of a put-down, but again I would rather have gone a bit further afield, but anyway Lagos turned out to be a very interesting and very stimulating post at that time.

MM What time was that?

DD I went in late 1968 and I did feel that the FCO had quite given up their experiment of sending me to a chandelier post, so they sent me off to Lagos to do the Aid portfolio, which didn't look very exciting at the time (there was a certain amount of aid being given), really working for the ODM, I think it was then (Overseas Development Ministry). But of course it did develop into a full-scale relief programme because of the Biafran War, which was in full swing at the time.

MM So you were doing aid, and the relief program for the Biafran War?

DD Yes, when I arrived it was actually being dealt with by Chancery, because David Hunt, who was then High Commissioner, regarded it as politically very sensitive and didn't really trust the chaps upstairs in the Aid department to do it; so it was done by the Second Secretary in Chancery. When a new Aid counsellor arrived, he decided that this was really rather silly, because it was ODM money and the Aid department ought to take it over. So we did take it over and I found myself in the middle of this relief programme. The war was still on at the time. Harold Wilson gave £5 million to be spent particularly on relief, and as the war came to an end (it ended in 1970), a great number of doctors and nurses were flown in by Oxfam and Save the Children Fund essentially, who were funded almost entirely by the British Government, by the ODM, and they worked with the Nigerian Red Cross, which was their Nigerian counterpart, trying to do something about the Biafran children, who were left on the Nigerian side of the line; and there was a huge programme of inoculations, vaccinations and medical attention and so on going on in the east in Nigeria, which I found fascinating. I was able to go round and visit all these operations. I had a

Landrover and a driver and there was no phone, there were no communications to Lagos and I was a bachelor, so I wasn't leaving anybody behind; and I used to go off for two or three weeks. The bridge was down over the Niger to get across to the East, the Onitsha Bridge, that had been blown up in the war, so you had to go across on a rickety ferry with the Landrover, and for a young diplomat I found it all quite exciting. And in fact I found it a very satisfying job, because it was very much hands on, quite different from a normal diplomatic job sitting in a European Chancery. I wrote reports on my visits, and I think that probably for the only time in my career, they were read at Secretary of State level, because there wasn't much else coming back. So I was the main officer going around getting reports of exactly what was happening, and I was complimented on that afterwards when I got back; and it was one of the more satisfying jobs that I did. And some of it was very unpleasant of course, Biafran children looking pretty bad.

MM What were you looking out for to actually report back on?

DD Well, I think the extent of the operation, the number of people being cared for and so on, in all these clinics in the area, and it seemed to me that the condition of the children wasn't as bad as Biafra propaganda painted it. A lot of them were very malnourished, but of course the Biafrans had a very effective propaganda campaign through Markpress, and through some of their supporters like Frederick Forsyth who, remember, changed sides. He was with the BBC, but ended up supporting Biafra in a big way. And they had very good propagandists, who tended to exaggerate the extent of the suffering. It was considerable, but not quite as much as the world believed. And it was a very effective propaganda campaign, there's no question about that. So I think my reports damped down the scale of the human disaster, which was probably what the British government quite liked to hear.

MM After finding that there was this or that requirement in this area, that there were already clinics there, what did you do, apart from reporting it?

DD Well, I might recommend stepping up the operation or scaling it down, depending on particular areas.

MM You mean sending staff?

DD Sending more staff, supplies and more money and the operation was expanded as the Federal army pushed on through Biafra, and as they gradually took it over. Of course more money was put in.

MM I guess because the field of operations was changing?

DD Yes, it got bigger, that's right. And more money was spent on agricultural implements for the farmers, and a lot of tools was imported through Port Harcourt, which was also opened up again in the south, and one had to try and supervise the distribution of this stuff, and we got two or three TCOs in.

MM TCOs?

DD Technical Co-operation Officers, paid for by the ODM to do it. But it was extremely difficult for them, because they had to use the Nigerian farmers and officials at some point or other, and of course once they got their hands on the tools we weren't quite sure they were distributed in the right way to the poorer farmers, who'd lost out in the war; we think a lot of it probably went to the bigger boys, who probably then sold it on and so on. I mean we couldn't control the operation as we would have liked to have done, but even so they did go into the economy, pick-axes and shovels and all sorts of agricultural items. Blue Peter sent several Peugeot cars there, and I was able to report that I'd seen them; that went out on the BBC programme back in London, remember. And there were other medical teams, for instance the St. John's Ambulance (Order of St John) sent out a medical team, whom I had quite a lot of dealings with.

MM The French must have been quite pleased at our sending the Peugeot cars?

DD Indeed, but they were ones which lasted better in the rather bad road conditions. They were very well sprung, those Peugeot estate cars, they were without doubt the

best cars for that reason. Which is why Blue Peter sent them. The Save the Children Fund I remember were very pleased with them too. I was made an S.B St.J,

MM A what?

DD A Serving Brother of the Order of St. John. And Leslie Glass, who was then British High Commissioner in Lagos, summoned me down and said “They seem to want to give you this award, terribly nice”, which must be rather unusual in the Diplomatic Service, because when I received it from Harold Caccia, the PUS, FCO, who was the Grand Prior of the Order, whom I’d met briefly before when a Private Secretary (Duncan Sandys also drove him bonkers), you know and he said to me “You know, I don’t often give these awards to members of our Service, you must be one of the few”, so that was quite nice. And we then gave an OBE to the leader of the St. John’s team, which I’m not sure he quite deserved, but Leslie Glass felt that we ought to reciprocate. It did occur to me that, if I hadn’t been offered this Serving Brother award, I’d probably have got an OBE myself, because some of the British junior aidworkers did get MBEs, much to the annoyance of some of the local businessmen. There was quite a lot of controversy about Honours. We got two OBEs for it, the leader of the Save the Children Fund team got the other OBE.

