

## **BDOHP Interview Index and Biographical Details**

Sir Colin Richard Budd, KCMG, 2002 (CMG 1991)

Biographical Details with (on right) relevant pages in the interview:

Entered Diplomatic Service, 1967	pp 2-3
Commonwealth Office, 1967-68	pp 3-4
Assistant Private Secretary to Minister without Portfolio, 1968-69	p 4
Warsaw, 1969-72	pp 5-8
Second Secretary, Islamabad, 1972-75	pp 8-11
Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 1976-80	pp 11-14
The Hague, 1980-84	pp 14-15
Assistant Private Secretary to Foreign Secretary, 1984-87	pp 15-18
European Secretariat, Cabinet Office, 1987-88	pp 18-19
Counsellor (Political) Bonn, 1989-92	pp 19-22
Chef de Cabinet to Sir Leon Brittan, Vice-President of EC, 1993-96	pp 22-26
Deputy Secretary, Cabinet Office (on secondment), 1996-97 (Chair of the Joint Intelligence Committee and Head of the Overseas and Defence Secretariat)	pp 27-30
Deputy Under-Secretary of State, FCO, 1997-2001	pp 30-37
Ambassador to the Netherlands, 2001-05	pp 38-43

**BRITISH DIPLOMATIC ORAL HISTORY PROGRAMME**

**RECOLLECTIONS OF SIR COLIN BUDD KCMG**

**RECORDED AND TRANSCRIBED BY CATHERINE MANNING**

CM: This is Catherine Manning recording an interview with Sir Colin Budd for the British Diplomatic Oral History Programme on 7 November 2016.

Colin, you joined the Foreign Office in 1967, but before you tell us about your start in diplomacy, would you like to explain why you chose the Foreign Office as a career?

CB: I chose it in effect because I'd grown up in a family and in an environment which was heavily imbued with both international relations and politics. My maternal grandfather, Leslie Burgin, had been both a Liberal Member of Parliament and a Cabinet Minister, and a solicitor with a very widespread international practice, and spoke about seven languages. My mother had read French and German at Cambridge and I was brought up from a very early age to have an enthusiasm for international affairs and travel and indeed also for politics (my father was five times a Liberal Parliamentary candidate, and my mother President of the Women's Liberals). Since at that point the post-War Liberal Party had not yet started its growth phase and had, during most of the period when I was growing up, only six Members of Parliament, there was obviously no future in a political career as such. I also read a rather striking book, which I found in my school library when I was about sixteen, by a former Italian diplomat, Daniele Vare, called *Laughing Diplomat*. He was one of the Italian ambassadors sacked by Mussolini in, I think, 1935. From a Venetian family himself, he had both an English wife and an English mother and wrote bi-lingually in English as well as Italian. He inspired me to think of diplomacy as a profession. My political grandfather's influence (though he died two weeks before I was born, I was brought up to venerate him) also taught me a great deal. Even his mother was fluent in German, having been a governess in Dresden in the 1870s. So I was brought up to take foreign affairs very, very seriously and really never hesitated. I instinctively looked to diplomatic life as a way of combining politics and international affairs.

CM: Did you go into the Foreign Office straight from university?

CB: I did, to my regret in a way, because I had just been offered a job which would have been fun, as an intern in the US Senate. Joe Clark, one of the Senators for Pennsylvania, had written a book called *Congress: the Sapless Branch*. I'd written to him, with some chutzpah at that age, to say what a stimulating book it was. He wrote back saying how charmed he was by my letter: would I like to come and work as an intern? And I would have, except that in order to take up that opportunity I would have had to work till November, I think it was, and the Foreign Office started on the first of September – so I really had no choice but to turn Clark down.

CM: What was the training for young diplomats like in 1967? Did you receive some training or were you plunged straight in?

CB: Almost none. By the standards of most of the diplomatic services of Western Europe, vestigial - two weeks. I can remember we were looked after by Alan Donald, later Ambassador to China, who was a most charming and highly intelligent man, but lengthy training was not then in fashion. We did a few things like playing exercises about Vietnam, one of the great sagas of the time, and I played the militant cadre of the Viet Cong in one such exercise, which was indeed fun. But the thesis, the very British thesis, was that for the most part you had to learn on a desk. What was unfortunate was that the Foreign Office had not then put as much effort as it did later in our careers into ensuring that people in their first year did something really useful. I had a pleasant first year, but it was much less stimulating than it should have been.

### **Commonwealth Office, 1967-68**

In the middle of September 1967, after the two weeks of training, I joined the Zambia and Malawi Department. The Commonwealth Office was then still separate from the Foreign Office, though both were already part of a unified Diplomatic Service. The Commonwealth Office, in particular, was notably overstaffed. I wasn't the Zambia desk officer, as you would be today in this situation; I was something like fourth in line working on Zambia. I had almost nothing to do. I had a helpful Head of Department, Bill Peters, who'd been himself in the Colonial Service and he took some pains to teach me something which I hadn't practised much since I was at prep school, I think: the difference between direct and indirect speech. I can remember the extent of his red ink on my earlier efforts, so that was a salutary experience. But the failing of that first year was that there was really very little effort made to expose us to wider challenges. I spent quite a lot of time twiddling my thumbs. I was

fortunate in that the Deputy Head of the Department was an interesting man called Brian Unwin. He transferred a year later to the Treasury and eventually became Chairman of Customs and Excise and President of the European Investment Bank. He was a man of high calibre, and opened my eyes to many things. But it was a largely wasted first year, luckily followed by a great piece of luck, when I suddenly had to go up about three gears.

### **Assistant Private Secretary to the Minister Without Portfolio, 1968-69**

In October 1968, just over a year after starting work, I became Assistant Private Secretary to a Cabinet Minister. George Thomson, Minister without Portfolio - based in the Foreign Office, but a Cabinet Minister in his own right, working on various things, principally the negotiations with Ian Smith about Rhodesia. So the fact that I had been working on Zambia and Malawi was relevant to that; someone had intelligently put two and two together. It also fitted because at this stage I had been selected to go to Poland as my first post, but the Polish language course at RAF North Luffenham only started in the March of the following year, so I had six months to fill in. Some wise person in the Personnel Department of the day thought, 'He's had this central African background; he knows the context; put him in there.' There I was, and that for me, at the age of 23, was a wonderful experience. I saw all the Cabinet papers of the time, because my boss was a Cabinet Minister. I met many of the key players in the fascinating high drama of the Rhodesian story. I remember meeting people like the ADC to the Governor, Sir Humphrey Gibbs, who was representing the Queen against Ian Smith. On top of that, George Thomson was a very considerate man. A most capable man too, later one of our first two European Commissioners, with Christopher Soames. He was absolutely charming to me. It can be quite fearsome at 23 when you are suddenly a Private Secretary. On the other hand, in the way of the world the Private Secretary, whatever his or her age, is regarded with a certain veneration by even grizzled undersecretaries. I remember Peter Bottomley's father, Jim, a very striking man, who was widely regarded as a rather off-putting figure. He'd been wounded in Normandy in '44 in the War and his jaw had been twisted slightly sideways. He naturally took me seriously as a representative of his Minister, but beyond that also went out of his way to teach me a lot, despite having this rather fierce image. I only spent six months in that job, but I learned a great deal, not least about central Africa, and how Cabinet works, various things which came in useful later. I also enjoyed the company of the senior Private Secretary I had to work with, David Mackilligin. So that was a very good time.

CM: After that lucky six months, you moved on to your language training. How long did you have to learn Polish?

CB: Six months. That was a very strange episode. RAF North Luffenham is deep, deep England. I think the nearest bank was fifteen miles away, or something like that. It was quite isolated, which is good for language training. Polish was being taught there not least because there had been a lot of Poles in the Air Force during the War. It wasn't a perfect system, because we learned quite a lot of military Polish, but it was effective. We learned a lot.

### **HM Embassy, Warsaw**

CM: When you arrived in Poland you found you were able to cope in Polish?

CB: Yes. What happened when you arrived in this particular slot in the Warsaw Embassy was that you went straight into the curious discipline of co-editing with an American colleague *The Polish News Bulletin*, a summary of the Polish press. I had an American opposite number, Tom Simons, who was later Ambassador to Poland and to Pakistan, a very high quality operator.

CM: It might be worth, Colin, explaining about the set up of *The Polish News Bulletin*, what it was for and how it operated, because it was a rather unusual, indeed unique, enterprise for the Foreign Office.

CB: Yes, it was a fascinating construct. We did week on, week off, as I recall with the American colleague. It had been set up jointly by the American and British Embassies in Warsaw and it existed in order to provide an English language summary of key developments in the Polish press. We had a team of Polish translators, and the prime responsibility of the editor, British or American, was to make sure that the selection of the articles for translation was apt and useful. It required you to get a grip pretty fast of the full range of available media sources. Obviously, after six months you are hardly bi-lingual, so one had to really sprint pretty hard in order to keep up in those early stages, particularly when simultaneously doing all the other things you have to do at the beginning of a posting.

It was an extraordinarily lucky time to be in the Warsaw embassy because we had a very remarkable leader – Nicko Henderson, then in his first post as Ambassador, but later Ambassador in Germany, France and the United States, and with two spells as Private

Secretary to the Secretary of State already behind him. With an equally remarkable Greek wife, Mary. At the age of 24 I could not have asked for a more interesting or congenial couple to learn from. Nicko had grown up half in Bloomsbury. His mother had been a prominent member of the Bloomsbury group. He was open, stimulating, immensely lively, and above all fun. He had a whole range of interesting friends, and was a typical member of Brooks's Club. He had friends like Lord Gladwyn, the Bonham Carters, and the Grimonds. All sorts of members of the UK liberal intelligentsia came out visiting and were always charming to me. I was often sent off with them on weekends. As you know, Ambassadors can be conservative and pale-faced and never do anything novel or interesting, but Nicko was the complete opposite. I was always encouraged to have and float ideas. I shared a room, the Third Room, to start with, with Michael Pakenham, who was the Ambassador's godson. So it was all a rather family atmosphere. I learned a lot of such professionalism as I absorbed over the years from the Hendersons. Mary, who had been interrogated by the Gestapo in Athens several times during the War, taught me, and Agnes when we got married, the significance of colour and style and verve and taste and the deployment of all these qualities to make an evening hum, and the importance of inviting the right people. She was extremely well organised and kept Nicko's rather more louche qualities within bands of steel: together they were formidable. We had the combination of a fizzing Ambassador with a disciplined ambassadorial spouse, plus exciting events to report on and encouragement to produce ideas and to engage routinely in wide-ranging discussion. I was very fortunate indeed in that first Embassy.

