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British Diplomatic Oral History Project.

interview with Lord Renwick of Clifton
on 6 August 1998, conducted by Malcolm McBain.

M.M. Lord Renwick, I know that you are a very busy man so I don't want to take up too much time with going over old history, but could we start with your career in the Foreign Office at the point when you became Private Secretary to the Minister of State in 1970? Were there any notable events which took place at that time?

Lord R. Well, the Minister of State was called Joe Godber and the first problem he had to try and sort out was Anguilla; long forgotten, but we had got ourselves into a real mess in Anguilla including a sort of invasion of the territory by a small contingent of

British troops under the Wilson government, following a sort of rebellion by the Anguillans against the Prime Minister of St. Kitts. We spent some time sorting out that problem. We very quickly found that what the Anguillans actually wanted was to revert to direct colonial status - government from London - and we proceeded to make legislative changes to enable that to happen. I am glad to say that that pretty well sorted the problem. It was regarded as a kind of Gilbert and Sullivan comic opera affair at the time and it resulted really from attempts by the Commonwealth section of the Office to try and sort of force a federation between these islands, perfectly understandable in economic terms, but since they detested one another it never worked.

M.M. Now that was the occasion when policemen were sent out, wasn't it?

Lord R. Yes, we had metropolitan policemen on the islands for some time. It sounds comic in retrospect that we - the previous Minister had literally been run off the island at gun point - so that when we went out there we were very concerned not also to be run off the island !

M.M. Did you have any contact with other Ministers in the Heath government of 1970?

Lord R. Yes, I saw a lot of Alec Douglas Home and I have to say that of all the Foreign Secretaries I served with, I think that he was one of the very best. He was quite deceptive, Alec Douglas Home, because he gave the impression that he was not a workaholic, that also he was no intellectual, but I watched him operating during the

Black September crisis when we had a British Airways plane and its passengers seized in Jordan. Jordan was collapsing - it was a very, very difficult and dangerous period indeed and I was enormously impressed by his calm and steady judgement and I thought he was an exceptional and outstanding Foreign Secretary.

M.M. Yes, I have heard that opinion expressed by a number of people. So, moving onto Paris. You were there from 1972 - 76.

Lord R. Yes, it was an interesting period because it was our first 5 years of membership of the European Community. When I first arrived in Paris the Ambassador was Christopher Soames and he had done a spectacularly effective job in Paris with the Pompidou administration, helping to get us into the Community, and I am glad to say that following that posting to Paris with him we remained very close friends until his death. Indeed, I was the leading advocate later on of appointing him as Governor of Rhodesia in very difficult circumstances, because I had seen him operating so effectively in Paris.

M.M. Did his style influence you in any particular way?

Lord R. Well, yes it did. Because he was a very much larger than life Ambassador he threw extremely well attended and good parties. In Paris he was on first name terms with the Ministers even in the quite difficult environment of the time and certainly I learnt a lot from him and from one of his successors, Nicko Henderson, who I also served with in Paris.

M.M. You mentioned parties. Now this is something that the Foreign Office is often criticised for giving way to. Obviously they do have great importance when you invite the right people.

Lord R. in practical terms they do. Throughout my time in Washington every visiting Minister wanted to meet all sorts of dignitaries there. You are frankly competing with 130 other Embassies - most of them aren't as large or thought to be as important as ours, but some of them are and Senators simply will not turn out or do you any favours unless they know you personally and you have to try and form a personal relationship with key figures in the Administration, the Senate, the Media and so forth. And that does entail entertaining them and furthermore they won't actually come unless they think they are going to enjoy themselves and meet interesting people. So you are either fortunate enough to be in the position where your parties are

well attended and people come to them because they are attended by, for instance, the Vice President or people know that he is likely to be there and will turn up themselves or you can get into the opposite effect where they don't think that they are going to meet particularly interesting people at the Embassy so then they don't come. In fact, in Washington it was a common practice for a Senator who was invited for his staff to ring up to find out who else was going to be there, then he would decide whether to come. On one occasion, I think, we had 20 Senators at once which was one fifth of the Senate for one dinner at the Embassy and the majority leader George Mitchell pointed out that this was more than he could normally manage to get on the Senate floor!

M.M. is that the George Mitchell of Northern Ireland?

Lord R. Absolutely. Excellent man, very good man. I was the first briefer that George Mitchell had on Northern Ireland and I am glad to say he did a wonderful job.

M.M. But going back to Paris. What sort of view do you think was taken in Paris in those days about renegotiations of entry terms and what did they think about the referendum in Britain?

Lord R. Well, they were very unimpressed, frankly, by Harold Wilson who had no sort of rapport with President Giscard at all and seemed to them to be a short term politician ducking and weaving. They were much more impressed by Jim Callaghan and by the fact that Jim Callaghan clearly did want to get the right answer in the referendum. One or two things had to be done to help the government get there, but the tragic mistake we made was in not joining the Community at the beginning when we would have had much greater influence on the sort of Community it turned out to be. We could have avoided a lot of the worst extravagances and absurdities such as the full fledged development of the common agricultural policy, for instance. We could have had much more influence in the institutions in Brussels. We are still playing catch up in that regard. And the negotiation in one extremely important respect turned out to be a sham, because we negotiated what was supposed to be a new budgetary arrangement which never delivered any benefits for Britain at all. Margaret Thatcher was left picking up the pieces of that and I was involved in those negotiations later when we did succeed in getting a correction in the British budgetary contribution. But under the Wilson government that particular item was dealt with , I'm sorry to say, with smoke and mirrors.

M.M. Now, of course, it looks as if we are on the point of being relegated once again by virtue of our inability to cope with the common currency.

Lord R. I don't think so. I think that we are in a much better position now than we were then because, first of all, the Prime Minister is regarded in Europe as being essentially Euro positive. I think that he will be in power a lot longer than Chancellor Kohl or President Chirac will. I think that, because of his basically positive stance, Tony Blair has a better chance of getting some of the results in Europe we badly need to get if we are to make the Euro more popular here. I was involved in advising Prime Minister Blair before the election about the single currency. I gave him two pieces of advice: one was to give the Bank of England the independence to set interest rates thereby bringing it into line with other European central banks and the Fed; but secondly, not to try to join the EMU at the outset, at a time when we are at a completely different stage of the economic cycle, when the effect of joining EMU would have been to cut interest rates drastically in Britain, at a time when that would have been extremely dangerous for the British economy, but to start preparing for entry into EMU in three or four years time when, I think, it ought to be feasible for us to take that step.

M.M. Thank you very much. I think that for the purposes of this rather short interview we might move on to the Cabinet Office where you were seconded from 1976-78. What exactly did that job entail and how did it come about that you got the secondment?