But I also went to Calabar, in South Eastern Nigeria, which was Mary Slessor country, and to Port Harcourt in Rivers State. Shell and BP had started up their operations again. Shell/BP worked together (Anglo-Dutch) and their operations had been severely disrupted during the war; they had all these oil flares in Rivers State, and the swampmasters getting oil out of the swamps. I went around by helicopter with Leslie Glass, seeing this extraordinary landscape. And I also went to Warri, which had something of the atmosphere of a Wild West town about it. A lot of oil men moved in there, which was also in Rivers State, that was all starting up as well. I paid about ten visits to Enugu, which was the capital of the East, with various officials, and after the war was over I took Michael Stewart, who of course had been Foreign Secretary and had defended the Government’s policy very effectively, which was a difficult policy to maintain against the Biafran propaganda, if you remember. And he made a particularly good speech at the Oxford Union, for which he was

highly praised; but he and his wife came out afterwards and I went in a small plane with them to Enugu, and it was the most terrifying flight I've ever had in my life, because there was a violent thunderstorm about half way there, which seemed to carry on for a long time, and this small plane was being buffeted around with a Norwegian pilot. There were only four of us in it, and I think they were quite worried about what they'd let themselves in for! But we got there anyway, and of course he's a very modest man, very nice man, Michael Stewart. And Leonard Cheshire came out as well during the war, to see what his organisation could do to help the relief programme. We were worried that he was rather pro-Biafran, which he might have been, and I remember Michael Palliser had managed to intercept him at the airport in Paris, as he was going through, and give him a message from the Secretary of State urging him to say the right things. There was a sort of operation there to give him the right briefing, which I remember Palliser was involved in. Peter Stewart, the BBC correspondent, was kicked out by the Nigerians, and the other thing that happened was that Bob Scott, the Defence Adviser, did a very critical report of the Nigerian forces, which was leaked to the *Sunday Telegraph*. But the chap who leaked it was Jonathan Aitken, and that was where I first heard of Jonathan Aitken, in 1971. He managed to get a copy off one of the Generals, with whom he was friendly, and promptly gave it to the press. He was charged afterwards with breaching the Official Secrets Act, but he got off. My first experience of Jonathan Aitken!

MM First and last.

DD It was as far as I was concerned. I lived in the Harbourmaster's house, which was in the garden of the High Commissioner's residence; it was very pleasant, because it looked out over Lagos harbour. It was pulled down soon after, when the residence itself was pulled down, but it was a good experience, because I used to sit on my verandah eating paw-paw for breakfast, looking out over the shipping in the harbour.

MM Static shipping?

DD Yes, it was fairly, but it was a very nice time, and of course Lagos itself wasn't particularly violent at that time. There was a blackout, but you could move around fairly safely, and the violence and corruption developed later in the seventies and eighties, when fortunately I wasn't there; and the social life was good in Lagos, because there wasn't much else to do, I suppose. And we had some very good people in the High Commission, like Richard Parsons, who was Head of Chancery, Hugh Arbuthnott, Andrew Bache, and Maeve Fort who became the most senior woman in the Service to be posted overseas, I think, as High Commissioner to South Africa; Maeve Fort was the Second Secretary, so it was a good team, and the bonhomie was more than I've known it anywhere else; and we kept together to a great extent. And Jimmy James, who also turned up as an Immigration Officer after his RAF service, was involved in the Great Escape of 1944. They've just celebrated the fiftieth anniversary.

MM Ah, Colditz...

DD Er ... no, it was one of the other camps, and you remember 75 people escaped and fifty were shot, and Jimmy James was one of the ones who'd survived. I saw him recently at the Imperial War Museum and reminded him of that. He was one of the celebrities being interviewed by everybody in the media, Jimmy James. On the whole, the British Government policy was justified.

MM With regard to Biafra?

DD With regard to supporting the Federal government with arms and aid against Biafra, which was very controversial at the time, partly because the Nigerian government under General Gowon were very magnanimous to the Biafrans afterwards. There wasn't any of the African vindictiveness, which you might have expected, and they were really very generous; they didn't take it out on the Biafran survivors. I think Ojukwu was allowed to go off to the Ivory Coast into exile, I mean he wasn't tried or shot or anything like that. I think that was something good that came out of the policy.

MM Good, good. So you finished in Lagos, Denis, what was your next assignment after that?

DD Well I came home to the Office.

MM What year was that?

DD 1972. I was at home until 1975 and I was first of all Pakistan desk officer, and I don't think there was anything of great note then, except Mr Bhutto came to London and I remember I met him very briefly after the Bangladesh affair, after Bangladesh was created, and there was a dinner for him at the Savoy, presided over by Ted Heath, the Prime Minister; I remember that.

Then I did a spell in the Defence Department which was my second job at home. And one of the interesting things I did then was to help update something called 'The War Book', which you may know involved HMG's arrangements in the event of war, particularly nuclear war. One of my tasks was to brief Ambassadors (some of them very senior), before going to their posts, on some of the nuclear war arrangements, which really involved a series of regional posts, in case the UK was knocked out, that kind of thing. And they were slightly amused, I think, to be briefed by a fairly junior Officer, who told them that there would be a piece of paper in their box at post, outlining these arrangements. The other thing I did was to go to the Bahamas with an MOD delegation to negotiate what was called the AUTEK firing range, which was an underwater firing range for underwater missiles, which was apparently very important to the Americans, as well as to ourselves. The Bahamas was considered within our sphere of influence, so we negotiated the agreement with the Bahamas government, and I represented the Foreign Office on the Ministry of Defence team. The range was very heavily used and probably still is for that matter.