On top of that was the fact that we were in the middle of, by Iron Curtain standards, moderately great events from December '70. I'd arrived in September '69; in December '70 the northern Polish ports blew up, with the first great mutinies against the Polish Communists. Russian tanks everywhere. There was a lot of excitement. London was keenly interested in what was happening. We had all sorts of opportunities to develop ourselves and put ourselves on the map of the wider world, and learned very fast a lot of things.

CM: In relation to the events of 1970, did you have contact with dissidents or with intellectuals who supported the workers in the ports? Was that part of what you had to do?

CB: It was still very Iron Curtain. You were followed quite often by secret police. I wouldn't suggest it was easy, but we had, inside Warsaw, a lot of contacts among the Press and intelligentsia. Many of our friends were cross questioned regularly by the secret police

about their contacts with us. There was pain involved some of the time. At meetings in the Pen Club I met a number of intellectuals who had been prominent in previous Polish episodes of dissent. It was extraordinarily gripping. The sad thing was that because the Iron Curtain was still there, it was quite difficult to keep in contact with these people after one had left. So that was frustrating. But as an experience at the time, it was anything but boring. The combination of a fizzing Ambassador and fizzing Poles was always exciting. Not that all the Poles were entirely admirable, as you know. There was systemic anti-semitism in quite a lot of the population and, having grown up as a Protestant, I didn't personally take to Marian Catholicism. But the existence of censorship, which was integral to the Iron Curtain way of life, created such ambiguity on the cultural plane that there was immense scope for interpretation as well as enjoyment. Even if you went to something like Grotowski's Mime Theatre in Wroclaw, there was political symbolism in the mime. There was a famous weather forecaster on Polish television and it was always said that when he spoke about clouds coming from Moscow, this had deep political significance. This went to satire and beyond. There was no shortage of melodrama and much electricity in the cultural air. The *Battle of Britain* film, a British film, came out while we were there and Susannah York came out for the first showing in Poland. I remember the excitement in the audience because there were some snatches of Polish in the film, because of the Polish pilots, of course. I remember also going to Krakow to see Wajda's production of Dostoyevsky's *The Devils*, which again is full of anti-Moscow stuff, originally in the nineteenth century Russian context, but picked up immediately by the Krakow audience as criticism of contemporary Moscow. So all these things created a magic in the air, which meant that social gatherings were often full of it ...

CM: Though censorship of written material was part of the system, the Poles effectively had freedom of speech, because they said a lot. Other people have commented, too, that going to cocktail parties, today almost a caricature of diplomatic life, was actually an essential part of the working day because of the exchange of information and opportunities to meet significant people who were there at those events.

CB: Yes indeed: at a cocktail party you could talk without being overheard, whereas in any home that was not necessarily the case. A cocktail party had more use behind the Iron Curtain than in most contexts in this world.

CM: And an important time because you got married during that period.

CB: Absolutely. The younger generation, of course, wouldn't now understand this, but we had met about six weeks after I had arrived in the country and Agnes, about six weeks later, left, having been in the Netherlands Embassy. She had been there through the excitements of '68 and she then left and went to New York. In 1969 New York was a long way away and it was quite difficult to talk on the phone. We got married in May '71 and spent another year there together.

### **HM Embassy, Islamabad, 1972-75**

CM: At the end of your time in Poland, after two and a half years, your next posting was almost, for you, like going home, because you went to Pakistan.

CB: Yes, it was, because I had spent the first six years of my life in Karachi. My father had been in the Indian Civil Service and I had indeed at the age of six spoken a vernacular quite fluently. Actually Kashmiri rather than Urdu. Urdu is of course a very up market language, whereas I had played for the first six years of my life with the children of my parents' servants, who all came from Azad Kashmir, so I spoke fluent Pahari, a hill language. Kipling wrote lyrically about how everything comes back when you return after the English immersion in the middle. I wouldn't claim that. Because I hadn't spoken Urdu when I was small, from 1972-5 in Islamabad I had to work very hard learning it. My return to India was, however, fascinating and clearly at some level, including partly a subconscious one, I picked up a lot of things again: smells, memories of seeing cobras dance, carpet sellers coming to the door, people coming with magic stones, all these things. Elements of *Kim*. It's always hard after the event to distinguish what was put in your system by Kipling, what you really remember from childhood and what you then absorbed as an adult, but in some magic way these things come together. On a personal and family level, because it was wonderful for my parents too, it was gripping. But it was actually professionally a very frustrating time.

I had again a most interesting Ambassador, whom I'll return to, but the work was neither very satisfying nor easy. Pakistan in the early 1970s was a country where the Brits were still very expert about the area. It was a quarter of a century after Pakistani independence when I went back as a young Second Secretary, and we had all the expertise, but absolutely no power. Not only that, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Benazir's father, who was then in power, was conducting a considerable feud against the UK. He had himself been a law lecturer at Southampton University and was a very intelligent man, but for more than a year of the

period that I was there, the Foreign Ministry was banned from talking to the British High Commission and Embassy. There was quite serious bad temper for all sorts of reasons: because we had been trying to influence things he was doing and expressing disapproval of some things he was doing. He was not very good at the rule of law and a few things like that. So that was frustrating.

I remember a number of things about this period. A wonderful country in many ways, then luckily not inhabited by the Taleban and al Qaeda, so one could travel safely. Pakistan has many of the most romantic parts of the whole British Empire: driving up to Kabul through the Kabul Gorge, stopping at Peshawar en route, was a wonderful experience. We did that, I think, three times. I walked from Chitral to Gilgit across the fifteen thousand foot Shandur Pass, following in the footsteps of the 1896 British Expeditionary Force. Fishing in the Kaghan Valley, lovely things. Many of the experiences which members of the ICS (Indian Civil Service) had loved you could, at second hand, also still enjoy in this capacity. But the work was frustrating because this quite sophisticated machine was not really applied. All of us who've done this job seriously have always wanted to do things that are important for the British national interest at the time in question. The British in 1972-75 no longer had a very great interest, frankly, in what was happening in Pakistan. A large part of the Embassy, as no doubt in Delhi, was already occupied with immigration. There was a distinct limit to the extent to which the Foreign Office in London needed detailed political reporting on what was going on.

A slightly artificial period, redeemed to some considerable extent by having another fascinating Ambassador, Laurie Pumphrey, a Wykehamist of some distinction, who had been a prisoner in Colditz in his time. He was very short in stature so his version was that he was always sent through the new tunnel first and was therefore often caught at the other end and thereby ended up in Colditz, but that was perhaps his modesty speaking. He'd also been, for most of the Attlee government, Attlee's Private Secretary at No. 10 on foreign affairs, so had wonderful stories about Attlee and Dalton and Cripps and all the other veterans of that period, and he taught me a huge amount. He was also very intellectual. He insisted that serious members of his Embassy learned fluent Urdu and before the Embassy began work - I say 'embassy' because Bhutto left the Commonwealth for part of the time, so we ceased to be a High Commission. The post began work at 8 o'clock in the morning; for three years I had an Urdu lesson at 7 every morning before going to work. That was discipline of an interesting kind, but again frustrating, because Urdu was not actually very useful. Obviously, the fact

that you could speak it was appreciated by many of the people you met, but the kind of people who speak Urdu in Islamabad are almost always people who speak excellent English. The useful language in Islamabad for most practical purposes is Punjabi. Urdu with its honorific and its more subtle Persian and Arabic connotations was mostly wasted on the Punjabis by whom we were surrounded. So I wouldn't say it was hugely useful, but it enabled one to read the press and so on.

Laurie Pumphrey also attached great importance to the way in which his staff wrote, so it was back to school. He was for instance a great believer in the use of the colon, and very precise. I have worked with various Wykehamists in my time. Just as I learned about Latin tags from Geoffrey Howe, the colon I absorbed from Laurie Pumphrey. He had moreover particular aversions. He hated the improper use of the adverb 'hopefully' and any time in a morning meeting when anyone was guilty of such solecisms, there was immediately a giggle as the ambassadorial eyebrows rose. That was about the importance of the harness and getting the harness right, but he did also attach huge importance to the horse and having the right qualities inside the harness. It was an education. The frustration in the end was that we were being trained by a man of huge experience and capability, but that the end product of what we were producing on the political side in the Embassy was simply not greatly valued in London at the time. And frankly, not needed very much.

CM: Did the Embassy even see Bhutto?

CB: The Ambassador saw him quite a lot, and one of the reasons it was so frustrating was that I, too, was extremely well connected. The Foreign Secretary, who was actually the PUS equivalent, the PUS of the Foreign Ministry when I arrived, was also, like my father, a former member of the Indian Civil Service and his first job in the ICS had been as a junior to my father. So I was quids in from the start. I had a network across the country of my father's former ICS colleagues, all sorts of interesting people. One was Agha Hilaly, who features in Kissinger's memoirs as the Pakistan Ambassador in Washington at the time that Kissinger was opening up the relationship with China and played a key role there. Hilaly, who by this point had retired, was the elder brother of Agha Shahi, the PUS, and had been an exact contemporary of my father in the ICS and at Cambridge and then himself been in the Bengal cadre of the ICS. He and his friends used to tell me all the gossip. I knew exactly what was happening inside the government; I knew exactly how Bhutto was persecuting the other

members of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), which he'd started with. I had a very sophisticated knowledge, but it was of little professional value.

On the other hand I did lovely things. I greatly enjoyed going to ceremonial events at the Shalimar Gardens. I loved Lahore; I loved Karachi; I loved Peshawar. We had amazing travel and tourism, but professionally a frustrating time, so I was quite glad when it came to an end. We drove back overland to London – a great adventure in itself.

### **FCO London, 1976-80**

CM: So after Pakistan, it was back to the Foreign Office, living in London. Is this the start of your European career?

CB: Yes, it is, absolutely, in two interesting chunks. First of all, in the East European and Soviet Department (EESD), dealing with the CSCE, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. I joined that just after the signature and implementation of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975. This was the first time the Russians had opened themselves up to comment from outside. Again a tremendous education, partly because of two very good Heads of Department, Brian Cartledge and Ken Scott, but also because this Department had tremendous charisma in the Foreign Office of that era. Many of the brightest and the best were clearly there. There were people like Rod Lyne and Christopher Meyer in it, and you had morning meetings when all these bright sparks were crackling off each other. Brian Cartledge was a man of great substance, often locked in battle with Reg Hibbert, his Under Secretary. By watching them one learned what a later colleague, Jeremy Thomas, once described to me as 'officemanship,' how to handle things; when to take a stand on principle. I remember one submission on which Brian was overruled by Hibbert, on which his final comment was: 'Fiat justitia, ruat caelum.' My time in EESD made it possible to study the administration and the pursuit of all our Russian and East European policy, but also to see at first hand the very high standards of the best of the Foreign Office of old.