Lord R. Well, the Cabinet Office job certainly has an extremely important role - co-ordinating - which it still has on European policy. I was part of the European Secretariat led at the time by Roy Denman and Michael Franklyn which was co-ordinating our policy towards Europe; this was a major task because at the time a number of government departments had very little experience with dealing with Europe. Now of course they have lots of experience and the co-ordination task remains important but it is not as tough as it was then. We were also dealing with a government several members of whom didn't want to be in Europe at all, notable Peter Shaw, John Silkin, Tony Benn, so this was not an easy time in terms of co-ordinating policy towards Europe.

M.M. But you had positioned yourself in Paris as a First Secretary?

Lord R. First Secretary in Paris and then Counsellor in the Cabinet Office dealing

with Europe.

M.M. So you got promotion and also a move into the Cabinet Office.

Lord R. The move into the Cabinet Office was a mixed blessing because it is a hyper bureaucracy, frankly, and independent decision-taking is not its forte; but it does play a vital co-ordinating role.

M.M. And then you went from that pretty crucial job into the Head of Rhodesia department.

Lord R. Well, that was a very much more demanding job because we were in a real mess on Rhodesia policy at the time. It was just at the time when Lord Justice Bingham had produced his reports showing that the previous government, in fact the Wilson government at the time, had connived at the evasion of oil sanctions against Rhodesia by the British Oil Companies because they didn't want to extend those sanctions to South Africa. That was a perfectly legitimate point of view, if you like, but what was not legitimate was the fact that it wasn't admitted openly. I remember Harold Wilson himself making an extremely evasive intervention in that debate in Parliament. Rhodesia was not a subject on which we had covered ourselves in glory. Harold Wilson was, of course, author of the famous statement that sanctions would be effective in months not years and fourteen years later we hadn't solved the problem. Every Commonwealth country berated us for our failure to do something about the problem. It was a real millstone around the neck of the British government at the time. So it was a difficult time to move into the Rhodesia department. David Owen had developed the Anglo/American proposals to try to offer a solution. They had been categorically rejected by Ian Smith and his comrades and equally categorically rejected by the Patriotic Front - Mugabe and Nkomo - so we can't say we were in good shape at the time. It also had proved quite difficult dealing with the Carter administration on this issue and that was one of the issues that had to be addressed when the government, the British government, changed.

M.M. You said that the Bingham report clearly showed that the government had connived at the evasion of sanctions by Shell and BP. Was it quite as clear cut as that?

Lord R. Yes, it was. There was a very dignified statement by George Thomson in the House of Commons when he said yes that he knew perfectly well that effectively oil was being re-routed via South Africa and he had told the Prime Minister's office this

and that unless we were prepared to impose sanctions against the whole of Southern Africa there was nothing that could be done about it. So that was the position, but it was never properly admitted in public. Good for George Thomson, I thought, he behaved with dignity.

M.M. Do you think that a case could have been proved. After all, the oil was going into grey painted tankers.

Lord R. Well, it was one of these cases where effectively everybody knew what was happening but it was too embarrassing to deal with. We kept a frigate, the Beira patrol, off Mozambique for ten years or whatever; it was doing absolutely no good whatever while all the oil was shipped through Durban.

M.M. It was a difficult position. Anyhow, while you were there UDI came to an end, didn't it?

Lord R. Well, it did. David Owen had got stuck because the Anglo/American proposals were rejected, as I said. I thought he made a courageous attempt to try to deal with the problem but the proposals themselves were so obviously skewed towards the Patriotic Front that there was no chance of Smith and Muzorewa ever agreeing to them and since the Patriotic Front didn't believe we were serious and since they believed that they would win in the end anyway they didn't even accept them themselves. When the government changed there was a very great danger indeed that the new Conservative government would simply rush in and recognise Bishop Muzorewa. They had sent a team out there lead by Lord Boyd which had concluded that elections under Muzorewa were broadly fair and acceptable and so on and the new government was quite close, actually, to simply accepting that this was indeed the case. In the Foreign Office, Tony Duff, the Deputy Under Secretary, and I argued strongly first with Peter Carrington and then with the government more generally that this would be an extremely dangerous course for us to take, because I didn't actually believe that the elections were free and fair because they were held under circumstances where there was never any chance that Zanu or Zapu would participate and secondly I didn't believe that Muzorewa would survive either because he really was a cypher in the hands of the white security establishment who were themselves continuing to run the country. I thought that if we recognised Muzorewa no one else would; the war would continue and get worse; in the end there would be some sort of a collapse and we would have got ourselves into great difficulty. What I was not impressed by, at all, was the attitude of the other Commonwealth governments -

including the African Commonwealth governments - who were very sanctimonious on this subject while systematically denying any semblance of democracy to their own peoples. So we thought, I mean, I thought at any rate, that if we were to persuade Margaret Thatcher to do something other than recognising Muzorewa it was absolutely no use going to her and saying "Don't do it, the Commonwealth wouldn't like it etc.". She would have been very unimpressed by that. I thought, and so did Tony Duff, that we should perhaps try to develop a plan which would this time be deadly serious and would show that this time we, the British, were really going to do something about the problem. It was our failure to really do something about the problem which was the legitimate grievance the Commonwealth governments had against us. We went through the motions for years and years and years but there was no disposition to take risks, to actually intervene on the ground. So we produced a rather wild plan, if you like, rather than recognising Muzorewa we should change the constitution into a respectable constitution but with protection for minority rights and that we should ourselves take over the running of the country for a period and then de-colonise it as we had in other countries. This appealed to Mrs. Thatcher because she thought that this was Britain doing its thing and, frankly, we were allowed to put up this plan because the Foreign Office was at its wits end. It was self-evidently a risky and hazardous plan and it was not only Margaret Thatcher but Peter Carrington who needed a lot of persuading at the beginning that we shouldn't effectively recognise Muzorewa and try to wash our hands of the problem. In my opinion we would not have been able to wash our hands of the problem, because there were still over a hundred thousand British citizens there and if there had been some sort of military collapse there, it would have been pretty disastrous for our position in Africa and our interests generally and our reputation.

M.M. So you and Sir Anthony Duff were joint authors of this scheme.

Lord R. Yes. Duff was a great man. He had been a submarine commander during the War and was completely unafraid of politicians, one of the ablest, best people I have ever worked with. What then happened was that Lord Harlech went round Africa and reported on the lines we were proposing and that helped a lot with both Peter Carrington and the Prime Minister and when the Prime Minister got ready to go to the Lusaka conference we were deliberately not revealing our plans because we knew that if we did this then President Nyerere and President Kaunda would simply pocket these concessions as they saw them and ask for more so there was an element of stage management. I had been very influenced when I was in Paris both as a student and in the Embassy by the way De Gaulle used to operate with an element of surprise.

Anyway, Mrs. Thatcher went off to Lusaka with some misgivings. At Lusaka she astonished them all by saying that we were going to change the constitution and so on and the implication of that was that you needed to have new elections. Duff and I knew perfectly well that that was implicit but it only became explicit at Lusaka and that was the advance in Lusaka. What we said to the Patriotic Front - Nkomo and Mugabe - was this conference is going to be held at Lancaster House because that is where the final independence constitution of every other colony had been decided and this time it is deadly serious; these aren't talks about talks; at the end of this conference something quite dramatic is going to happen which could be either beneficial to you or disadvantageous to you; and we expect you to negotiate seriously rather than giving us the run around previous governments including David Owen, Anthony Crosland and Ivor Richards were given.