Whilst I was at home, I served as Resident Clerk in the FCO for the second time. I'd done it before from 1964 to 1966 (in fact when the FO and CRO Resident Clerks combined in late 1964, they combined before their respective Offices). The first weekend of the combined Office was when I was on duty, so in a sense I was in

charge of the world. I was the first man in charge of the world in the Clerkery if you like. One or two interesting things happened to involve the Resident Clerks. I remember Lal Bahadur Shastri, the Indian P.M., had a heart attack meeting Ministers in Tashkent, and we had to get important people on the plane for the funeral, like Lord Mountbatten, which was a great scramble. I also remember the occasion of Churchill's funeral when I was on duty that weekend, and I got a call from Ian Smith's delegation who were in London at the time, to complain that they had had no invitation to the lunch at the Palace, so there was a great hoo-ha over that because invitations had been delivered to their hotel, we were assured. But Ian Smith refused to come unless the invitation could be found; eventually he was persuaded to come and he turned up, and the Queen met him and he said "Ma'am, I haven't had any lunch", so she promptly introduced him to General de Gaulle, who hadn't had any lunch either. You can imagine that they were trying to make a big issue of it. And Singapore/Malaysia was another issue - I was on duty once when we got a telegram from Viscount Head, the High Commissioner, reporting that he'd just discovered that Singapore was about to break away from the Malaysian Federation.

MM Oh, Kuala Lumpur?

DD Yes, Kuala Lumpur. And that hit us on the Sunday, and there was an awful lot of scurrying around, as it was due to be announced later that day, or the next morning. And Harold Wilson was in the Scilly Isles, and he sent a message to Lee Kuan Yew to try to dissuade him from taking this course of action. It failed of course and Lee Kuan Yew went ahead and took Singapore out of the Federation. That was certainly an exciting time. I also met Michael Shea, who was a fellow Resident Clerk, and Prince William. He wasn't a Resident Clerk but I met him when I was in the Office.

When I came back from Lagos, I was still a bachelor, in 1972, and I did Resident Clerk again. The Cod War was on, I remember being up all night on two occasions with telegrams concerning Iceland and the Cod War. And all of a sudden the Princess Royal's car was hijacked in the Mall when I was on duty; that of course wasn't directly the Foreign Office's responsibility, more the Home Office's. It was quite an eventful evening.

On another occasion, the Israeli Ambassador was stopped from boarding a flight at Heathrow, because he insisted that his bodyguard be allowed to carry a gun. The Ambassador was very unpleasant to me on the phone, and I was rather sad when James Craig and David Gore-Booth from Middle East Department decided that he should be allowed to continue, because Harold Wilson had assured his Minister that there would not be any trouble.

During my second stint as Resident Clerk, we were fortunate in having Assistants at the weekends, which had become extremely busy. One of the Assistants was Antony Figgis, who is now the Marshal of the Diplomatic Corps (having retired from the FCO as Ambassador in Vienna). He reminded me of this recently. One bonus of being Resident Clerk was the privilege of watching Trooping the Colour from the apartment's balconies.

Well, after Pakistan and Defence Department, I was posted to Pakistan in 1975. Meanwhile I'd got married. I'd met my wife in Senegal in West Africa. Patricia was in the Embassy there, and in fact our honeymoon was driving to Pakistan, which you could do then, driving through Iran and Afghanistan, down what was called the Asian Highway. You couldn't do it after 1979, after the fall of the Shah and the invasion of Afghanistan by the Russians, but in 1975 it was reasonably straightforward. And in fact the best road for driving was Afghanistan because it had very good roads, half built by the Russians and half by the Americans. So we were able to do that. In Pakistan I did the economic job, with some aid as well. We did a lot of travelling around the irrigation system, because British aid was going into irrigation, sometimes in planes supplied by WAPDA – Pakistan's Water and Power Development Authority - learning about Pukka nukkahs which is where the irrigation channels joined each other and where a lot of disputes and murders took place. One was able to learn a few things about the sub-continent that way. Bhutto was arrested while we were there; Robin Fearn I remember, told me, coming back from an interview with General Zia, that he didn't have much hope for Bhutto, after that particular conversation. And indeed Bhutto was executed after we left. We did bring back what was probably Bhutto's last tape, which he'd recorded for the BBC, and as we were coming on leave

we were asked to carry it back, which we did; and the BBC met us with a car at Heathrow as a result; but that was known as Bhutto's last tape made before he was arrested. General Zia of course died later with a bomb on an aeroplane, probably something to do with Bhutto's followers, but I don't think it was ever proven.

Visitors to Pakistan included Duncan Sandys, because he had originally had something to do with the construction of the new High Commission there, so he was very interested to see that again. Mrs Thatcher came in Opposition. Callaghan came as Prime Minister, returning from the Far East somewhere, and all the staff met him at the airport. He went round meeting everybody, which was very good of him.

Another visitor was Archbishop Coggan, the Archbishop of Canterbury, whose daughter was a missionary in the North-West Frontier Province, in Bannu, where she was a surgeon helping to run a hospital, and of course she was very valuable in the field of women's surgery, because on the whole women weren't allowed to be operated on by men. So of course she provided a very valuable service, and we went up to see her in Bannu, in the hospital there, as did the Archbishop when he came up. But it was a very wild part of the world. And we had Lawrence Pumphrey and John Bushell as Ambassadors, as Heads of Mission were then called, because Pakistan was still out of the Commonwealth in that period. Pumphrey had been involved in Colditz, and Bushell had been involved in the Wooden Horse, although they both kept that rather quiet when they were in post; one discovered that subsequently. We had fun going on the bacon and cheese runs to Delhi, through the border which was the only place that was open near Lahore, and also getting special tea in Islamabad. If you ordered special tea at the Chinese restaurant, you got a teapot full of beer, which was the only way you could buy beer. And I was offered hash (heroin) in the Khyber Pass, offered on more than one occasion, drugs being of course a great activity in that part of the world. But we enormously enjoyed travelling the northern valleys and driving around Afghanistan privately, which you could do at that time. It was our first married post, so it has particularly favourite memories for us, Islamabad. It was a much disliked post in London because there was a huge immigration staff and lots of marriages broke up. Colin Imray (Head of Chancery) had to be a marriage guidance counsellor as much as anything; his wife did that sort of thing too. It had got a rather poor reputation for that. In fact most of us thought Islamabad was one of

the secrets of the Service, because the travel from Islamabad was absolutely delightful, up into all those northern valleys of Pakistan, and into Afghanistan as well, of course. Although Islamabad was a rather arid capital, I think as a posting it had huge amount to be recommended; it was a much belittled post, which could prove to be very enjoyable.