CM: Helsinki was so important to what came after, to the revolutions in Eastern Europe and to 1991 in the Soviet Union. Could you see, even at that stage, how important it was going to be?

CB: Absolutely. Various churches in this country were already using it to lever open the system and send Bibles; all sorts of things were going on. The way that I got into Europe then was because I went regularly to the meetings of the European Community's CSCE

Working Group, which involved work with the other (then only nine in total) member states. It was an opportunity to see the interplay of the European process and to learn a lot of things, and there was the first exposure to professional French.

CM: In fact we are talking about a period which is really the beginning as far as the British were concerned with our involvement in Europe.

CB: Yes, we'd only just joined (in 1973). So we were three years into our EC membership.

CM: So you began at a very early stage of British civil servants working with Europe.

CB: Indeed, and I went directly from that in '78 to the external Foreign Office European Community Department (ECD), again with two interesting Heads of Department. This was working on the Lomé Convention, relations with the African and Caribbean and Pacific states, a classic context for British and French both co-operation and conflict. The Lomé Convention had been originally a French construct, designed by the French to bring the resources of the European Community to bear in support of their empire. One of the consequences of our entry was that it had to be adapted to take account of the former British Empire as well, and that had a whole range of interesting complications. I was sending instructions from '78 to '80 on everything to do with Lomé to the Counsellor for Development in UKRep Brussels, who was John Coles, later in No. 10 with Margaret Thatcher, and later still PUS.

My first Head of Department in the ECD was Michael Jenkins, himself later Deputy Secretary General of the European Commission and a very substantial figure in its apparatus. Michael Jenkins had already at this point been Chef de Cabinet to George Thomson in the Commission, which brought back into play that old connection. Michael Jenkins taught me a great deal about how Brussels operates, and how to operate the European policy co-operation system, both inside the Foreign Office and with the Cabinet Office. European policy co-operation in the British case was always based on the triumvirate of UKRep Brussels, the Cabinet Office and the Foreign Office. One of the things you had to do to be creative in that system was to understand how it worked. In which science Michael Jenkins was my tutor.

His successor was Giles Fitzherbert. A curious man to whom I didn't enormously warm, but he was on any analysis interesting. He was, among other things, a son-in-law of Evelyn Waugh, and clever. He was a sort of forerunner of Christopher Meyer in wearing red socks

to the Office. He also came in one day and issued a written instruction to all members of his Department, banning the use of all adverbs for six months. You can imagine the atmosphere all too well for the first week after this injunction. Everyone said, 'Ridiculous, can't possibly do it. What is he thinking of?' But in fact as time passed it was an extremely instructive exercise in the art of making one's prose more disciplined, and spare. It is of course true; there are far too many adjectives and adverbs used in the language and you can actually not just get by, you can improve the force of what you want to say quite markedly, if you cut out most of them. He was quite serious about it and any work containing an adverb was sent back to sender.

That whole period gave me the opportunity to grow in a number of respects. The Lomé process involved quite regular conferences, which taught me a number of things about how to organise and prepare a delegation for a complicated meeting, where there are fifty or a hundred topics on the agenda, ranging from bananas to minerals and much else. I remember the flush of pride I felt when Donald Maitland, the dry but charming Scot who was then Head of UKRep, gave me a particular compliment for the way one particular Lomé set of briefs was put together. Another useful training ground.

CM: Can I just ask about working with the French? We tend to compare ourselves with the French because they are our closest neighbours. Do you have any comments about working with the French, about the way they work meetings, how they achieve their goals?

CB: As Pascal Lamy wrote in an article he published once, comparing the British and French styles, they are, of course, in a number of ways very similar. They're both quite top down. I learned through the prism of a particular subject, what everyone learns sooner or later, that the real secret of getting effective European foreign policy was always to get British and French agreement, because once you have that magnet at the heart of the system, the other member states will tend to cluster round it, like iron filings. Although we had in the Lomé colonial connection to some extent competing interests - clearly there were some things that would benefit French colonies more than British former colonies, and vice versa - we also had a number of common objectives. We had a common interest in persuading, for instance, the Germans to cough up and increase the budget enough to ensure that we could benefit all our clients. So there was a series of lessons there about how to marshal effective force.

CM: Did the Germans carry less weight at that stage than they came to have at a later period? Did you see an evolution in their growing dominance?

CB: They were then already very powerful in many areas, but it so happened that the area I was working on was essentially the story of the former colonies of notably France and the UK, also to some extent, the Dutch and Portuguese, but not a German story. Their role really was to pay for it and that's where we had a great advantage. We had to a large extent a common interest with Paris in ensuring that what we wanted out of this particular dossier would be supported by the Germans. So we could co-operate with the French. I learned about the clarity and effectiveness of the best French diplomatic style.

### **HM Embassy, The Hague, 1980-84**

CM: After work on Eastern Europe and on the European Community, the next stage was a posting to Europe. You went home again, for at least one member of the family. You moved to the Netherlands.

CB: Yes, Pavlov has played some role in the development of my career, I must admit. That posting I was perfectly happy with. It was obviously excellent for family reasons. I already spoke some Dutch because I had a mother-in-law who spoke very little English, so I'd had to work quite hard on Dutch from the beginning. It was again a happy and interesting time, and enabled me to become expert about Dutch politics. Having a wife from the country to which one is posted does, of course, help enormously.

The main battle professionally during that posting was about Cruise missiles, about the deployment of Pershing missiles. The Dutch were internally divided. The political establishment stood in exactly the same place as we did, but there was a very substantial Dutch peace movement. So part of the story of the time, part of the professional requirement, was to get close to the left of centre members of the Parliament and the media and the church movements who were involved in trying to prevent cruise missile deployment. I look back on that period with somewhat mixed feelings. I was extremely expert, but I would say now that I was sending back to London probably two or three times more information than London actually needed.

It was however a very happy time. One of the charms of the Netherlands as a posting is that, although it is obviously not the biggest country in the European Community, it is both big enough to be quite substantial for various reasons and small enough so that you can know it in a way that you could never know the big countries. There are only 150 members in the Dutch House of Commons. I knew two thirds of the Dutch House of Commons really

well. I had an extremely good network in the foreign and defence ministries, the Prime Minister's Office, all these places. I knew all the key journalists. I had the satisfaction of having a very finely tuned personal network in excellent working order. I was doing work of real importance, but I should have been more selective in my reporting!

**Assistant Private Secretary to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, FCO, London, 1984-87**

CM: You were in the Netherlands for four years; your posting ended at the expected time and that happened to be when a new Private Secretary to the Foreign Secretary was needed.

CB: Just to give you the crossover. I had spent the previous two years sending instructions to John Coles in Brussels. He then moved from the Brussels job to Margaret Thatcher's Downing Street. Margaret Thatcher came on a visit to the Hague in, it must have been, '83 to see the Dutch Prime Minister, Lubbers. I was walking on the lawn outside the Dutch Prime Minister's house with John Coles and he said, 'What are you going to do next?' I said, 'What I'd really like to do is go to the Private Office to do the European job there.' At that stage I had no inside track supporter for this thesis, though I had mentioned it to POD. He said, 'Hmm. I'll see what I can do,' and almost certainly went away and talked to the Principal Private Secretary about this idea.

CM: Assistant Private Secretary to the Foreign Secretary was a very exciting and important job to come back to.

CB: It was wonderful. Here again luck played a role. Geoffrey Howe had a brother called Colin. He was also, you may remember, Lord Howe of Aberavon. My father's father had been a Methodist minister in Aberavon. In the interview I could feel the importance of these connections. For whatever reason, Geoffrey Howe decided to offer me the job.

I got to know him very well indeed and stayed on the warmest terms with him until he died. One leitmotif of my career is that I have effectively three times done a private office job, with George Thomson, Geoffrey Howe and Leon Brittan in the Commission, for Chef de Cabinet is effectively the same job, and all three of the people that I worked with in this role were among the most charming human beings you could hope to work for, which makes a big difference. It was not like working for David Owen or someone like that. Geoffrey Howe was an absolutely charming man. He was appreciative, funny; there was always humour being brought to bear to lighten the tension of difficult times. A dear, dear man with elements

of Puck, Dr Doolittle, and Father Brown - also a man of tremendous conscience as well as intellect. On all the fronts he operated on, he added value. He tried our patience from time to time, because his method included a reluctance to take quick decisions. He was the lawyer who built up the case, brick by brick. But he was a dear, dear, special man to work for, so we worked long hours very willingly, which is part of the trick of how to survive those intense times, because they were 70 to 80 hour a week efforts.

I won't go into the substance of policy because that is extremely well recorded in the memoirs of the day. You can find in the Thatcher, Howe, Lawson and Hannay memoirs most of the big stories.

I was working on three things: I was responsible for relations with North America, which gave me my first insight into official Washington, which was obviously interesting in its own way, though not most of the time dominant. Star Wars and a few other things brought me into that world. Also the whole African story, which was really very interesting. I am mentioned possibly forty times in the footnotes of Volume II of Charles Moore's Thatcher biography, because of the voluminous correspondence between me and Charles Powell (in No. 10.) Much of it was about Africa, where the whole battle about apartheid and how the Commonwealth handled apartheid in South Africa was being played out. There was a very congenial group of Foreign Office colleagues working on Africa at the time: Ewen Fergusson, Kieran Prendergast, and wonderful trips round Africa with Christopher Meyer as Head of News Department. Geoffrey Howe had done his National Service in Kenya, so he was in love with Africa.

Most of my time however was taken up with European policy. This was the whole period of building up to the Single European Act, Thatcher accepts majority voting and so on. We lived through fifteen months of persuasion. Even after the Treaty referred to the European Parliament, she refused to call it 'the European Parliament' and went on calling it 'the Assembly.' We went through huge battles over all these details.