M.M. So that was a splendid success.

Lord R. Well, it was. It was a very risky success indeed and when we started this process old Rhodesia hands looked on more with pity than anything else. Everyone expected us to fall flat on our faces and it was tremendous tribute to the way Carrington managed things during the Conference and Soames managed things in Rhodesia that we got through.

M.M. Who managed things in Rhodesia?

Lord R. Christopher Soames was Governor and we did get through because, I think, to some extent we made a bit of our own luck by being prepared to take brave decisions like sending 800 British soldiers there. Like sending the Governor, Christopher Soames, there to be sure that the Patriotic Front had to agree in order to, as it were, co-erce them into it really. We were then on a real cliff hanger in Rhodesia as the Rhodesian generals didn't like the way things were going and were constantly debating with one another whether to stage a revolt and Mugabe's troops were frankly cheating and not observing the cease-fire and engaging in all sorts of acts of intimidation, thereby giving the Rhodesians an excuse to try to upset the applecart. So we had a constant exercise in brinkmanship throughout the Conference. We had a constant exercise in brinkmanship in Rhodesia but in the end we did succeed in de-colonising Rhodesia in circumstances where the war was ended and the country was going to get the best start it could in life as an independent country. I have to say that, as I went through that process, I did so with some not so much reservations but with the clear knowledge in my mind that Mugabe once in power was likely to turn out to

be just as autocratic, just as tyrannical, just as dictatorial, as the White regime had been and that Alec Douglas Home was essentially correct when he said 'What these people want is one man one vote once'. It is a tragedy in Africa that leaders in movements which start off by being popular - and Zanu was popular in Rhodesia at the time, they won the election because of that, not just because of intimidation - turn into deeply unpopular movements because of the phenomenon of the Wabenzi, the Nomenklatura, of the people in power tolerating no opposition and aggregating to themselves all the fruits of power, legitimate and illegitimate, and the state of Zimbabwe today in 1998 is frankly pathetic and all my sympathies are with the opposition to Mugabe, the Union leaders who are trying to contest a completely authoritarian rule. This is the African tragedy, the actual independence constitutions which were handed on were perfectly good documents providing for democratic freedoms, legal rights, freedom of the Press, independence of the judiciary and so forth and scarcely one of them has been observed. The consequences for Africa have been catastrophic. If the only way to change the regime is by a coup or a civil war you are bound to get a proliferation of coups and civil wars and that is exactly what has happened.

M.M. Very, very sad indeed. Before we leave Rhodesia, may I go back briefly? Can I go back to this question of connivance, of breaking sanctions by the British government. Was the Foreign Office implicated in that in any way?

Lord R. Well, Foreign Office officials reported what was happening. Intelligence agencies reported what was happening. The Government didn't really want to admit that effectively they had said to the oil companies "well, it is OK; you can go on supplying South Africa, but try to ration them as it were". It was a very, very messy situation at the time and it was fairly distasteful in the sense that I do believe in more open government in that sense that you should say what you mean rather than what you don't mean. Thatcher was very good at saying what she meant and doing what she said; that was regarded by many people as highly undiplomatic and it was undiplomatic in Europe certainly; but nevertheless there is a certain amount to be said for that approach. I think that some people would say that she didn't follow it in the Westland affair; that's a fair comment, but generally speaking she did.

M.M. Yes, I think that is right. Thank you very much for that. When you finished in Rhodesia you managed to get a sabbatical to Harvard and presumably you were there to write 'Economic Sanctions'.

Lord R. I wrote a book about Economic sanctions because the Rhodesia case was the biggest single case of that application at the time. It isn't since. There have been more important ones, notably South Africa; but I was very interested in the effects of sanctions and what one could hope to achieve by imposing sanctions. The argument in my book was not that sanctions have no effect and not that they should never be applied. I think that they do have an effect and there are plenty of places where they should be applied; but what I objected to was the tendency of governments to pretend that sanctions are some sort of magic bullet which will produce much bigger and better results than in fact they are likely to produce; and they also, of course, have unintended effects. They penalise the civilian population. Any ruthless regime like Saddam Hussein's can pass the effects of sanctions on to the civilian population while not suffering so much themselves. The other unintended effect is that it produces a sort of laager mentality where it is easier to rally support against the outside world. Smith used that a lot, but the fact is that sanctions did weaken the Rhodesian regime and they did weaken the South African regime and if they are applied to a rational adversary like F.W. de Klerk you then get the results you want. But you don't get the results you want against irrational adversaries. Nevertheless, I am strongly in favour of enforcing sanctions against ghastly regimes like in Iraq, like in Iran, like in South Africa at the time; but I do think that you need to be very selective. In South Africa I was very much opposed to disinvestment because all of my experience in Africa was - and is - that it is easy to get companies to leave but that it is very hard to get them to go back again. On the other hand I was a strong supporter of the arms boycott, the nuclear boycott, the sports boycott which actually did hit white South Africans. I think that the cultural boycott was a mistake because it closed the country in on itself when, you know, the dissemination of ideas, information, culture etc. tends to erode these authoritarian regimes.

M.M. I suppose with the Internet and all that it is probably increasingly impossible to cut off cultural contact.

Lord R. It is, but one of the instances in South Africa was the decision by Crosby to withdraw the Crosby show from showing in South Africa. This is a show which portrays a black family. It was very popular in South Africa; one might have thought it would be beneficial for South Africans to go on seeing it. Janet Suzman who is, of course, South African was never prepared to accept the cultural boycott and she organised a famous showing of 'Othello' in Johannesburg and supported the Market theatre. Her aunt Helen Suzman was a redoubtable opponent of the cultural boycott. Indeed, Helen on one occasion said that "those who support the cultural boycott think

that they are on the side of the angels; in fact they are on the side of the idiots”.

M.M. Well said. How did you succeed in getting time off to write this obviously important book.

Lord R. Well, at the end of the Rhodesia process the Foreign Office didn't really have a job for me and since I had actually been acting effectively as deputy Governor because Duff wasn't there at the time and had been ill. It wasn't so easy just to go back to a normal routine Foreign Office job. Rhodesia was all about life and death not about signing off telegrams. So I definitely wanted a period of readjustment.

M.M. Whose idea was it ?

Lord R. It was mine because they didn't have a very interesting job available so I said “can I have sabbatical year and write a book?”.

M.M. So they gave you leave of absence.

Lord R. Which they did, which was very enlightened.

M.M. Surprisingly. Do you have - presumably that was all approved by Lord Carrington - have you got any comments to make on the contrasting styles between Carrington and Owen?