And then from there they decided for some reason to give me a complete change, which I did not necessary particularly welcome, being a Commonwealth man, which was to go to Lima, Peru. And I was very much in two minds about it. I rather wanted a Head of Chancery post in a small Commonwealth country, that's really what I was after, but they said "Here's a good chance for you. You can experience a new continent and you can learn Spanish." So I had to learn Spanish, which I did.

MM When did you go there?

DD 1978, yes. So I learnt Spanish in London, and then in Cuernavaca in Mexico, which was the school the Office used at the time, recommended by the British Council, and I took my wife there too.

MM Did she learn Spanish?

DD Yes, she did. Although I had to pay for it, which I found rather irritating. The Foreign Office didn't pay for wives. They did subsequently, and they do now, but I had to take her at my own expense, and I thought there was something wrong with the state of the Office. She probably needed to speak more Spanish than I did, since she had to deal with the maids from the Andes, of course, who spoke no English, and looked after our two children. Patricia had the children at the local hospital, which worked well because the doctors had been trained in America and they gave her caesareans, partly because of their American training. It was extremely nice that the children were looked after by the maids very largely, with whom Patricia conversed all the time. In fact my daughter learnt Spanish as a first language, in the sense that she left when she was three or four, and then forgot it; but she'd learnt Spanish before English. But Peru is an extraordinary country; you ascend 16,000 feet in three and a

half hours by road. The railway, the highest railway in the world, goes up to those heights in the Andes, and if you're short of oxygen, which you often are, they bring round special pillows which they squeeze into your face to give you oxygen, if you're feeling a bit faint. Which is rather an interesting experience.

MM Special pillows, what on the trains?

DD Yes, they came around and squeezed them in front of your face, which was their means of providing oxygen. But if you felt quite bad with soroche, as mountain sickness was called, you might have to go to a clinic and be given oxygen properly from a cylinder, which I did once, in a town 15,000 feet up, when you did feel really quite groggy; and several people flew up to the Andes and were so sick, they had to fly immediately back down again. It wasn't unusual for that to happen to some of our staff, so these were some of the interesting incidentals of the posting. We could actually travel over most of the country because the Shining Path, the very strong terrorist element, the Sendero Luminoso, really got going about the mid-eighties after we left, and then Peru got into a terrible state for tourism and so on. It's recovered now, but it was in a bad way for about ten years, with the extreme terrorism which affected Lima as well. They blew up pylons and electricity systems, and so on.

MM What did they want to achieve?

DD Well, they were Maoists (they called themselves Maoists), so they were quite anarchic in the way they carried on, but I think they wanted to take over the government and impose a kind of authoritative Maoist regime, as far as I can work it out. But they gave a lot of the villagers a very hard time, often massacring whole villages whom they suspected of not supporting them. Equally the Peruvian military, who were a pretty happy go lucky lot shot whole villages whom they suspected of supporting the rebels, the Maoists; so it was a very bloody time, late in the eighties. But we were able to travel down to the jungle to Iquitos, which is where the Amazon starts before it flows into Brazil, and to look at some of the drug country, a lot of drugs being grown there, especially coca, which produces cocaine. We were able to visit much of the country, and Macchu Pichu of course. Princess Alexandra was

coming out, and we spent a lot of time arranging a programme for her and Angus Ogilvy. Princess Alexandra had been there in 1959 with her mother Princess Marina, and wanted to come back with Angus, but just before they were due to come, the Falklands War broke out, and since the Peruvians on the whole supported Argentina, the visit was cancelled. They never managed to get back; I saw Ogilvy at the memorial service for Denis Thatcher, and he said “You know it's a great shame, but we never made it”, which is a pity; he's ill now himself, but they were hoping to visit at some point.

MM Denis, you were saying the Falklands War was a major event.

DD Yes, for us in Lima because Peru on the whole supported Argentina - partly because Chile supported us – and gave them a lot of moral and diplomatic support, if not material; it was a difficult time, because we had a lot of bomb threats at the Embassy, and we had to decide whether they were genuine or not, and whether to evacuate the Embassy or not. In fact none of them were, I'm glad to say, and we didn't really evacuate more than once. It was very difficult, because we were at the top of a tower block, which would have meant the exit was impossible without descending the tower, and the Israeli Embassy were below us as well, which didn't help us much; anyway, we managed to get through it. The Americans supported us eventually of course, in the Falklands War, and then the American Ambassador had a rough time in Lima, in fact he was hanged in effigy. In some ways, the Americans became more of a target than the British in Lima, being better known there, of course. I had to stay on (I was due to leave) for another four weeks, and my successor was there with me. We thought at some point the Ambassador might be asked to leave, or that the Embassy might be closed at some point, so we made provisional arrangements for a friendly Embassy to look after our affairs, but that didn't happen. And the Ambassador, Charles Wallace, stayed on even after the *Belgrano* was sunk, which was probably the worst moment for us; we got a very shirty note from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. But he was still able to remain, so then I left rather quietly, slipping out with my successor already in place.

MM What was the basis on which the Peruvians wrote a shirty note?