So I had the mix of Africa, Europe and occasional tensions with the US. Demanding in lots of ways. I was speaking, like the other Private Secretaries, to Charles Powell perhaps half a dozen times a day on the phone. He was invariably cordial, whatever the tensions. On a personal level the relations between the Foreign Secretary's Office and No. 10 worked very well, but there were very substantial tensions, not least because Charles Powell by this stage had become so identified with many Thatcher policies, particularly on Europe. He was

extremely correct and always charming to deal with. I give him huge credit for that. Apart from that I had the great benefit of two and a half years working every day with Robin Renwick and Stephen Wall on Europe inside the Foreign Office. That was a real masterclass.

The whole Private Office experience, further intensified by the UK EC Presidency of the second half of 1986, was just extraordinarily fascinating – especially the travelling. As a Private Secretary one of course works closely with Ministers when in London, but closer still when you're travelling with them and waking them up in the middle of the night to deal with a crisis. To give you an illustration of what that can be like. In April '85 there was a six-day trip to the Czech Republic, the GDR and Poland. Normally such a trip would have two private secretaries on it. Len Appleyard, who was due to come, fell ill with flu just before we went. So I did that trip alone, having only four hours sleep a night. But it was hugely absorbing. In Warsaw, for example, we visited at night the church of the recently murdered priest, Popieluszko. When we got out of the car, we were greeted by a crowd of two thousand, holding blazing torches, who started to chant the Lord's Prayer in Polish. After which came a two hour meeting with Jaruzelski (of which I made an 18 page single spaced A4 record), and another with Glemp, the Polish Cardinal.

CM: Can I ask you about that trip or on others that you made as Private Secretary about foreign leaders or foreign ministers that you met?

CB: That's inherent in the process. An example: we had a series of bilaterals, possibly three times a year, with the Italian Foreign Minister, Andreotti. Just Foreign Ministers and Private Secretaries. Absolutely riveting. I remember trips to places like the Villa Madama. You know the Andreotti persona well enough: this hunched-backed, extremely clever, wise, interesting man. The opportunity to see people like that at work at close quarters was invaluable. I also remember a visit to Washington, a lunch on the seventh floor of the State Department with about fourteen people. Shultz and Howe, temperamentally very slow and solid characters, of great quality, in the middle and Perle and John Kerr at opposite ends of the table. There were quite long periods of this lunch when the debate was between the ends of the table, with the two Secretaries of State watching like tennis.

The other huge opportunity: as a Private Secretary you get the understanding of the interplay of politics inside your own country and inside your own Cabinet, obviously to a large extent from the paper which is rushing to and fro, but also from the meetings, because there would

be people like Nigel Lawson or Heseltine who would frequently come for bilaterals with Geoffrey Howe. I've sat in, in a corner, listening to those two, who'd mostly be extremely direct, even in the presence of a Private Secretary, trusting in the system. They might say from time to time, 'Don't record this,' but you learned the dynamics of what was going on about Westland and things like that. Geoffrey Howe was very close on policy, not in temperament, to Heseltine, and most of the time to Nigel Lawson. The Nigel Lawson of today, you know from the substance, is a long way from the Nigel Lawson then. Then it was Howe and Lawson against Thatcher to a large extent and Lawson had taken over as Chancellor from Geoffrey, so they were very close. But also a sequence of the bit players and PPSs: Richard Ryder among others, Ian Gow was a tremendous friend of Geoffrey's; a wide mixture of people. Actually he had almost no enemies inside his own party. He was a much loved man and had a huge range of acquaintances and friends.

### **European Secretariat, Cabinet Office, 1987-88**

CM: We've started again after a short pause and we've reached 1987. After three years in the Private Office, which must have been pretty exhausting, you moved to the Cabinet Office.

CB: Indeed. Exhausted after the Private Office, I then had an opportunity to recharge somewhat in an important but lower key job as the Number Three in the European Secretariat of the Cabinet Office. The Cabinet Office has, you know, about six secretariats, one of which is responsible for co-ordinating our European Union policy. It was run at that point by David Williamson, originally a MAFF civil servant, later himself Secretary General of the European Commission, and John Holroyd. This was, after the Private Office, in some ways an anti-climax, but it was an opportunity of huge value to study at close quarters with a bit of time for reflection on it, the mechanisms of the way that everything worked in British European policy. I already mentioned the tradition of the triumvirate between UKRep Brussels, the Foreign Office and the Cabinet Office. I had seen that very much in operation, albeit at a hectic pace, from the Private Office. Incidentally, I had gone with Geoffrey Howe every month to the Foreign Affairs Council, staying the night with our Permanent Representative to the European Union, first Michael Butler and then David Hannay. So I'd been listening a lot to how all this fitted together. I then was able to see it at work in the eighteen months I spent in the Cabinet Office in the European Secretariat. I was the Secretary of the weekly Whitehall meeting, when every Friday the key Deputy Secretaries from the all the different Whitehall Departments would come together under Williamson's chairmanship to decide our

European policy on the key issues of the day, and I took the minutes. That enabled me to see Williamson in action. This was important for all sorts of reasons, partly because he was the crucial figure advising Margaret Thatcher, with input from Hannay in Brussels and Renwick in the Foreign Office. It was also an opportunity to see the Williamson method. All of these key figures in the inner European policy circle of the UK had different temperaments: Hannay, push, push, push, bang, bang bang from the front; Renwick consummately Machiavellian in the background, talking out of the side of his mouth; Williamson, quiet, biding his time, much respected by Thatcher. I saw how he played the instruments in order to get the response that he wanted - which he didn't always get, but he quite often did - from Thatcher. So that was for me an intriguing time. It was something of an anti-climax, but highly instructive.

The Single European Act had been signed by this time and there were all the dramas of starting to put the Single Market into effect. One of my last acts in the Foreign Office was to listen to the conversation between Geoffrey Howe and Arthur Cockfield, who had created the Single Market as Commissioner, in which Geoffrey Howe told Cockfield that he would not be reappointed in the same position, because Leon Brittan was being sent instead. This was because Margaret Thatcher had become incrementally irritated by Cockfield's tendency to stand up to her.

### **Counsellor (Political) HM Embassy, Bonn, 1989-92**

In late 1988 another opportunity opened up. Christopher Mallaby bounced into my office one day and asked if I would like to come to Bonn – where the then Head of Chancery, Anthony Figgis, had developed a medical problem, requiring him to bring his posting to a premature end. For many reasons that sounded a good move to make. We arrived accordingly in Bonn in February '89 in a political job, effectively the number three in the mission: Mallaby number one, Pauline Neville-Jones number two, and I was the Head of Chancery, which at that stage in the British system still involved responsibility for morale in the Embassy and supervision of the Admin Section, as well as the politics. Living in a house, Im Etzentel 21 in Bad Godesberg, in a street made famous by Le Carre's *A Small Town in Germany*, with many distinguished predecessors, including Con O'Neill and Christopher Audland.

Again luck played a role, because six months after we arrived the whole story of German Unification broke out. That developed into another truly intense period. Obviously the

political story was hugely important and difficult, because Margaret Thatcher, although we were nationally committed by treaty to promote German unification and support it, was fairly clearly for about six months trying to stop it. That was not easy. It was a highly talented Embassy with a lot of very interesting people but real morale problems, because of the pace at which everyone was working: a lot of pips were squeaking. That meant that the combination of the jobs of running the Political Section with an extremely heavy political agenda and trying to keep body and soul together for the Embassy as a whole was really very demanding indeed. Hugely absorbing, and I wouldn't have missed it for the world, but it was really a very testing time.

CM: The summer of '89 was a very dramatic moment in the history of Germany. Did you see or take part in any of the events, or were you mainly observing from Bonn?

CB: That I really regret, because the job of Head of Chancery leaves you pretty much based in the Embassy. I was not going to Berlin and I missed in that sense the drama of what happened, but there was plenty of drama in Bonn too. The timing was extraordinarily serendipitous, because I'd gone there at short notice and, although I had German 'A' level, I was to start with by no means fluent in German. We arrived in February '89. In April and June I was able to take two fortnights of total immersion, living with a family in Nuremberg, which brought me pretty high up the learning curve. Then, just as I had had six months to work myself in to a decent level, the whole drama really started in the autumn of '89.

CM: At the start of the summer, as the migrants built up in Prague and Hungary, was there any sense in the Embassy of what was coming?

CB: Yes, incrementally. In fact the whole story can be traced from the UK records, which were beautifully put together by Patrick Salmon and his team, and are publicly available. There is a volume of about four hundred pages of all the key British documents, which even includes several that I wrote. The Embassy could see what was coming, but Margaret Thatcher did not want to be told it was coming, since she found it extremely unwelcome. Christopher Mallaby was very brave in the way in which he pushed this into her consciousness. The documents collection includes one Mallaby telegram with a Thatcher scribble that says, 'Does HM Ambassador not understand that we are opposed to German unification?' As I mentioned earlier, HM Ambassador understood very well that we were committed by treaty to German unification. So it was not easy. You will remember the episode, well recorded by history, when Thatcher got together all the expert historians on

Germany for a Chequers seminar and Charles Powell then wrote it up in a way which quite a lot of the participants did not approve of. There was a leak of the record and a leak enquiry, in which I was one of the suspects, though I had had absolutely nothing to do with it. A lot of intensity, a lot of drama, quite a lot of members of the Embassy becoming very highly strung under pressure, a hard time. This was a phase of existential intensity for everybody German. We went through very dramatic times during this whole period when Mitterrand was conspiring with Thatcher to block unification, but then he was wise enough to change course before we did. Douglas Hurd gradually talked Thatcher round, doing an excellent job.

For eighteen months or so all this was really the front line of British foreign policy. Anyone who knows the Foreign Office knows you can, through the bran tub effect, quite easily have a career during which you never experience a crisis like this. To be in the right place at the right time really was of fundamental significance in my career.

Margaret Thatcher was to a significant extent preoccupied by a stereotype. She was genuinely very worried about how Germany would develop after unification. At a very formative stage of her life she had experienced the Second World War. She had a friend who was a German Jewish refugee who'd stayed with her family for several months and who had told her stories about Jews who'd been forced to scrub the streets. One has to have every sympathy for Margaret Thatcher's concerns, but if you lived in Germany and knew a lot of Germans on a friendly basis - it's very easy to get on with German civil servants, you must have often found the same - you know perfectly well that what the occupation forces set out to do in Germany between '45 and '50 was in effect to subject the Germans through a process of education to a lobotomy which would prevent them ever being violent again. Because of the whole way that Robert Birley of Eton constructed the education system in the British Zone of Occupation in the north, and others elsewhere, the Germans we were dealing with, of our age, had been brought up, in a very profound way, to regard violence as unacceptable. Indeed, we were already then beginning to complain about German unwillingness to use force at all in international relations. So there was a great irony. Margaret Thatcher was trapped in an earlier stereotype which was not apt for the time in question, and that was really very frustrating. We got there in the end, and to her credit she came round. But the sadness was that by then we had lost a lot of credit with German public opinion. If we had not been so difficult about German unification, we would have been more likely to get German help when Cameron needed it in the renegotiation in

2015/16. Because we had an exceptionally strong record in Germany in our Zone of Occupation, as anyone there would tell you.