Lord R. Owen was very unpopular in the Foreign Office because he felt that the hierarchy was too old, too stuffy, too ponderous etc.. Personally I got on well with David Owen but I must say there were not many people in the Foreign Office who did, partly because he wanted to do everything instantly; say, he would come in and if there wasn't something already being done he would try to dictate the telegram himself. So the secret of dealing with David Owen was to dictate the telegram before he did, so that the minute he said “what are we doing about this?” it was there, either already done or already on his desk. That involved short circuiting the hierarchy, of course, because if you waited for this to trickle through the system he got very impatient.

M.M. How did you get away with that?

Lord R. First of all he was almost trying to run Rhodesia department personally

himself and secondly, by then, the hierarchy had decided that if at least part of the system could cope with him, they'd better go ahead and do it. Carrington was a much more sort of patrician orderly figure, very, very popular in the Office. Did an extraordinarily good job on Rhodesia and, as it were, in managing the Prime Minister and so on and obviously had a great and richly deserved career.

M.M. Then, of course, he was replaced by Geoffrey Howe.

Lord R. Who was completely different; because Geoffrey Howe brought a lawyer's approach to absolutely everything including writing his speeches which went through at least 14 drafts before they ever saw the light of day. He did not have Carrington's capacity to deal with the Prime Minister because she got very impatient with his yessing and butting and 'on the one hand and on the other hand' and temperamentally they were just so different from one another that it was a difficult relationship from quite an early stage.

Lord R. She was pretty brutal in her treatment of him and that was very unfortunate. On the other side of the medal, when I was dealing with European issues in the Foreign Office and when Geoffrey Howe wanted to argue with the Prime Minister, he would try to get me or David Hannay or Michael Butler to do it for him rather than doing it himself. Yet strangely she would quite often accept these arguments from us; I don't know quite why. I think he would have been much better to have been blunter with her than he was; also she put understandably an extremely high premium on loyalty so it was absolutely essential when dealing her that any arguments you had with her - and I had lots of arguments with her - should be conducted exclusively in private and there should not be a trickle of information to the press suggesting that the Foreign Office were quotes 'unhappy' about this that and the other; because she could identify very clearly where those sort of reports came from. So if you did that you were dead in the water before you started. If you went to her and said "look, this is your objective, but I really do think that you have got to adopt a different method of getting there," then you got a very much better response from her.

M.M. So that is an interesting insight. Did you have easy access to Mrs. Thatcher?

Lord R. Well, yes I did in the sense I got to know her quite well because of the Rhodesia process which, you know, she really didn't like the fact that Mugabe had won the elections and understandably so; but that was always liable to happen, but she did think that we had acquitted ourselves really well in terms of decolonising

Rhodesia in the end; she appreciated that and I did have good access to her partly because after that at a later stage Charles Powell was appointed as her Private Secretary. He was my closest friend, and we worked together on Rhodesia and I was able to get messages to her if I needed to through Charles Powell and she did respond to them and you got a very rapid answer.

M.M. So if you were arguing or making a case to her were there any witnesses present? I mean did she have Private Secretaries?

Lord R. Yes, there were. During the European negotiations when I became the Under Secretary in charge of the EEC in the Foreign Office - that was 1984 - we had an enormous problem which is that we were contributing to the European budget as much as the Germans were and it was a vast net contribution and nobody had succeeded in negotiating a permanent correction to it and she was absolutely determined - and rightly so - that we had to do something about this and get a permanent solution, not a temporary one; in the process she annoyed all other 11 member states because none of them wanted us to benefit and them not to benefit, but it was a necessary thing to do in terms of getting public support in Britain for our continued membership; and when we did eventually get the agreement at Fontainebleau in June 1984 in was the single biggest triumph of our negotiations in the European Community because it gave us back two thirds of our net contribution to the European budget permanently and that has benefited this country to the extent of well over 20 billion pounds since it was negotiated. In fact, I think, substantially more than that and it is quite striking that the opinion polls before that agreement was reached were generally quite negative about the community. Since then they have been broadly positive because the main injustice of our accession terms had actually been corrected. The actual Fontainebleau agreement was negotiated, the text was negotiated by David Williamson who was the Deputy Secretary in the Cabinet Office and me with our French counterpart Guy Legras. It provided for a two thirds permanent abatement of our contribution net and the one and crucial item to be added in it was the figure which we wanted to be 66% which we deliberately left it to Margaret Thatcher to negotiate herself in the European Council in Fontainebleau, because we knew that whatever result we got she would have thought she could do better. We had told the French very, very clearly that there would be no settlement under 66% so they were prepared for that. There was a hell of an argument in the European Council and she won and she got the 66% figure and she rightly decided that this is the time to settle and she did. Two years later, I was very much embroiled with her in negotiating the Single European Act which I do think was a high point of

our influence in the Community because the Single European Act was on our agenda. It was to create a genuine common market in services as well as in goods and we knew when we negotiated it that we wouldn't fully succeed in getting a proper common market established by 1992 - full freedom of competition and services; but we thought we could exert pressure in that direction that would benefit large areas of British industry and economy. It would also benefit Europe. There is still a very long way to go before you get a genuinely level playing field in these areas. The Commission has totally failed to suppress State aids in the rest of Community. We are now the least subsidised country in Europe; there is lot more to be done in that respect and it will have to be part of the Blair agenda, but I do think that that was another successful negotiation and the key to that negotiation once again was co-operation with the French. When I took over that department the general sentiment was that one had to try to sort of get the others to line up against the French. I believed that if we could cut a deal with the French the others would follow it and that certainly proved to be true at Fontainebleau and it also proved to be true in the Single European Act.

M.M. I was going to ask you about that. What is the view of the Germans in all this? Are they just happy to go along with anything

Lord R. Well, the problem with dealing with the Germans was that they wanted quite contradictory things. They wanted the Community to spend less but they were even more attached to the CAP than the French were. They wanted nominally free trade, but they weren't really prepared to stand up and fight against protectionist practices in the Community. So hard as we tried to operate closely with the Germans, in the end we found that it was more profitable to strike a deal with the French and confront the others with that outcome; that did work in that period. After the Single European Act I was shipped off to South Africa and I am sorry to say that whereas at that point we were still arguing for a positive agenda, I do think that thereafter the Thatcher government ended up arguing essentially for a negative agenda and that, whereas being brutal to the others had been justified over the budget, being brutal to the others for the sake of it, which is really what happened afterwards, really diminished our influence in Europe. We got ourselves into a marginalised state and that continued to a large extent, unfortunately, under the Major government; it started off better, but ended up just the same.

M.M. To whom do you attribute that change?

Lord R. Well, I think Margaret Thatcher got increasingly impatient with her European

colleagues and they with her. Her heart was never in it anyway and I do think that she was a first class advertisement for term limits. I honestly believe that for the first nine or ten years of her Prime Ministership she did great things for this country but in the last two years I really did see what I thought was a deterioration because she had ceased to listen to ordinary people in Britain, e.g. on the poll tax, and she had become dismissive and contemptuous of her Ministers; that it was positively embarrassing. I think she was the greatest peacetime Prime Minister of this century but I do think that the last two years were two years too many and she, of course, made no provision for any succession to her which ended up being improvised in not very satisfactory conditions and with a not very satisfactory result.