DD Well, because they thought the sinking of the *Belgrano* was completely unjustified, an unnecessary loss of life; it escalated the war, which I think it did to some extent, and they also pointed out that the ship was going away from the exclusion zone. And we were involved at that time in the Peruvian Peace Plan, which emerged, negotiated by President Belaunde with the Americans, and the point came up as to whether the British Cabinet knew about the Peruvian Peace Plan before they ordered the *Belgrano* to be sunk, which became a very controversial issue in British politics and in Parliament later. I'm not sure the truth has fully come out about the whole episode, but it meant I spent two nights at least with Charles Wallace drafting telegrams to Washington and London. Frances Pym, the Foreign Secretary, was in Washington at the time. Charles Wallace came out of it rather badly in a sense, because he didn't know about the Peace Plan until he heard about it on his car radio at 6 in the evening on the particular Sunday, a point which was picked up by the MPs. It wasn't really surprising that he was sidelined by the Peruvians, because after all Britain was one of the combatants, but he was summoned to a Select Committee at the House of Commons later, and had some difficult questions to answer. It was a great blow for him, because he was half Spanish, and regarded himself as extremely close to the Peruvian Government, so he did take this rather badly. I think at the same time he had a touch of Spanish arrogance about him, which the Peruvians detected.

At the time, Morales Bermudes had recently handed over the Presidency to Belaunde. Bermudes was the head of the military government, and Belaunde the new civilian government; that would have happened in 1980. Wallace got on rather well with Belaunde. Other visitors there included Nicholas Ridley, who came through as Minister of State. And there was a rather panicky phone call about some correspondence he'd written back in Britain, which had to be sorted out by Robin Fearn, who was accompanying him. He was Head of Latin American Department at the time. We had George Howard, who was the first Chairman of the BBC to visit Latin America. He was visiting Peru and Brazil, and was entertained by the Peruvians to dinner at the Palace. He insisted on bringing along a young girl, who was a friend of his working on an aid project, and she was the only woman at the stag

dinner, so the Peruvians were much puzzled as to why he'd insisted on her attending, which was a slight diplomatic embarrassment. But there we are.

Then when we left Peru after four years, we drove back across the States from Los Angeles to Washington, over the course of a month, with two very young children, but we managed to do it using motels en route, which was reasonably comfortable, though a lot of driving. And then I was at home in the East African Department from 1982 to 1984, where nothing of great note occurred. I did get a familiarisation trip round East Africa. I think the main political interest was probably in Diego Garcia, which came under the East African Department, as it was part of the Indian Ocean. There was the question of the original islanders of Diego Garcia, which was the American base, wanting to return there from Mauritius where they'd been transferred a few years earlier; there was in fact a minor landing by some of these former islanders and we had to send in a destroyer to take them off. There was also the question whether Mancham, who was the former Prime Minister of the Seychelles, should be given a British passport. He wasn't for quite a long time, but Malcolm Rifkind, as Minister of State as he was then, decided that he should be given a British passport, and he got one, because he was then living in Britain in exile.

Then I was posted to Calcutta, as Head of Post and Deputy High Commissioner. We were keen to go back to the Indian sub-continent, having enjoyed Pakistan earlier, but before we went to Calcutta I'd had a call from POD asking me if I'd go to Bombay temporarily on the way, because it was just after the assassination of Percy Norris, who was DHC in Bombay. I'd actually known Percy in Lagos; they were in Lagos with us, Percy and Angela, and although we felt rather upset about going, and Patricia didn't really want to go at all, and it was a no child post as well, because everybody lived in flats, we did go and when we got there, of course, it was OK. I was supposed to have an Indian bodyguard, but then half the time he didn't turn up. And we were slightly upset to have been given the same car in which Percy had been shot. It was a Rover car, with a certain amount of marking from bullets on the back seat, and I'm really surprised they didn't actually change the car. We had the same driver who'd been in the car when Percy was shot; but the Indians were very kind to us. And...

MM Could we just, before you pass over that, go over the story of Percy Norris being shot?

DD It was a great mystery, there seemed to be no particular motive. There was no clear idea who had done it. It was thought on the whole that a couple of members of Abu Nidal had come in from Iran, which was quite easy to do, and to get out again. They shot him and left, and there was a veiled reference to Abu Nidal, but they certainly didn't claim it clearly. The whole thing was so pointless because...

MM Did he drive around in a car with a flag on it?

DD I think he did. No, I'm afraid Bombay was regarded as a pretty safe place, and the security wasn't that good, because he left his flat at the same time every morning and took the same route every morning, and he was shot as the car rounded a corner, where it slowed down; they stood on the corner and fired into the back seat.

MM Would they have known that he was British?

DD Oh yes, oh yes. I think so. I think the flag, and they'd worked out when he was going to leave the house and when he was going to be at that corner.

MM So when you took over from him did you fly the flag?

DD No! Absolutely not! And we took different routes and at different times, which it was possible to do, every morning, and we were extremely careful about it, and mixed it up as much as possible. And I don't suppose the flag has been flown since. But it was one month after Mrs. Gandhi had been assassinated by her Sikh bodyguard, so India was in a great state of uproar. And it was the day after he'd been entertaining the England cricket team to a party the night before. They were particularly upset about it, and had to play a Test Match the following day, which they did, although they had doubts about it. I think they lost and it was pretty upsetting for them. But we're still in touch with Angela, Percy Norris's widow. I saw her last week actually. After four months I went to my substantive posting which was Calcutta. Bill Harding

visited us in Bombay, the DUS, whom I'd known previously in Peru. John Nott came out on a commercial trip. I think it was after he was sacked from the Falklands Cabinet, and he was on merchant bank business. Nicholas Ridley came as Secretary of State for Transport. He was looking for railway business ostensibly, but I think his real reason for coming was because he was the grandson of Lutyens, and wanted to see all the architecture in Bombay and elsewhere. I don't think they got a lot of railway business, but they certainly looked into it. So we had some interesting sessions with the Indian Railways. We went to the Bombay station very early in the morning and so on. They had 1.2 million commuters daily in Bombay, which I think is the highest in the world. I learnt a great deal about Indian railways, which was quite interesting.