I'd just like to put on record how much I learned from working with both Christopher Mallaby and Pauline Neville-Jones, in quite different ways: the former certainly no slouch as an intellectual, but a supremely gifted organiser, as the doer of a project; the latter very often sharply insightful, always brave enough to stand back and challenge the orthodoxy on a particular subject.

### **Chef de Cabinet to the Vice President of the European Commission, 1993-95**

CM: After this very dramatic time in Bonn, '89 to '92, the whole period of German unification, of the downfall of the Soviet Union, huge events, you moved to Brussels to be Chef de Cabinet to our Commissioner, Leon Brittan.

CB: I had applied already for the post of Leon Brittan's Chef de Cabinet in '89, when, though nobody told me that at the time, I had come second. What I didn't know was that Leon Brittan and Christopher Mallaby were good friends, so when Leon was casting around for a new Chef de Cabinet in '92, one of the people he asked was Christopher. Christopher said, 'Well, there is this guy who is doing a great job for me here,' and Leon said, 'Oh yes, I interviewed him last time.' And lo and behold, he then offered me the job, which I was delighted to get, not least because it fitted so well with my earlier career.

Physically one of the easiest moves, from Bonn to Brussels, and I already had quite a lot of relevant experience. But I hadn't worked in the Commission and that was clearly an important next piece in the jigsaw. Not all, but many of the British European civil servants specialised in this area have worked inside the Commission. A lot have done UKRep instead, some have done both, like David Hannay. But three years in the European Commission was obviously an enormous opportunity to experience the prism from a different end. Again I was fortunate. You were asking earlier about how we were perceived in Europe. Of course, there was much hostility towards the Thatcher approach for much of the time, but Geoffrey Howe was always very popular around Europe and had been Finance Minister at the same time as Jacques Delors. When I started with Leon Brittan at the beginning of '93 Geoffrey Howe sent Jacques Delors (now President of the Commission) a message saying that this former *cher ami* is now coming to work for Leon, I hope you'll look after him. I can remember vividly the New Year Reception that the President of the Commission gave in

January '93 at which Agnes and I arrived late and exhausted. Fortuitous again, if we'd come on time, we wouldn't have had the chat with Delors. Delors and his wife were standing on the receiving line and there was nobody there when we arrived. They were on their own, as the result of which we could chat for about ten minutes. He was a lovely man. 'Cher ami, Geoffrey.' The result of that was clearly that the Delors Cabinet were told, treat this guy well - he's a friend of Geoffrey Howe's. Which mattered because, though they were never evil, they were really tough.

I had 'A' Level French and understood a lot of French discussion, but there is a great difference between that and having to proactively take part in a negotiation in French about very recherché subjects, like aircraft engines or shipbuilding subsidies: tricky stuff. For some months I was really hanging on by a wing and a prayer. I had one conversation with Pascal Lamy, Chef to Delors, when he referred seven or eight times to *le big bong* and only after about ten minutes did I realise he was talking about the Big Bang. In that situation, if you're wise, you say, 'I'm sorry, what do you mean?' But it's hard to get in, and you don't want to look as if you haven't understood.

Here I was anyway in this absolutely fascinating environment, considerably more intense even than the Private Office in London, because in the Private Office in London, you're in control most of the time. Most of the time you're telling other people what to do. It's hard in terms of hours and it tests the intellect of course, but in the end it's not that difficult. In Brussels it was hugely multilateral. I was dealing, even inside my own team, with three people of the highest capability, who were all temperamentally very black and white and very averse to compromise: Leon Brittan himself; Catherine Day who was the Deputy Chef de Cabinet, later Secretary General of the Commission; and Robert Madelin, a very tough trade negotiator. All charming people, with whom I got on well. But the job of the Chef de Cabinet is to assess the overall balance of power on any subject and to work out where you have to put water in your wine. I was for ever having to tell these three that they had to put water in their wine, which they didn't like. This was really, really tense. At the same time I was standing on tiptoe operating in a language which I hadn't operated in at that level before. It was stimulating as well. I was often using Dutch and German, as well as French, and was working my butt off. For the first six weeks we were sleeping on camp beds. It was a hard time. It was the first time that we had had no Admin Section to look after us on arrival. I had a six-year-old child starting in the European School. A hard, hard time.

We had two years of Jacques Delors: hugely stimulating because that was the last great period in the life of the European Commission. There had always been ideological differences between Delors and British Ministers, plenty between Leon Brittan and Delors, but there was also deep mutual respect between them. Delors had had huge respect for Cockfield. The Single Market was the creation of Cockfield and Delors, who *pace* Thatcher had no difficulty working with the British. Lamy had huge admiration for the British system. Although there were ideological battles inside the Commission, there was also a sense of élan and high morale all over the European Commission, because everyone knew that Delors was respected by every Head of Government in the European Union. The result of that was that every time there was a European Council, you knew that the European Commission would be spoken for by someone deeply respected all the way round the table.

There were major topics going forward in trade policy, which was my Commissioner's responsibility. We had the Uruguay Round coming to its climax in '93, the first year I was there. We also had the Copenhagen European Council, in June '93, which reached agreement on the criteria for the 2004 Central European enlargement. That was hugely important, with the French, frankly, for some while, trying to stop this happening. There was an alliance inside the Commission to get that through the Commission in the first place, made up of Bangemann, the German, Van Den Broek, the Dutch Commissioner, and Leon. We played a major role in the Central European enlargement, getting that cleared for take off, and helping to bring the Uruguay Round to a successful conclusion was plainly of major importance. Great Anglo-French tensions all the time. I never had the feeling that it was impossible for the British to be successful at the heart of Europe. Indeed we were very successfully at the heart of Europe in very major areas.

One of the tasks of the Chef de Cabinet is to create an effective working relationship with the Director General of the Directorate General responsible to one's Commissioner - in my case a very charming, very effective German called Horst Gunter Krenzler. Having come to the job from Bonn I could hit the ground running there, and never had a moment's difficulty with him. He was 100% honest and reliable, as well as very expert and experienced.

I enjoyed working in the European Commission more than I can say. It was not a great change from working in the British civil service; more a natural continuation. But it was hugely stimulating to work on a larger scale, representing the whole of the European Union.

What did change, which was sad really, was the President. I was there three calendar years; the first two were still Delors, the third (1995) was the first year of the presidency of Jacques Santer, who is a very charming, decent man, but was not of the calibre of Delors. The Commission immediately lost to a large extent the sense of élan that I was referring to earlier. That was sad and it irritated and upset a lot of people. That has been in many ways part of the problem ever since, because the balance only really works in the creation of European policy when you have a dynamo that is effective and respected at the Head of the European Commission.

I was in any case very fortunate to be there for the last two years of Delors and to experience a period when we were still moving forward, still doing dramatic things. The Uruguay Round in trade policy was undoubtedly of huge benefit to the world. I can't say that I was personally involved in the trade negotiation, but I was part of the team that was involved. There were great excitements along that road. I remember at 3 o'clock in the morning hearing the US Trade Representative, Mickey Kantor, crunching ice as he finished his Coke and saying, 'Leon, you've got to get Chiquita off my back.' This was because one of the great problems in the end game was bananas. The other being French culture, because we had to provide some means of insulating the French cultural space against Hollywood.

CM: Do you have any thoughts on the fact that here we are twenty five years later and the world is experiencing a reaction to free trade and NAFTA, so that it looks at the moment as if treaties like that, TTIP for example, won't go through in the future? Do you have any thoughts about why that reaction has come now?

CB: I wouldn't claim to be one of the world's experts on the subject, but I personally think that globalization gets a very unfairly bad press most of the time. It's fairly clear that its net effect is to increase prosperity and employment and benefit the consumer. The problems that have arisen – I summarise for the sake of brevity – in my perception are essentially because of the interaction of globalization, which has clearly left some groups of workers exposed, with the effects of austerity, which has monetary and other connections, in a time of recession. This has meant that a number of governments, including the British government, have failed to take enough action to remedy the extent to which parts of the population have been exposed in a damaging way to the effects of austerity. The way that this played back into the Brexit story here, in my view, was that yes, there are parts of our population that have been exposed, but instead of the central government taking the remedial action which it

could and arguably should have done, instead in the Osborne period, the central government ran a policy of austerity and it was the combination of globalization, effects of, and austerity, effects of, which led to this churning, deep, populist resentment. That's not the whole story, but it's an important part of the story. One thing is clear: if you study trade policy and the effects of trade policy you can see absolutely that the quantum of world trade has been expanded very substantially by the Uruguay Round. It's not zero-sum; it benefits everyone as trade whizzes round, as Ricardo and others pointed out a long time ago. But if you want to avoid the populist uproar, it is then incumbent on central government to take the necessary action in each country to look out for connected suffering and remedy it.

CM: Colin, your last note under this heading was 'Leon's run for the Presidency.' I'd forgotten about that.

CB: That was an unhappy episode. John Major had asked Leon to run for the Presidency of the European Commission. Without naming names, though I could, other relevant members of the British Cabinet and civil service were never convinced that this was a sane or good idea, so put no effort into it. It very probably was an idea that was never going to fly anyway. It was not impossible. To show you what has been possible: Margaret Thatcher, who was so much disliked, nonetheless successfully advanced David Williamson as the British candidate for Secretary General of the European Commission. So it was not impossible to get Brits into key positions. Considering how much some of them hated Margaret Thatcher, it was an absolute miracle that Williamson was accepted. Leon was for a number of reasons quite a controversial candidate. He was always very ideological; he had very strong views. He was not someone who trims towards compromises and the rest of Europe could see that. By this stage of course – we're talking about '95 here – British exceptionalism had become rather more marked and to run Leon was substantially more difficult than running Williamson for Secretary General had been. He still got some surprising support. He was backed by Mme Cresson, for instance, which did not endear him to many of the French, a lot of whom (especially the Enarques) dislike her. All this came to a climax at the Corfu European Council of 1995, where the UK vetoed the appointment of Dehaene, and Leon got one vote, the vote of the UK. It was a sad and poignant time. Looking back, it was not something that should have been attempted.