[End of side one.]

Interview with Lord Renwick continued on 29th. September 1998 in his office at Robert Fleming & Co., in London. interviewed by Malcolm McBain.

M.M. May I start or may I resume, Lord Renwick, by talking about the situation in Washington and the contrast in style in the relationship between Mrs. Thatcher and Ronald Reagan compared with the relationship between John Major and Presidents Bush and Clinton both of which occurred in your time and both very remarkable periods.

Lord R. Well, I was in Washington for the last 18 months of the Bush administration and the first couple of years of the Clinton administration. Whenever there is a change of administration in the US pundits in the British press say this is the beginning of the end of this special relationship. George Bush took over from Ronald Reagan; they said things will never be the same again. Thatcher and Reagan had this very close understanding. Bush did not get on with Margaret Thatcher nearly as well as Reagan did because he had been the junior partner in that relationship as Vice-President and he felt that she had very strong opinions on everything and didn't always listen to what he had to say. Jim Baker was very concerned that it should be the US which was clearly seen to be leading the alliance and since the main item on the agenda at the time of the reunification of Germany he obviously devoted a lot of his time and efforts to that negotiation. So there was a sort of change in the character of the relationship at the No.10 level. But within 18 months, of course, the Gulf crisis had intervened. In the Gulf it wasn't possible for the Germans, even if they had wished to do so which they didn't anyway, to play any particularly important role and it turned once again to be an extremely close Anglo/American relationship. And the reason

was that only Britain was prepared to share the military risk of fighting in the Gulf from the outset; in the end the French turned up as well and good for them; but it was very much in doubt until the very last minute. So that re-solidified the relationship both at the level of Prime Minister and President and with John Major succeeding Margaret Thatcher shortly before hostilities commenced and also in the public consciousness both in Britain and in the United States the spectacle of British and American troops fighting alongside one another in a winning war. With John Major Bush had an easier relationship because Bush very clearly was the senior partner and he regarded Major as something of a protégé. John Major gave very staunch support during the Gulf War and the transition was managed so successfully in part because of the continued presence of Charles Powell alongside John Major through the Gulf War and he had a very strong relationship with the National Security Adviser General Scowcroft and that certainly helped what at the time was an inexperienced Prime Minister - certainly inexperienced in this kind of crisis. I think Powell's presence helped him a lot. It certainly ended up with Bush having a high regard for John Major and vice versa and that continued obviously for the remainder of the Bush term. When Bill Clinton took over from George Bush, again almost all British pundits prophesied the end of the special relationship. Apart from anything else, Conservative Party Central Office had sent emissaries over to help Bush. The Home Office managed to indicate, inadvertently, that they had checked the passport files to see if Clinton had applied for a British passport to dodge the Vietnam draft and, to put it crudely, in the Embassy in Washington I was left to clear up this mess. Fortunately we had done a lot to establish very close relations with the Clinton camp before they won the election. By that June in election year I had become convinced that Clinton probably would win the election because the Bush campaign had got off to such an appalling start, indeed no start at all. Bush had no position whatsoever in California which is crucial if you want to win a presidential election. Jonathan Powell from the Embassy was assigned to the Clinton campaign from when Clinton started in November. He started off on the Clinton bus in New Hampshire; he then graduated to the Clinton plane by the time Clinton was rich enough in campaign terms to have a plane. The future National Security Advisor, Tony Lake, I knew well and had several meetings with him during the campaign to discuss Clinton foreign policy positions. Warren Christopher I had a meeting with in Los Angeles well before Clinton won and before he became Secretary of State. Strobe Talbott and Dick Holbrooke and other luminaries of the Clinton foreign policy team were long-standing friends of mine and we kept in touch with them throughout so that when Clinton came in, as an Embassy at any rate, we had better contacts with that camp than anyone else did. That was one of the cases when an Embassy does help because I do think that it was a stabilising

factor at what otherwise might have been quite a bumpy moment.

M.M. It does seem extraordinary that we were able to get somebody onto the Clinton bus. Is that a regular feature?

Lord R. Yes. I mean, it is the kind of thing, I don't know whether we did it quite the same depth, but we've before always tried to keep in touch with as it were 'the other side' in Washington; that's always one of the most important things you have to do because the people on the outside certainly remember those who stayed in touch with them and listened to them, kept close relations with them. In this case, as I said, a lot of people in the Clinton team, were a lot of people I knew from previous service in Washington and it was very important throughout the campaign to understand what their foreign policy positions were going to be. One of the others was Winston Lord on Asia so I had a whole series with them all the way through. When Clinton won I had a meeting with him in Kay Graham's house, Katherine Graham's house, and I explained that the Conservative Central Office thing didn't signify very much, that the Home Office genuinely had made an extraordinarily bizarre statement but there hadn't been a real inquisition for political purposes into his time at Oxford; and he accepted that and assured me that contrary to all the Press speculation at the time that John Major would be the first European head of government to be received in Washington and I set that up. Initially the relationship between the two wasn't particularly good or close but gradually it became closer. There was a lot of turbulence about Northern Ireland, as you know, but in the end the value of the relationship reasserted itself and after John Major lost the British elections Clinton said some very nice things about him. I think it was not one of the strongest relationships between a British Prime Minister and an US President but nor was it a bad one. Over Northern Ireland John Major got very cross and understandably so at the tendency of the Clinton administration to keep shifting its ground. They wanted to do two things really. One was they wanted to placate the Irish/American lobby in the US; Teddy Kennedy and co. had a lot of influence on them. Secondly they did genuinely want to make a contribution to an attempt at peace in Northern Ireland; through London eyes people tended to see the first part of that equation rather than the second part of that equation. I got very cross myself with the White House for its failures and once they had said that they would only give Gerry Adams a visa if he does this, that and the other, one knew that they would come back to us and say well he hasn't done this, that and the other but we are still going to give him a visa which I regarded as a highly unprofessional thing to do; so I was irritated about that myself, but I did also believe and I always believed that in the end US influence in Northern Ireland could be very

beneficial; people like Ron Brown and George Mitchell and others made a real contribution to the agreement now reached in Northern Ireland and I always felt that it was quite difficult for us the 'Brits' just to have this face to face relationship with the likes of Sinn Fein, that you probably did need a bit of help from outside actually. I think that in the end the US effort has been broadly vindicated and I think that it is only fair to say that.

M.M. Thank you very much. That actually leads me on to a point that I was going to raise in connection with 'Fighting with Allies'. I think that that is an extraordinarily useful book and ought to be more or less a primer for British diplomats going to work in the United States but it does omit any sort of mention of the Irish problem and I am just wondering why that is, given that it must have loomed pretty large in your relationship as Ambassador.