And then we travelled by train to Calcutta, across the continent from Bombay, via Madras, so we got to see Madras on the way. We spent two and a half years in Calcutta which was...

MM What was your impression of Calcutta?

DD Well, when you first arrived it struck one as a bit of a hellhole, because it was extremely difficult to get around. There were beggars all over the place, people dying on the railway station and so on. But for all that, once you got used to this sort of awful poverty and so on, it proved a very friendly place. The Indians were particularly friendly to us there, because they were always apologetic about their city. It was more British than Bombay, in that there were more of the historical remains there of course, with the Victoria Memorial and the churches; and of course the tea companies were very British, with their headquarters in Calcutta. We were able to travel around Assam, where the plantations were run almost entirely by Indians, not the British any more, but they were run just as the British had run them, very welcoming. We completed made a very enjoyable Consular tour, particularly in the northern parts of Assam.

MM How did you tour around?

DD Mainly by Landrover. We would send the car ahead of us, then we would fly to Gauhati in Assam and pick up the car there, which is what High Commissioner Robert Wade-Gery used to do all over India. He used to send his car to various points and he would fly there, and pick up usually a Range Rover, because he was very keen on seeing all parts of India. Well, we were quite lucky in the areas we could visit, and I did actually go to Imphal and Kohima with the Chairman of the War Graves Commission. We had to get a permit from the Indian government in Delhi, which was quite difficult, but we got it, and we did visit those places. Kohima was where the famous Tennis Court Battle had taken place, where the Japanese were really stopped for the first time. Among visitors there, we had Shirley Williams, who was on British Council business, who stayed with us; William Golding, the Nobel Prize winner (we gave him lunch when he was on the British Council tour), and Lord Mackay, who was the Lord Advocate for Scotland, also on a British Council tour, and six months later he became Lord Chancellor in Mrs Thatcher's cabinet. Little did we know that he was going to be Lord Chancellor, presumably he didn't know himself! The main visitor we had was Robert Runcie, the Archbishop of Canterbury, as he was then, who did a trip round India. He was extremely good in Calcutta and he saw a lot of Mother Teresa, which of course we did. He spoke to a gathering of all the Catholics in Calcutta. I remember going from Mother Teresa's home, her home for the dying, which was the most dramatic place one could visit, and Robert Runcie said "Can't we tuck Mother Teresa in the car with us?" and she being about 4' 8", joined us, and so I was delighted to have in my car Mother Teresa and Robert Runcie, and I thought that my place above was booked for the future! But she was quite a personality. I heard her speak several times in the cathedral. She did mention abortion after about three minutes, which is one area where I rather differed from her, but she was a riveting speaker, speaking in a Yugoslav-Albanian accent, which she still retained, in English of course; and she did call at the Consulate once to ask for information on AIDS, because she was going to open an AIDS clinic in New York and we managed to get some material from Delhi and London to give to her. Robert Runcie followed the Pope, one month previous, but I think he had a successful trip to India, and he stayed with us because the Bishop locally was rather nervous about putting him up, because his accommodation wasn't very suitable so he was happy for us to have him and his party to stay. But we enjoyed Calcutta very much. And then I

was posted to Jamaica as Deputy High Commissioner. That was in 1987. Probably the most important event of the first year was Hurricane Gilbert, which devastated the whole island; I was actually on leave at the time and we got back to find that it was a complete disaster. The island was hit to such an extent that the only communication between the mainland and the outside world was through the British High Commission at one point. Even the Americans had to send messages through us to London for Washington, because our radios had remained intact on the roof, and theirs hadn't. That was the case for a short while. And I think Alan Payne, who was the High Commissioner then, was quite proud of that. And then we worked hard on trying to restore the island and doing something about the enormous devastation. The main problem of course was that the electricity system had been completely knocked out. Britain played a major role in restoring this; we had the west of the island, the Americans had the centre and the Canadians had the east; we had teams of linesmen, as they were called, putting up the lines.

MM Did you import them?

DD Yes, from Britain, from various regional authorities; there was a team from Northern Ireland, one from the west country, and a team from Wales paid for by the ODA essentially out of restoration and relief money, so once again I was involved in a fairly big relief programme and went round reopening lines after they'd been repaired. It was a source of great mirth for Jamaicans seeing white men go up telegraph poles putting lines in; they found that very amusing. But we did a good job and got the island going fully after about a year to install the whole thing. Of course its quite difficult living in Kingston. Downtown Kingston is where the gangs operate for the two political parties, a lot of guns, a lot of drug activity, and it's very dangerous on the whole to go down there. We lived in uptown Kingston, but of course uptown Kingston tends to be invaded by those from downtown for robberies and a certain amount of mugging and violence, so you had to have a lot of security; you'd have your alsatians at night, and your push button. You'd have vans patrolling to come to your aid, and you had armed guards as well. So it was pretty difficult for about a year until you got used to it.

MM Indeed. Were there any attempts on your property?