**Deputy Secretary, Cabinet Office (Chair of the Joint Intelligence Committee and Head of the Overseas and Defence Secretariat) 1996-97**

CM: Today is 4 January 2017 and this is the second interview with Sir Colin Budd for the British Diplomatic Oral History Programme. This is Catherine Manning recording.

Colin, last time we talked about your career up to 1995 and at that point you had just finished being Chef de Cabinet to Sir Leon Brittan in Brussels when he was Vice President of the European Commission. You came back to London and you were appointed to the Cabinet Office, as a Deputy Secretary. You had the role as Chair of the JIC, that is the Joint Intelligence Committee, and you were also Head of the Overseas and Defence Secretariat. Shall we start with your role as Chair of the JIC?

CB: An example again of the role that luck can play. I mentioned earlier how getting the job in Geoffrey Howe's Private Office covering Europe had owed probably a good deal to a chance meeting with John Coles, who had gone to No. 10 after a period (1978-80) during which I had supplied him with instructions, when he was at UKREP Brussels. By the time I was seeking in 1995 to manage my re-entry from the European Commission into Whitehall, he had moved again and had become PUS in the Foreign Office. Managing the re-entry into Whitehall from Brussels was historically not always easy, because there was a tendency for your home department to forget about you, since you were no longer in the home-based system. I was very fortunate to return not only to a good job but also on promotion, and that undoubtedly owed something to the fact that the Number One Board of the Foreign Office was being chaired at the time by John Coles.

CM: Can I ask, were you tempted to jump ship and stay in the Commission?

CB: Not really, no. I certainly could have stayed four years longer as *Chef de Cabinet*, but I wasn't tempted. I could possibly have ended up as a director general somewhere in the Commission, but although I found many things about working there very satisfying, there was also a lot that I found frustrating, essentially because it takes much longer and much more effort to achieve a given end there than in the national system. There are also all sorts of heffalump traps you can fall into along the way: getting the wrong boss from the wrong country and so on. I felt, for all sorts of reasons - partly indeed because there was a rising possibility of Tony Blair coming to power - that I wanted to be back home, to capitalise on the earlier investment in a Foreign Office career which I had put in. I had also by then

experienced the start of the Jacques Santer Presidency, and realised that this was going to be an enfeebling, difficult time for the Commission. If it had been the beginning of Jacques Delors, with everyone performing *con brio*, and a great opera being written, I might have stayed, but it was the reverse.

I came back to a role which was a combination of two things. The definition of the Joint Intelligence Committee job has varied over time. Sometimes the occupant has done that job and that only; sometimes they've combined it with being personal assistant/adviser to the Prime Minister, as Rodric Braithwaite did. In my case, I combined, as Paul Lever had before me, the job of being Chair of the JIC with being Head of the Overseas and Defence Secretariat in the Cabinet Office, covering non-EU foreign policy and defence. Its main preoccupations during my time in the job, some twenty months, were the Balkans, Iraq and Northern Ireland.

So, my first job at Deputy Secretary level, of great interest for all sorts of reasons. One was that the heads of the secretariats in the Cabinet Office take the Cabinet minutes. Every week, when Cabinet met, I used to sit as part of a team with Brian Bender, who was then the Head of the EU Secretariat, and when it came to foreign affairs we'd go in, replacing the pair who'd covered the discussion of domestic policy. To see Cabinet in action was of course a real privilege, and what I had in this job was the last year of John Major and the first five months of Blair: two quite different styles, as you can imagine.

CM: I wanted to ask you about the different styles of holding a Cabinet. It is something that has frequently been discussed in the last twenty years, the decay of Cabinet government, whether Cabinet government is disappearing completely, the sofa government of Mr Blair. What were your observations of John Major's chairing of the Cabinet and what about Mr Blair?

CB: Like anyone who had lived through, not at very close quarters in my case, the Thatcher era, I knew all about the Thatcher style. The Major style was completely different. He let everyone run. I remember one very vivid example when a subject, which was not even on the agenda of the meeting in question, took up an hour and a half's discussion. This happened because Ken Clarke, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, had brought to Cabinet the first physical examples of Euro banknotes. He'd done it to tease people like Michael Howard, who were his old friends but ideological enemies. He waved the Euro banknotes at them, and thus sparked off a conflagration of debate. Thatcher would have banged her fist

on the table after about five minutes and said, 'Enough!' John Major's style was very different. Blair, on the other hand, tended as you know to take the key decisions outside Cabinet.

To come back to the JIC and the OD Secretariat. The Joint Intelligence Committee's work is nothing to do with intelligence operations; its purpose is rather to assess the significance of current events and of looming problems. It is a rather interesting relic of great power status, still useful, especially in time of crisis.

The substance of the Overseas and Defence part of the job depended on the crises under way at any given time. I have spoken about the Cabinet involvement, but there were also all sorts of daily contacts with No. 10, and with the FCO and MOD.

I enjoyed the whole Irish dimension very much. I made probably half a dozen visits each to Dublin and Belfast, and found it absorbing to have a ringside seat for a process of such historical importance.

Iraq was not then in one of its most intense phases, but in the autumn of 1996 we went through a kind of dress rehearsal for later Iraq crises, with Saddam's successive infringements of the northern no-fly zone. This brought me into close contact with the interface between international law and the interests of the British Government. That was an education in itself.

CM: Can you illustrate that particular point?

CB: You will remember that in 2001/2, we had endless discussion about the legal basis for what we were doing, and whether a second UN Security Council resolution was or was not needed. The autumn of '96 was a kind of precursor of that. At that stage we had strong UN authority on our side: the northern no-fly zone had been established by UN mandate. But at the same time - this has never changed through the years - the question of when resort to the use of force is justified is invariably a complex one, involving meetings with the law officers and the Chief of the Defence Staff. In each new iteration of that complex of problems, you have to navigate the military side of it and the legal side of it and, of course, the political side of it, and seek to ensure that the whole thing remains in a satisfactory state. It's rather like playing one of those pinball games, in which you pull the lever back and the ball goes on to the pin board and there are all sorts of things it bumps off, and bright lights flash when it hits certain obstacles. You have to know when the bright lights are coming. You have to know

the direction you're trying to go in. But you must be able to deal with the accidents that inevitably happen.

There was also the very complicated situation in the Balkans, which was exemplified by the saga of chasing war criminals. You remember that we were trying to bring various Balkan war criminals to justice and that the UK was involved in various operations, trying to apprehend these people. That too involved some sensitive questions as to what the objectives were, what the rules of engagement were, and all these had to be looked into in detail, *ad hoc* in the case of each intended apprehension of a particular war criminal suspect. That necessitated much discussion with the MoD, with the Prime Minister and so on. Successive Chiefs of the Defence Staff, in my case, Peter Inge and Charles Guthrie, had to give that a rather high priority. This was in the aftermath of the Dayton Agreement, which was in November 1995. Part of the intended thrust of Dayton was to bring the key miscreants to justice, and to persuade public opinion that justice was being done.

That pretty much sums up the Cabinet Office experience. It was only twenty months or so, not a very long time. I then got involved in wider machinations, because a requirement arose for a new ambassador in Washington. Christopher Meyer was extracted from Berlin, where he had only been very briefly, to go to Washington, and Paul Lever was sent to Germany. I was chosen to replace Paul Lever, as the DUS in the Foreign Office responsible for the European Union, while simultaneously being Economic Director. I started that job in November 1997 and stayed in it till the end of 2000.

### **Deputy Under-Secretary of State, FCO, 1997-2001**

Being Economic Director, just to dispose of that first, involved various responsibilities. One was being a sous-sherpa in G8, so the whole G7/G8 process; another being the UK representative on the executive committee of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development). For calendar 1998, when the UK had the G8 Presidency, I was in the chair of the Foreign Ministry Sous-Sherpa group. And for a year in 1999/2000 I chaired the OECD's executive committee – the first UK representative to occupy that role since Rodric Braithwaite.

CM: Can you give us some background?

CB: Chairing the OECD was much less onerous than G8, because its executive committee doesn't meet very often, but was in some ways a greater challenge. G8, as its name suggests,

is a relatively small group. Both systems take decisions by consensus, but that process is a lot trickier in the OECD, with its more than thirty members. The substance of the OECD work was full of dry economic detail, but undeniably important.

Getting appointed as the chair of the executive committee was not easy. Also running for the job was the Italian PUS, Vattani. The United States and Japan and quite a lot of others supported me. This was not least because I knew the US and Japanese representatives very well (they were both my colleagues in the G8 group). Vattani, as the Italian PUS, had the support of quite a lot of other European PUSs, as you can imagine. We were more or less tied. It was normally a two-year term. John Kerr got involved in the denouement and brokered a split term, whereby Vattani did one year and I did the other.

As Economic Director I was also responsible, inside the FCO, for the economic side of the analysis, the work of Economic Relations Department and the FCO Economists - as well as for the FCO's relations with DFID.

Our 1998 G8 Presidency was dominated by the preparations for the Birmingham Summit, which involved a great deal of organisation and was very interesting in lots of ways. Since the Presidency was held by a different G8 country every year, that brought with it a good deal of travel, particularly in my time to Canada and Japan. I went seven times in the year 2000 to Japan, which taught me a great deal.

CM: The G8 was the G7 +1.

CB: It was. The G7 was still in existence, because the Russians were not in the economic and financial part of it. But they were by then in the G8.

Our G8 Presidency work was led by the UK Sherpa, Jeremy Heywood. Tony Blair established in advance, after much discussion, the two topics he wanted to focus on. One was medication for AIDS - at that stage so expensive that it was in most cases unaffordable by the people who needed it. We had many contacts with drugs companies to try to find ways of remedying that problem. The second objective was to seek out the best way of giving access to electricity to the roughly one sixth of the world's population then still without it. That too involved much discussion with experts. Those interested in the work of G8 can find more details in the chapter on the subject I contributed to the 2003 edition of Nicholas Bayne's *The New Economic Diplomacy*.

Integral to the G8 role was obviously liaison with DFID, because of their keen interest in the subjects in question. One of the major difficulties at that time was the personal animus between Clare Short, running DFID, and Robin Cook, running the Foreign Office. Luckily, I knew very well the DFID PUS, John Vereker, with whom I had worked closely in 1978-80 (when John Coles was the Counsellor Development in UKRep, John Vereker was the Head of the European Union Department of DFID). That made it easier to deal with the occasional tensions at Ministerial level.