Lord R. Well, it is not a memoir; it is a study of the relationship between Britain and the US and the Irish issues which arose when I was there were too close and too sort of sensitive to go into in a book which isn't intended to be a sort of scandal sheet in any way; but I have just told you what I think about them. The other great issue at the time - which is dealt with in the book - was Bosnia where there were some very serious disagreements between us and the Americans about Bosnia with the Clinton administration. That led a lot of commentators again to say that this is the worst crisis in Anglo/American relations since Suez and I have to say that at times it was a very serious potential crisis because there was a desire on the British side to try to work with the Europeans to deal with this problem and there was a great hubris among Europeans 'we're going to deal with this problem ourselves' and we ended up trying to undertake a peacekeeping operation in the absence of a peace to keep. To me at least it seemed pretty obvious at a fairly early stage that we were actually never going to achieve our objectives unless we were prepared to take military action against those principally responsible for this mess - namely the Bosnian Serbs and that was something fiercely resisted by the Major administration, including the Foreign Office generally, and Douglas Hurd, who I think was actually an extraordinarily good Foreign Secretary for whom I have a great deal of admiration though I didn't actually agree with him on this point. My frustration was just as great on the American side because while they lectured us constantly on what we ought to do to deal with the problem i.e. be much tougher with the Bosnian Serbs, they were not themselves prepared to accept any of the risks on the ground. So you got this absurd argument where we were struggling on the ground and they wanted to bomb while our people were in a very vulnerable situation; and the first duty of any

Ambassador in those circumstances is to seek to help protect the lives of the British Soldiers on the ground. I certainly spent a lot of my time trying to do that. In the end the situation got so bad when Srebrenica was over-run and the Dutch contingent were humiliated. At that point two things happened. One, I think, I did help to persuade Malcolm Rifkind by then Foreign Secretary and Michael Portillo, that we had to think of something very different i.e. withdrawing from Gorazde and putting ourselves into a position where military action could be taken against the Bosnian Serbs. After the fall of Srebrenica I went to see President Clinton and I saw him on my own, for an hour, with Mack McLarty who is a personal friend and advisor of his and I did say to him that if we allowed the same thing to happen to Gorazde and to Sarajevo the reputation of no western leader would survive, least of all his own. I didn't do that on instructions. I did it off my own bat because I felt extremely strongly about this issue and that it was wrecking the alliance. Anyhow, by that stage President Clinton had himself realised that the penalties of doing nothing were potentially even greater than the penalties of taking military risks and so on and so forth. Following that and above all the involvement of Richard Holbrooke on the American side, not long afterwards we did get our troops out of Gorazde, we did batten down the hatches, military action was taken against General Mladic and his forces. It was a pretty effective air campaign. We didn't have hostages taken and that, in my opinion at least, paved the way for the Dayton Agreement and an end to the war in Bosnia; but it depended critically on the Americans being prepared to put in ground forces of their own and we did manage to get them over that hurdle at the very end of my tenure as Ambassador in Washington.

M.M. Thank you very much indeed. Going back to 'Fighting with Allies', there is another issue which seems to me to be perhaps overlooked to some extent and that is the huge Anglo/American commercial disputes which seem to ramble on endlessly. Things like Concorde landing rights and extra-territoriality and so on. Did much of that actually get discussed and dealt with by you in Washington or was it....?

Lord R. Less so. I was not on the economic side of the Embassy except when I was Ambassador. When I was Ambassador we did work together very closely with the Americans in achieving a successful outcome to the Uruguay round of trade negotiations leading to the setting up of the WTO - the World Trade Organisation - and I worked very closely with Micky Kantor as did Sarah Hogg from John Major's office and, of course, above all Leon Brittan on behalf of the European Union. It is perfectly true we constantly had commercial disputes with the Americans - aircraft landing rights, you mentioned Concorde, but that is just one incident and extra-

territoriality and so on. While I was in Washington we did negotiate with Governor Wilson of California a solution to the unitary taxation dispute which effectively ended that dispute between us. Now, we will always have commercial disputes with the Americans and in my opinion they will always in the end be resolved because the common interest is so great. What I do point out in the book is that following the abolition of exchange control by Margaret Thatcher's government our investments in America have burgeoned to an extraordinary degree and so have theirs in Britain so that we now have over 150 billion dollars invested in each other's countries. We are substantially the largest investor in the United States and they are, by a long way, the largest investor in Britain and those ties are very important. I always used to say to American audiences that I am sure that they knew where the real ownership of such all American favourites as Burger King, Dunkin' Donuts, Brooks Brothers and so on lay. It lay, of course, with us. Just as they own Jaguar and Cooper's Orange Marmalade and so on. So this is an extremely important relationship and I have always believed that it should be a fundamental aim of any British government to strive towards the eventual creation of an effective free trade zone between North America and Europe and that doesn't mean an exclusive arrangement or one which affects adversely the interests of others but it does mean a commitment to the progressive abolition of all the remaining obstacles to trade in manufactured goods and services existing between us. We have always pushed in that direction and others in the European Union have always tried to exert a restraining influence, in particular to preserve the Common Agricultural Policy.

M.M. That is certainly a great problem. Reading through the book .. how on earth did you find the time to do it?

Lord R. As you go around the United States as Ambassador you have to spend a lot of time outside Washington, otherwise you get an extraordinarily distorted view and that involves meeting and talking to major audiences across the US like Chambers of Commerce. We now have by far the strongest network of British/American Chambers of Commerce, far stronger than that associated with any other country, as well as the Councils on Foreign Relations, the World Affairs Councils which are influential bodies in the United States. So in talking to those bodies you write speeches, you use historical anecdotes to illustrate what you want to say to day; I have always had a passionate interest in the history of this relationship and in the reality of this relationship and the purpose of writing that book - the title is deliberately ambiguous - essentially that is what we have done. We have fought together in this century against aggression on numerous occasions and that is at the core of the relationship, but we

also have had plenty of fights between us; there has never been a period when there weren't sharp disagreements between the British and American governments on a number of subjects. Whenever that happens people who don't have an historical perspective and don't understand the width and depth of the relationship say 'Oh, my God, it's all over, isn't it' and this is an attempt to demythologise the relationship, to describe what really is special about it. Which remains, firstly the ties of history, language, culture, values and secondly the military, defence, intelligence, nuclear relationship which is very special and important and not to suggest that all the rest of it is smooth sailing. It isn't. We have always had profound disagreements, for instance about the Middle East.

M.M. Yes, thank you for that. Continuing on a matter partly raised by the book, I didn't perceive very much mention of what your particular views might be about the often repeated State Department view, at any rate, that they would prefer us to be more closely linked with Europe than with them and that our influence on the United States was more or less in direct relationship to the strength of our relationship with Europe - what do you think about that?