DD We didn't have any attempts, but we were quite fortunate in that some of the senior Jamaicans, who were also victims of this - it wasn't particularly racial, couldn't afford to pay for all the security that we had, so some of them did get attacked. The theory was that, if they got in, they would quite likely shoot you, because they feared that they could get recognised, which of course they probably wouldn't be; but they thought they would be, so they tended to shoot. Or rape the wife and shoot you afterwards. But it did happen to a number of senior Jamaicans - the headmaster at our children's school - it happened to him, or the head of Burger King, who was murdered. It happened to the French Defence Attaché, at one point. I mean these things were happening; the murder rate was one of the highest in the world (with New York and Los Angeles) per head of population. And when it came to elections in 1989, there was great press interest in it. In fact, there weren't quite so many deaths as there had been in earlier elections, and I remember Martin Bell came down from Washington. A lot of senior correspondents came in. The upshot of it was that Michael Manley took over from Seaga, the former Prime Minister, and it was relatively peaceful, and his party, slightly more to the left than the other, remains in power to this day. But a Jamaican election is always cause for some excitement. Of course, they exported their guns and drugs, and London is afflicted by 'yardies' - so-called because of the yards in downtown Kingston, who cause the Metropolitan Police a lot of trouble. And in America they're called 'posses'; they have the same kind of problem in America with them. We were actively trying to do something about the drug problem of course, and I remember going around in helicopter spraying the crops, the ganja (marijuana), to try and eradicate it, but it was an uphill struggle, and there were 82 illegal airstrips on the island at one point. As fast as the authorities filled in the airstrips or tried to blow them up, the authorities, more were constructed. This was to bring in the drugs from Colombia, and to pass them on to another area. So it was a huge industry in Jamaica, and the battle against it is still going on. Of course the Royal Navy also played their part. We had a frigate in the Caribbean, which spent a lot of time intercepting the smugglers, often in very fast motorboats, which was difficult. But that was our main effort in Jamaica, to do something about the drugs problem, and to try and assist the police force through aid,

which we're still doing. We did bring back the British Council who had pulled out of Jamaica, and of the Caribbean earlier. We managed to get them back in their main office in Kingston. We had visits from Chris Patten, who was then Minister of State at the ODA. The Princess Royal came through, and Ted Heath; he'd retired by then, he was just an MP. I remember he asked us what was the connection between our various posts, and my wife said, "Well, it's mainly drugs or cricket", which in fact was an interconnecting theme between most of our posts. And we had the Mayor of Bristol, who was a Jamaican originally, and the Sheriff of Nottingham, also a Jamaican. They were invited back as 'Sons of Jamaica' on VIP visits. And the cricket event of 1990 was the first English victory at Sabina Park since 1955; then we went on to lose the series 2-1 to the Caribbean. We also went to Haiti, because we covered Haiti from Jamaica, with some difficulty. We went to the installation of a new President. It was obviously a chaotic country, but it's got considerably worse since, and we reported on it as best we could; but it was transferred, probably rightly I think, some years later, to Santo Domingo (the Dominican Republic) from where it is still covered, at the other end of the island, from the Dominican Republic, which I think probably makes rather more sense. But we did find some good French restaurants in Port au Prince, the one compensation.

And when we left Jamaica we took the train across Canada, which was another long journey across North America before flying back from Vancouver to my last post, which was Amsterdam.

MM Which was in?

DD 1991, I was Consul General. I was actually surprised, if anything the security (and I'd had a lot of security before, in Bombay particularly and in Jamaica), was heavier in Amsterdam, because I was greeted by six Dutch policemen, whom I had for the next two years, as we were regarded as on the IRA hit list, both myself and the Ambassador in The Hague. So there was a police box outside the house, quite welcomed by the street. It was a very wealthy street, they rather liked having the police box there. But security was pretty intrusive; the Dutch were very vigilant as Richard Sykes had been shot in 1979. They really didn't want that to happen again.

Apparently, Amsterdam was a bit of a rest post for the IRA, which is why they were particularly keen on protecting us. They were also able to use Michael Jenkins the Ambassador, and myself, as practice for Ministers who came across from Britain. When John Major came across, he had the same team as we had, and other British and European Ministers.

MM You mean the Dutch police were actually able to practise defending you?

DD Yes, yes. So that when John Major and his people came they had it all in place.

MM Was it a question of the IRA practising too?

DD Not while I was there. The police were practising protecting us. They even used to follow me around at cocktail parties and rather than wait at the door, which I did find a bit much, and I did actually ask for more space on a few occasions. Michael Jenkins got very annoyed with them. I think he thought it was all way over the top. He was not a man to trifle with, and he had rather more arguments with them than I did, but they were doing their job and they wanted to be very thorough; and they certainly were. And even when I went to the Dutch Antilles, which I covered as the Consul-General (I had a little trip out to the Dutch Antilles).

MM That's back in the Caribbean?

DD Yes, they told the local police there to protect me, so I was met by a posse of local police at the airport, which I thought was too much, but there we are. That shows how thorough they were. But after two years, I think it was 1993, intelligence had decided the threat had lessened and I was able to drive my own car, and be driven around by a civilian driver; I didn't have police protection for the last two years. But one felt much less important, which is what other people said. At least when you arrived at a function with a police posse, people felt the Prime Minister was arriving, you know. They checked out the place beforehand, so when you just turned up on your own you weren't noticed so much.

While I was there, the Treaty of Maastricht was negotiated. I wasn't particularly involved in that; it was the Embassy in The Hague, but there was a lot of to-ing and fro-ing, and during the Dutch Presidency there were many meetings in Amsterdam which I played a part in organising. Virginia Bottomley, for example came over, as Secretary of State for Health, and she stayed the night with us. She was attending health meetings in Amsterdam, mainly about what the Dutch were doing about AIDS, in which she was particularly interested and quite rightly so. And the world AIDS conference took place in Amsterdam, because the Americans in Boston got worried and Boston wouldn't have it; so Amsterdam stepped in and had this huge conference of some 15-20,000 delegates, which occupied practically all the hotels in northern Holland. That's the sort of thing which Amsterdam did. They were great experts on AIDS for one reason or another, but they put an awful lot of money into it, and of course tried to sort out the red light area in a humane way, giving everybody examinations and so forth. But we disagreed with the Dutch on the drugs policy on cannabis, because we felt that it encouraged the use of cannabis throughout Europe, and that it encouraged visitors from Britain, France and Germany to enjoy the use of cannabis; so we didn't agree with the Dutch liberal policy. Some people here still take the view that the Dutch are right, of course, and cannabis has been slightly downgraded.