The other part of my FCO role from 1997-2000 involved an overview of all aspects of our EU membership, supervising the work (as AUS for EU policy) of – in turn – Emyr Jones Parry, Nigel Sheinwald, and Kim Darroch. On this front there were exciting new possibilities. We were then at the start of the Blair era in our European policy – well described in Roger Liddle's book "The Europe dilemma". This was an up period for the UK in the European story, with Blair visibly more European than the preceding government and widely admired all over Europe. He was particularly close to his German colleague, Chancellor Schroeder, and there was even talk, for an illusory period, of (German/French/UK) trilateralism, which Schroeder was for a while advancing. From 1998 onwards Blair made a series of speeches about how European he was. That took time to develop. He spent much of his first year as Prime Minister concentrating heavily on Northern Ireland, but from the spring of 1998 focused increasingly on European policy.

For officials these were not easy waters to navigate, exciting though the voyage was. The Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister were for the most part not using the same compass. This was a difficult period for Robin Cook, during which it was often hard to get him to concentrate. His marriage was collapsing, and he had only a very small circle of FCO officials to whom he spoke on a regular basis. During the forty months for which I worked under him as a Deputy Under-Secretary there were four different Ministers for Europe: Doug Henderson, Joyce Quin, Geoff Hoon and Keith Vaz. Not one of them had a close, open relationship with Robin Cook on the formation of European policy. So it was extraordinarily difficult. I had extremely good relations with all the Ministers for Europe, but neither they nor I had easy access to Robin Cook.

Our European policy during this period was to a considerable extent personally managed by Blair, and under him by Peter Mandelson. The latter's formal title was Minister without Portfolio, but he was de facto to some extent the real Minister for Europe. Because he had

the ear of, and access to, the Prime Minister on a daily basis, he was much better placed than the formal Minister for Europe was. He had, for instance, a direct relationship with Moscovici, then the French Minister for Europe. It was all very Alice in Wonderland. I knew Mandelson well because when Blair started in May '97, he came in as Minister without Portfolio, with an office about 50 yards from mine in the Cabinet Office. Quite early on he adopted me as his unofficial adviser on German affairs, since I had been not very long before in Bonn. So I knew Mandelson well and I also knew Roger Liddle, who came into the Downing Street team, working on European policy, and after that Francis Campbell. I knew them all really well, so I could to a significant extent operate by going direct to No. 10. That was feasible, fascinating and stimulating – but the machine would have worked much better if I could also have had a good relationship with Robin Cook. That I did not was not for any want of trying on my part.

The role of the DUS at that time was to be in the hot air balloon, above the whole landscape, supposedly producing sage thoughts from time to time on the big picture. There was absolutely no point in the DUS making a habit of second guessing the very capable AUS on the daily work of European policy. I did my best to interpret that role creatively, and put up a sequence of think pieces, highlighting a new dimension, or seeking to suggest a new theme that we ought to take more seriously, or reflect on. The first seven or so that I put up received no answer at all. Now that's almost unheard of in the life of the Foreign Office, but that was the way it was. There were great periods of paralysis in the life of Robin Cook at that time. At one point all the famous Private Office boxes were full, with their contents simply not being dealt with by the Secretary of State. At the end of my time as DUS, at the end of 2000, I was determined to at least go out with an analytical bang and I produced a fifteen page analysis of our position in Europe, how we were placed, and what we needed to do to move forward. By this point Sherard (Cowper-Coles) had become the Principal Private Secretary. He was an old mate of mine, because he had been Private Secretary to the PUS when I was in the Geoffrey Howe office. Sherard pushed my final analysis into Robin Cook and it came out again with red ink all over it. Positive, very positive, saying 'Please thank Colin for all the hard work he has put into this very creative piece.' So I felt I had got somewhere in the end. But it was not an easy time. It was above all frustrating, of course, because Robin Cook was a very clever man. He was extremely capable, and not only that, he became towards the end very European. He became Chair of the European Socialists about half way through this period, at which point he became more and more European.

This brings me back to Blair, because the most exciting part of being involved in European policy was, in fact, nothing to do with Robin Cook, since he was really aloof from it much of the time. But Blair from the spring of 1998 developed what was in effect a three track European policy, with which I was closely associated.

One track was labelled Step Change, which involved the intensification of our bilateral relations, putting effort into and giving greater priority to our relations with each of the other member states of Europe, as described in Roger Liddle's book, to which I referred earlier.

The second track involved re-examining all our European policies every six months or so, to see where we could move closer to the mainstream.

And the third, where again I was active, covered the party political dimension of European integration. I had a special dispensation from John Kerr as PUS, because obviously this was a sensitive area for a working civil servant. I worked on it with successive Ministers of Europe and with Denis MacShane, who was taking an interest in it for No. 10.

Immanent in the whole process of European integration has always been, especially since the development of the European Parliament, the party political dimension. When I started this job the UK was grossly neglecting it.

When the decline of UK influence in Europe comes to be properly charted, it will be seen that one of our major mistakes involved the party political story. Chris Patten, when Chairman of the Conservative Party, had succeeded in getting Helmut Kohl to agree to the so called *fraktionsgemeinschaft* community of parliamentary parties, which led to the Conservatives in the European Parliament working very closely with the Christian Democrats. David Cameron's decision to withdraw from that co-operation and leave the expanded group had predictably damaging consequences.

There was also a mistake that we had been making early on, from a long way back in the 90s, I think starting around 1990. The practice had grown up in the European Union that twice a year, on the evening of a European Council meeting (heads of government meeting as the European Council) the heads of government met in party political formation the night before - all the Labour prime ministers in one dinner and all the Christian Democrats and centrists in another. What we should have done as the UK was to push into that dinner – but John Major failed to do that, and Blair only belatedly came to the realisation that it was important for us to go to them.

With Denis MacShane in the lead another important decision was taken by the House of Commons at that time, allowing each MP two free trips a year to either Brussels or Strasbourg or the capital of a member state, in order to strengthen links with the rest of the EU. Later, as Ambassador in The Hague, I wrote to all backbenchers from all parties, inviting them to visit The Hague, and indeed something like one hundred and thirty did, from across the spectrum.

The third track was thus building up this party political connection. Denis MacShane, to his great credit, was spot on in all this analysis. He had lived inside the Parti Socialiste and the SPD; he was for years in Switzerland, as the International Secretary of the Metalworkers Federation. He knows the continent from inside in a way that very few British politicians do.

What Tony Blair wanted was to maximise our leadership potential in Europe, so the remit given to Brian Bender and me and others, was to do just that. That was important and very satisfying work. The frustration of it was that it was not being done with the Secretary of State in the Foreign Office. But the closing years of the last century were an exhilarating time to be working on UK-Europe.

CM: You must have been on the Foreign Office Board during both John Coles's time and John Kerr's time. The PUS acts as Chairman of the Foreign Office Board and that that stage the composition of the Board was just the DUSs, wasn't it?

CB: It expanded actually at some point in the John Kerr period, to include two representatives of the business world. I was there only very briefly with John Coles. He was a great professional and did everything in a very rational, straightforward way. What was interesting with John Kerr – but that is a commonplace for those who knew him – was his absolute fascination with personnel policy. He was of course highly skilled at real policy making, too, but he was always fascinated by the Rubik's cube of personnel questions.

CM: I have a question before we move on. During the period you were Economic Director, '97 to 2001, there was a real improvement in British relations with the EU. For the public this was the time of will we, won't we join the Euro. Was it always clear to you that we were never going to join, or was it an open issue?

CB: No, it wasn't always clear. A lot has been written about this by now. I'll explain, not least because I was present at a meeting of the European Council in Luxemburg in November

of 1997. It was nicknamed the Euro X European Council, because this was the Council at which a lot of the institutional machinery for the Euro was debated and put in place. In this November '97 meeting Blair and Brown were still very much trying to be part of that discussion, despite other people concluding that we were not going to join, so we shouldn't be part of it. I can vividly remember Gordon Brown storming into the delegation room, where I was sitting with Tom Scholar, and letting off steam from a very powerful volcano. For roughly six months before November '97 Gordon Brown was substantially in favour of the Euro, and Robin Cook against. Those tectonic plates moved over time, partly as a function of the personal relationship between the two men. My personal interpretation is that Gordon Brown was so angry at the way that he felt the UK had been treated at the November '97 meeting that from then on he became less and less European. He felt our view was not being taken seriously. Blair made about seventeen interventions at this European Council, but the UK was not really listened to, which plainly irritated Gordon a great deal.

The historians say already now, and will say more and more in future, that although Blair during the 1997–2002 period made a series of half a dozen very pro-European speeches, they were not made in the UK, but in other European countries. He is open to the charge that he never pushed home enough inside the UK the reasons why it was so important for our national interest for us to be squarely and centrally involved. He also is very open to the charge that although he was personally very strongly pro-European he failed to insist that the whole of his Cabinet should follow his lead. That was directly due to the fact that he was unable or unwilling to face down Gordon Brown. Because of that, his European policy was never really carried through in the way it could and should have been.

CM: Did you feel that the Prime Minister was interested in joining the Euro and his Chancellor prevented him?

CB: You said did I 'feel'. I really don't know the inside of that story. I think it's very possible that if Gordon Brown had not changed his view in late '97 then Blair would have tried to push it through. Certainly, Mandelson and Liddle in the second rank behind them were keen.

CM: What is your memory of the advice being given by officials? Obviously the civil service does what the politicians decide in the end, but at that period when Blair had just come in and there was a wish to be at the heart of Europe, was there a consensus for joining?

CB: No, no. There wasn't a coherent official view. What we had at that period was a whole series of reports into the pros and cons of joining the Euro. We must have had eight or nine very detailed reports and studies, from the Bank of England and others. If you put them all together they were as near as damn it saying that the economic pros and cons were very evenly balanced. So in the end it was a profoundly political choice.

CM: And is there any truth in the accusation by the eurosceptics that the pro-Europeans in the Foreign Office, or in any other ministry, were always pushing to join the Euro?

CB: No. Though it was always clear that if one wanted to maximise, as Blair did, our leadership potential in Europe, then there were clear disadvantages to being outside the main European project of the time.

CM: And were the difficulties of being outside considered? Having to fight the corner of countries who are not in the Euro, the out-countries, not the central ones?

CB: These problems have to be managed, but they've never been of major importance.