Lord R. Well, this is a very important subject and I am well known to be a leading exponent of the view that we have to do both. In other words if we allow ourselves to be marginalised in Europe, then we cease to be as influential as we want to be in Washington, but the opposite is also the case. That is what many people forget. When you say the State Department wants us to be fully integrated in Europe that is what I might describe as the European Bureau view. When I was told by every British journalist in Washington that the State Department want this I remember sitting next to Jim Baker at a football game the Washington Redskins and Jim Baker said to me 'you are not really going to join an Economic Monetary Union are you, I can't believe you would want to do that'. This was while I was being assured by every journalist talking to the Third Secretary in the Bureau of European Affairs that they wanted us to be fully integrated. So the truth is that you have to do both. Now I notoriously am a supporter of Blair's policy in Europe because it seems to me to be more positive, more likely to increase our influence in Europe than the efforts of the last government whose policy towards the end I couldn't understand at all. Actually, I couldn't see what they were in favour of, if anything, but there we are. Now, that I think has helped Blair's influence in Washington, actually; but here you come to the ultimate paradox. In the end the United States wants us to support them in world crises where our interests are at stake and theirs are. Typically, when we do that we find that we are either on our own or virtually on our own and the Europeans are nowhere to be

seen because they don't want to share those risks. They want to issue statements deploring this and deploring that of a motherhood nature; they do not want to face up to the risks of doing what we did together in the Gulf, except in that case the French. Now this is the paradox; we do need to be influential in Europe, we would all like to see Europe performing more effectively and more cohesively on the world stage and that in my view is going to take a long time coming. We didn't do very well as Europeans in the Gulf or in Bosnia and in those instances, I believe, this country has to be prepared when it believes it is justified to support the US; that actually is a service that this country renders Europe, even though it doesn't get much credit for it, for - believe me - if we hadn't been prepared to do the things we did in the Gulf and indeed militarily in Bosnia, the Americans really would go into a shell of their own; they would say, why on earth should we help to sort out problems in Kuwait and Bosnia when no European country is prepared to lift a finger to help us to do so?.

M.M. So that then is quite an important matter. What then do you think about the single currency?

Lord R. Well, before the last election Mr Blair consulted various people about the single currency; I was one of them, I told him that I was absolutely certain, contrary to a lot of the British press at the time, that it would take place and on time and that the convergence criteria would either be met or fudged; because this was this was essentially a political enterprise, they would go ahead with it and in my opinion also it would succeed. My advice was not to try to join in the first wave, because I think that would have been an extremely risky thing for us to do economically; our interest rates would have been rising while the others would have been very low, I shudder to think what the effect of trying to put those two numbers together would be right now; but I very much do favour this country joining in due course once we have been able to mobilise sufficient business, City, public support to do it which I think is achievable and secondly, and above all, once we are sufficiently satisfied that it would directly benefit us economically and that our situation is sufficiently convergent with that of the core economies to be able to join. There are going to be enormous strains here because if you set interest rates at a rate that suits France, Germany, Benelux etc. it is not really the rate which is going to suit Ireland or indeed Portugal probably. So there are problems, but this enterprise is going to succeed in my opinion. I firmly believe that we will join in due course. I think that we have got to recognise, which many of the advocates of joining don't want to do, that this will entail - this is actually a big step towards - a more federal system. I don't believe that a common currency will be sustainable over time without stronger powers at the centre and every other member

state says that. Yet we don't want to hear that message even among the advocates of joining and I think that unless you do realise that's what is going to happen, you are setting out a false agenda.

M.M. Is there any reason why the Europeans in a more federal mode should not be a rival power bloc to the Americans or at least an equal power bloc?

Lord R. I think it will be a semi-federal mode. It will take a long time to resolve enormous national conflicts of interest. At the moment it is a system that proceeds by a sort of consensus. The consensus is very often the lowest common denominator. Faced with each new atrocity by General Mladic, what do we do as Europeans? We issue a statement not to do it again. When he did it again, we issued another statement. There was no will there to deal with him. Now I as a European found that humiliating. Actually, Britain, France and Germany, the three of us, not to be able to tell a tinpot Balkan dictator what to do and what not to do was, to me, humiliating; if I thought that the will existed even among those three powers, setting aside all the others, I would be much more confident that Europe could become a real force in World affairs; at the moment it is an economic force in World affairs, politically it is not much of a force and militarily it is zero.

M.M. One has to agree with that!

Lord R. I am afraid so. We should not build delusions about this; we can be even better Europeans at the cost of behaving like the Belgians, going along with whatever statement is issued and regarding that as foreign policy. Neither we nor the French actually do regard that as foreign policy and it isn't.

M.M. Would there be any reason why we would be deprived of our special sort of agreement with the Americans or our need to act in unison with them if we were in a common currency?

Lord R. None at all. I can't see why our participation in a single currency should affect in any way, in any significant way, our relationship with the United States and certainly not the defence relationship with the United States, which is very much at the core of the thing.

M.M. Thank you very much indeed for that. I would like to ask you another question dealing with general sort of foreign policy issues and that is this: I have a special

reason for asking this. What role does the Secret Intelligence Service play in the formulation of UK foreign policy. Perhaps I should go on to say that the reason I am asking this is that, I think, that some of the people who read these interviews think that diplomatic service officers deliberately omit to make any mention of the SIS.

Lord R. Well, I am quite happy to mention the SIS. I don't think that the Secret Intelligence Service, in my experience, has any major influence in determining British foreign policy in the sense of policy choices. What it does is help to provide some extremely valuable information which enables those policies which typically have already been chosen to be implemented. When you are dealing in the Cold War world, obviously we needed intelligence on the Soviet Union and its allies. In the post Cold War world, we need intelligence on the fundamentalist terrorist rogue States, terrorist organisations which we are also battling with. That is an absolutely vital function for the SIS and it is certainly no less relevant today than it was before. SIS, senior SIS officers, don't try to determine policy; occasionally rogue elements might try but it simply wouldn't be accepted when it got to the top of the British government or the Foreign Office. All I can say of my own contacts with the SIS is that they have been unfailingly helpful in helping to provide the sort of information that we needed to decide how best to deal with this or that problem. The same goes, in some respect even more so, for the Government Communications Headquarters which provide invaluable information about the intentions and activities of people who could pose a threat to our security or that of British citizens abroad.

M.M. Thank you very much indeed. I would like to ask you a couple of questions, slightly detailed questions, arising from 'Fighting with Allies'. So this is delving back into the past a bit. In this book you are talking about John Maynard Keynes' negotiations for the post war loan. You say that the terms imposed by the Americans included interest of 2% repayable over 50 years and that sterling had to be convertible. I am just wondering why in your opinion they were so anxious to ensure that this money was convertible to dollars. Was it to ensure that sterling balances held by countries held by countries like Egypt, India and so on, Argentina probably, could be used for dollar purposes?

Lord R. No, I think obviously that was one of the implications resented by us; but I think that they had an ideological belief - which I personally share - that currencies ought generally speaking to be convertible and that's the goal towards which we should be aiming. In this case they asked us to aim for that goal far too fast and the results were bad. One thing this book does show, incidentally, is the enormous cost

this country has suffered over the years in attempting to defend fixed rates of sterling and the most recent cost was our ignominious expulsion from the European Exchange Rate mechanism. Some people regard that as an argument against joining a single currency. I don't. We wouldn't be defending a fixed rate of sterling. We would be merging sterling into a wider currency grouping. But it does impose all sorts of disciplines and you have to be prepared to accept those disciplines if you intend to do that. The Labour government after the War, the Wilson government, had their confidence completely shattered by repeated sterling crises. If they had had the wit to decide to float sterling, they would have saved themselves a great deal of grief.