There was also the tussle between ourselves and Germany for commercial influence; as in Belgium there was huge public sentiment for Britain, partly from the war, partly because the Dutch spoke such immaculate English. Everybody in Amsterdam speaks superb English, and even in eastern Holland you'll find English being used fairly freely so there was great sentiment for us; but when the chips were down, when it came to buying tanks, or commercial deals, they tended to go to the Germans. So one of the aims of the Embassy was to, as they put it, 'repel the teutonic drift'; to try to swing Dutch Government opinion around from Germany to us, commercially as well as sentimentally; I don't think we succeeded very much. And of course at that time the guilder was tied to the Deutsch mark which was another problem for us. That was probably the main aim of the Embassy during the time I was there. Certainly the main aim of David Miers, the Ambassador.

MM And your main aim too?

DD Yes indeed. What was disappointing about Amsterdam - of course one enjoyed living there greatly, a great cultural and social life - I didn't get a lot of responsibility and I didn't really do much commercial work as such; I didn't have commercial staff and I didn't have commercial files, which were held by the Embassy. I had a lot of contacts and performed many openings for businessmen. But the commercial work had been transferred to The Hague, which I thought was a great mistake, because the American Consulate did commercial work and Amsterdam was in many ways the commercial centre.

MM Right. So what did you do?

DD Well, I did a lot of representational work, of course, and I looked after Rotterdam; I was also Consul General for Rotterdam and frequently visited the port, especially for the Missions to Seamen, where the Princess Royal showed a great interest; we met her twice there. And I travelled all over Holland, calling on Burgermeisters, Commissioners, the local British community and churches. But it wasn't altogether surprising (well at least David Miers wasn't surprised and I think he was behind it really) when the inspectors came and downgraded the post, which was a blow for me. But that was how it was. I asked the Embassy for more responsibility, but on the whole they didn't wish to surrender any. So we were really doing just consular and visa work (that was wholly done in Amsterdam). And there were a lot of sticky consular problems which I was involved with; I had a good staff, both British and Dutch. Probably the biggest problem the Consulate faced was football, because whenever the England team played in Holland there was trouble. The big event was in 1992, when we played Holland in Rotterdam. There were serious riots in Amsterdam from the hooligans and then again in Rotterdam, when the Dutch police I think went over the top rather with their horses, and beat up a lot of hooligans; but there was not much sympathy with them either from the Dutch or the British, and the British press certainly had a go at them. John Major actually apologised to his Dutch counterpart for their behaviour, and since then of course the authorities in Britain have tightened up on hooligans, withdrawing their passports and

maintaining a blacklist. But then they were reluctant to take action, so there were an awful lot of hooligans around. So that was our main problem, and it was my responsibility.

And then I had the El Al crash in Amsterdam, when an El Al plane crashed on a block of flats; that was a very serious incident and I was able to get into the emergency operations bunker, with the Dutch, below Amsterdam. John Major offered help and in fact we got over two experts from the Lockerbie disaster to help, an Edinburgh Professor and the Chief of Police, both involved with Lockerbie, which was I think in '88 or '89. One of the problems was how many people had actually been killed, because some of the bodies had disappeared. In the heat of the fire they'd vaporised. That had happened at Lockerbie - a certain number of bodies just disappeared, so the Professor of Pathology was able to advise them on how to collect parts and put them together in a hangar.

MM You mean the parts of the plane?

DD Well, yes, parts of the plane and parts of bodies, of course, which were spread all over the place. It was a pretty major disaster, and it was an immigrant area, which made it even worse because nobody knew exactly who lived there (a lot of illegal immigrants). There was still a great vagueness as to how many people were lost, because relatives didn't want to reveal that they were there in the first place. But that was another major consular matter that I was involved in. Also a KLM Cityhopper plane crashed, and four or five British people were killed, just outside the airport at Schiphol, and I was caught up in that as well.

I was also asked to attend the reburial of bodies from the World War Two crashes; the Dutch kept discovering planes buried from World War Two, usually Spitfires or Hurricanes, and they're still coming to the surface. And occasionally the remains of the pilot can be traced by the Ministry of Defence, so I went to a number of reburials, where the relatives came over from the UK, and it was quite moving. There were six or seven hundred British planes said to have crashed in Holland, and they've not all been found, and if the Defence Attaché couldn't attend he quite often sent me. And

we had the fiftieth anniversary of Arnhem in 1994, when Prince Charles, the Dutch Queen, and General Mike Jackson (now Army Chief of Staff) all attended. As I had found in Belgium, the many military events commemorating the First and Second World Wars were a major part of Anglo-Dutch relations, and the RAF Association in Amsterdam was very strong. The Dutch were bitter over their time being occupied by the Germans, who were particularly severe on them; they had a very hard time, much harder than the Belgians, because they had a much more ruthless German government and were occupied for longer, almost to the very end of the War, because the allies left that pocket on its own as they pushed on over the Rhine. They were actually liberated in the end mainly by the Canadians, who went up the coast, and there was a notable celebration with the Canadians in 1994, to mark the liberation of Amsterdam. And the Canadians have a rather favoured position in Holland, because the Royal Family went to Canada during the war (they came first to London then went to Canada) and some of the Princesses were actually born in Canada.

British companies did try to get into the Dutch market. Marks and Spencers, Boots and Burberry tried but none of them were very successful. Marks and Spencers eventually pulled out, and Boots didn't succeed, rather strange because the Dutch were very friendly to Britain and the big joint companies between Britain and the Dutch like Royal Dutch Shell, Unilever, Reed Elsevier and Delta Lloyd on the whole worked well; but independent British companies operating in Holland did not do so well.

Other visitors included Ted Heath again (seem to have met Ted Heath at a number of posts); I saw him at Schiphol two or three times coming back from the Far East; Edwina Currie came over as well; that was after her affair with John Major, although of course none of us knew about it at the time. I also travelled in a hot air balloon, and in a Virgin airship. So it was interesting post, not one which carried great responsibility. As a result I had to retire a year early in 1996, because my post was downgraded.