M.M. I was wondering whether a future condition that you don't mention and which perhaps doesn't exist, but I was wondering whether another condition was that the Americans wanted to ensure that we granted independence to, particularly, India.

Lord R. I don't think that affected the financial negotiations but they did want us to grant independence to India and to everywhere else as well. That's part of the American psyche, if you like the belief that they are an anti-colonial power because they were after all the first anti-colonial power. They therefore have always been surprised that having advocated the independence of countries like Ghana and so on that the Third World doesn't love them as much as they would like them to.

M.M. I think that they were particularly shocked by India but you don't think that there was any direct linkage there?

Lord R. No.

M.M. Another thing which I thought was pretty interesting was your remark that Mrs. Thatcher had said that diplomats needed to remember that there was no point in engaging in a conflict with a friend when you weren't going to win.

Lord R. I think she is right about this. She was specifically referring to the fact that the Foreign Office and Peter Carrington were agitated, the Foreign Office more than Carrington, about American policy in Central America under Reagan. As far as she was concerned, that was an issue of not much concern to Britain in relation to much bigger issues on which we needed American help and support. She was probably right about that. Although people don't like to admit it, the fact is that Reagan did succeed in Central America. When he came into power there was a Communist dominated regime in Nicaragua and most people expected other dominoes to fall starting with El

Salvador where there was a full scale insurrection going on backed by the Sandinistas, Cubans etc. obviously reflecting a lot of dissatisfaction among the Salvadorian population. Today in Central America there are democratic governments and there are elections in all these States; American policy over the last 15 years has really been rather successful in Latin America and we should acknowledge that.

M.M. I just wonder why Mrs. Thatcher didn't recognise that sound advice when the question of German reunification came up.

Lord R. Well on German reunification the Americans didn't sympathise with her because she had instinctive fears about what a bigger Germany would do. Mitterand shared them, but didn't state them publicly the way she used to do. They didn't think it was sensible to adopt that position; they regarded Germany reunification as both inevitable and desirable and I think they were right.

M.M. She was expressing a view in public which was really a bit counter-productive.

Lord R. Yes it was; she says so in her own memoirs and also she did on one occasion confess to me that she thought she had probably been mistaken so stridently to oppose the US intervention in Grenada. I think she was mistaken. That was a bad episode in the sense that the United States failed properly to consult us but the reason they failed to consult us is that they knew that the Foreign Office was against doing anything in Grenada and if they did consult us we would try to stop them. So they decided not to consult us but to inform her at a late stage in the belief that she probably would see the point. Anyway she didn't see the point, she was cross and offended. In reality the Americans got rid of an appalling bunch of thugs in Grenada, they were welcomed by the population there and the British outburst about what a terrible thing they were doing, intervening in a member of the Commonwealth was frankly pretty absurd.

M.M. Thank you. Did you ever find in the course of your long career that Ministers were unwilling to accept impartial advice from advisers?

Lord R. No, I think, I didn't experience that. All the Ministers I worked with and there were a lot of them and Foreign Secretaries, you could say what you thought. Typically what they wanted to feel was that you accepted their objectives and were trying to advise them, as it were, on how to get there and indeed how not to get there. If you contested their objectives, then obviously they would have a rather different point of view. I struggled over a number of issues like Rhodesia where I was

extremely concerned at one stage; it looked as if we were actually going to try and reach an agreement with Ian Smith. That was in 1970/71 under Douglas Home. Over Bosnia I was extremely concerned that we were actually prepared to contemplate permitting the Serbs ultimately to over-run Sarajevo, but I didn't find that I couldn't get my arguments expressed and made.

M.M. Thank you. I was going to ask you about Monsieur Pesc, if time permitted, and when we met last time, of course, no UK representative or nominee had been made. I understand that one now has been. Is this going to be as important a task as it would appear to be?

Lord R. I doubt it, for reasons I have given. Before the election I explained to Mr Blair that there was going to be Monsieur Pesc also known in German as Herr Gasp and the Prime Minister was frankly appalled actually. But this is going to be the role of a senior civil servant effectively, who is supposed to articulate a common policy. The trouble with a common policy we have already identified typically - it is in favour of motherhood, peace, people not killing each other and so on, but it does not have any teeth except some economic pressures can be brought to bear. So a good Monsieur Pesc may be able to make something of this sow's ear. I don't think he will turn it into a silk purse. Ultimately, as over Bosnia, there were some quite profound differences between the member states; the Germans felt quite closely allied to the Croats, the Greeks with the Serbs etc. So maybe a highly competent Monsieur Pesc can help us to do better. I hope he will, but I think both we and the French and other member states will retain a sufficient degree of ultimate independence of action at the end of the day on interests which really concern us very much.

M.M. Thank you. if I may finally ask you have you got any observations about your career in the Diplomatic Service?

Lord R, Well, my final observation is that in the course of my term in the Diplomatic Service we helped to stop several wars in Rhodesia, in Namibia, an impending civil war in South Africa, we defeated Argentine aggression in the Falklands, we helped to defeat Iraqi aggression in Kuwait and we certainly helped ultimately to win the Cold War. I think that that is a proud record and I simply don't agree with the rather self-flagellating little Englanders who argue that we can't really have much influence in world affairs and that we should just huddle together with the other Europeans and issue statements from time to time. I think we can do a great deal better than that, given the quality of our armed forces, the role they have played in peace-keeping and

not only in peace-keeping but actually in war. All the circumstances I have described mean we can do better than that, provided we have the will, resolve and leadership which enables us to do so. I think our present Prime Minister feels that way and I think Margaret Thatcher felt that way and indeed John Major did too. I think we have a lot to be proud of in terms of our successes over the last 20 years. We have one thing very definitely not to be so proud of and that has been our failure to be more effective in our European policy because of the constant twisting and turning, because for instance I am now told we are now at last considering the abolishing that absurd rule for dogs and rabies. Mrs. Thatcher spent two hours with 9 other heads of government about preserving these rules which I thought we ought to have been examining fundamentally ourselves. Similarly frontier controls; ultimately I can't see why we couldn't participate in a wider system of frontier controls, even if that does mean the introduction of identity cards in this country. We all carry credit cards anyway. That is part of the price of being more fully part of Europe. Those are some of the issues that have to be addressed if we really want to do that. If we don't want to do that, fine. What we don't have to do is to submerge our identity into that of the Benelux, French or Germans; we will always have, in my opinion, a distinctive and important role to play in terms of helping to bind together Europe and the United States. That is a really important role for us which we have played, and in my opinion, will continue to play.

M.M. Thank you very much indeed.

Lord R. Thanks very much.