CM: And you personally, at that moment when you were Economic Director, so you had a very important role inside the Foreign Office, did you have a personal position on the Euro?

CB: I did not ever have a dogmatic position about the Euro. I could see, and still can, that joining it would have in some ways strengthened our strategic position in Europe, but it's so palpable that you couldn't possibly join it if the economic analysis was unconvincing that I was always a sensible realist about that. Part of the reason why I wasn't more involved was that for much of the time I was in this job there was a fierce enmity between Robin Cook and Gordon Brown. Because officials on both sides of the Treasury and the Foreign Office knew that their ministers were at daggers drawn, it was very difficult to have much dialogue at lower levels. Treasury officials knew very well that Gordon didn't want to give the Foreign Office any access to economic policy making.

CM: And the origin of this enmity between Brown and Cook, was it ideological or did it just go back to the depths of the Scottish Labour Party?

CB: Almost certainly the latter. Towards the end, they became mates again. Even before Cook resigned, they were right at the end good friends, but not during this period.

### **HM Ambassador to The Netherlands, 2001-5**

CM: Now we come to the time when you moved to be Ambassador in the Netherlands. You had been Economic Director for four years, so it was the end of that posting. Nobody could have been more qualified to go to The Hague. I don't suppose our ambassador there very often speaks fluent Dutch.

CB: That's all true, but I didn't want to go to The Hague. I badly wanted to go to Germany, but as happens in our profession, Germany was not vacant, nor can I say I would necessarily have got the job, had it come free. Paul Lever was in any case still there, and was doing a very good job.

Having already done four years in the Netherlands, as Head of Chancery, I rather felt I had been there and done that ... I also knew from the beginning that it would be wonderful for Agnes, which was a big compensation. Indeed, so it proved, but I arrived in The Hague without much enthusiasm, because I had not wanted to go there, and was the more disenchanted because for the first six months very little happened.

However, a number of topics then started to come to life.

One was Iraq, which became the reason for a substantial public diplomacy campaign, during which I appeared some thirty times on Dutch television. There was also the whole question of Dutch populism, which under the leadership of Pim Fortuyn started to develop from the autumn of 2001.

That in turn was intimately interwoven with the whole question of immigration. At that stage the Netherlands was conventionally regarded as the *beau idéal* of tolerance in the field of racial relations, but during my time as Ambassador the stereotypes between the Netherlands and the UK reversed. On top of that we had a number of big state occasions, as one does in many of these jobs. We sometimes, Agnes and I, called our posting Four Funerals and Two Weddings, because we had three royal and one other funeral (Pim Fortuyn's) and two big royal weddings. On top of that there was a lot of interest that developed over this period in the legal side of The Hague, not least in relation to war crimes. There was obviously a great deal to do with the European Union, and there were many WWII anniversaries. In the end there was plenty to do. I might also say a word, since this is for diplomatic connoisseurs, about the Budd salon, and how we used it as an effective entertainment tool.

Iraq, first of all. I arrived in the spring of 2001 and the whole story of the build up to the invasion was developing all the time. Like many other ambassadors, I was under permanent instructions to get/keep the Dutch on our side. You remember how the EU was split, actually split down the middle. Everyone now thinks that we were isolated, but at that stage we had Italy and Spain on our side and it was very tense. The Dutch were in the middle, but did after the invasion make a military contribution. The focus of most of my activity was partly on justifying the invasion and what we did in the process, but also partly on trying to keep the Dutch battalion in Iraq as long as possible – not least because they were in the UK zone, to the west of Basra. I had to run a public relations battle designed to persuade Dutch public opinion that the troops were there for good reason and should stay in Iraq for as long as possible. This led me into tricky territory, because at a certain point the Minister of Defence decided that he wanted to pull them out, and I then demonstrated that there was a majority in the Dutch Parliament for staying on. This did not amuse him, and he formally proposed to a meeting of the Dutch Cabinet that I should be made PNG (persona non grata), so that was fun while it lasted. Luckily, I was strongly supported by the Dutch Foreign Minister, Ben Bot, an old friend of mine, so that was all right on the night.

I spent a lot of time on the PR battle over Iraq policy, which turned into an interesting exercise in public diplomacy. Dutch television is conducted solely in Dutch, only very rarely using subtitles. The US Ambassador, who spoke no Dutch, was thus hors de combat in this case, and because my Dutch was really good, I had the Dutch radio and television companies coming to me again and again and again. I thus got involved over time in a whole series of performances on Dutch television, taking as my inspiration what my old boss Nicko Henderson did with the US media during the Falklands War. The importance, of course, of TV appearances is that they reach a range of public opinion which simply goes beyond what you can do with newspapers. To be on a Dutch chat show, which I was two or three times, with an audience of around a million in a country of sixteen million, is just a much better way of getting your point across than doing interviews with the written media. Also several times the Dutch version of Panorama, which has an audience of about 400,000. All that taught me a range of new skills.

I had done some media training, but you mostly learn by doing and in particular you learn the art of the one liner, because our defence on Iraq was (a) very Jesuitical and (b) factually complex. To try to justify our international legal position in public was really not that easy, especially because in TV interviews there is rarely time to spell out complex questions at any

length. By way of illustration, I appeared once on a chat show. One of the hosts was Jewish, almost all the Jews in the Netherlands were entirely in favour of our invasion of Iraq and the deposition of Saddam, so during most of the forty minute interview I was not given a hard time. However, to liven things up the producers had constantly present a former Dutch International football player, whom they used from time to time as a kind of attack dog. For the first twenty minutes I had been fencing comfortably with the two chat show hosts, when the attack dog suddenly growled, and said (in Dutch) 'Look, Ambassador, surely you know that this whole war is fucking illegal?' Luckily I had in my pocket a folded piece of A4, setting out the Goldsmith (then UK Attorney General) legal defence of our position. I said, 'No, absolutely not, it's perfectly legal, here's the explanation,' which of course was in such complex detail that he couldn't make head or tail of it. Not a pretty tactic, but it shut him up. The moral is: in public diplomacy, always be very well prepared.

Such episodes were also a reminder that to do public diplomacy well one needs a particular style: especially the ability to be succinct and incisive, when one liners are required, but also to shift gear quickly when a longer and fluent statement is called for. To succeed in the public arena means accepting that one can't always play by the Queensberry Rules. One needs to be flexible, and able to adjust quickly to a new challenge. Especially because in the case of Iraq, defending our policy in public did not get any easier as the saga developed. As our public defence visibly unravelled, I was still there in the exposed position of being the go-to ambassador, which had its tricky moments.

Race relations and immigration and populism were also a gripping story during those years. Let me just pull together one or two of the more vivid elements. I had arrived in the spring of 2001, and all the time I was there, all four years, I had a police escort, actually because of Afghanistan. One of my policemen said to me, in I think November of 2001, 'Ambassador, you should keep an eye on this guy Pim Fortuyn, he's saying things which ordinary people agree with, but which the politicians don't dare to say.' Armed by that, I started focussing very closely on Fortuyn. The background to his rise derived essentially from the fact that the percentage of ethnic minorities in the Dutch population was at that point double ours. As a result they were in general feeling various pressures well ahead of us, the more so because their largest ethnic minorities, apart from the long assimilated Indonesians, are Turks and Moroccans, neither of whose languages have any connection with Dutch.

Pim Fortuyn was a sort of Farage before his time and I observed at quite close quarters his rise and fall, as well as once having a three hour lunch with him on my own. From a standing start, pretty well, he ran in the Rotterdam local elections of March 2002 and became the largest party overnight. The Dutch electoral system being purely proportional, every vote counts, and from a standing start you can grow very fast. In the spring of 2002 Fortuyn suddenly zoomed into the national consciousness. A few weeks after that he was murdered, by an animal rights activist. There were quite extraordinary scenes, comparable to those after Princess Diana's death here. A sort of mass national hysteria. Four ambassadors attended Fortuyn's funeral in Rotterdam Cathedral. I had first had the idea and three others came - my American colleague, the Dane and the Swede. It was a most bizarre experience. We talk about two nations in the Disraelian context. There really were two nations there at this funeral, because you had on one side of the church the Dutch Establishment and on the other all Fortuyn's supporters, many of whom were quite rough, men with leather jackets and earrings, quite different. Outside the church you had a big, big crowd of thirty, forty thousand - chanting Dutch football anthems, with new words. It was really a very, very extraordinary atmosphere. Then his cortege passed about fifty miles across the Netherlands to where he was going to be buried and the route, the entire fifty miles, was manned five or ten deep by the Dutch population.

That started me thinking about a lot of ideas and Trevor Phillips, who was running the UK Commission for Racial Equality, which I later became a member of, was extremely interested as a laboratory experiment in what was happening in the Netherlands and came across on a couple of visits. I spent quite a lot of time studying this phenomenon, and the reasons for it, and did a lot of reporting on it. So that was one of the major leitmotifs of my time as Ambassador.

Another dramatic event in that connection was the murder of the great nephew of Van Gogh, the painter – Theo van Gogh (well described in Ian Buruma's book, *Murder in Amsterdam*). Ayaan Hirsi Ali was very closely involved in this. She and Van Gogh's great nephew had been involved in an extremely ill-advised way in wrapping nude models with gauze sheets imprinted with verses from the Koran, because she was active in the whole story of resisting what the assumptions of Islam were doing to Dutch society. As a protest against that, she and Van Gogh had mounted this protest, in the most lurid possible way, with these naked models, which of course is complete anathema to any Moslem, to have naked models covered with verses from the Koran. Two days after they had put these models on display,

Van Gogh was shot and stabbed in an Amsterdam street, which led to all sorts of philosophical further reflections.

Another big story was the war criminals. One of the interesting things about being Ambassador in The Hague is that one is one of the few ambassadors in the world combining a bilateral responsibility with various multilateral responsibilities. Thus I was Ambassador to the OPCW on chemical weapons, but also responsible for monitoring Europol, and all the legal institutions based in The Hague - not only the International Court of Justice but also the ICTY Balkan War Crimes Court, where there was a British judge and Milosevic among others was on trial.

As always in The Hague, there was also a lot of routine EU business. At that stage the UK was as keen as ever to get the Dutch more closely allied to us than to France or Germany. I knew very well, from my time as Head of Chancery in the 1980s, the whole Dutch EU policy making apparatus – including the successive Foreign Ministers during my time as Ambassador. Including, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, later NATO Secretary General, who during the whole four years that I was Head of Chancery in The Hague, had been Private Secretary to the Foreign Minister.

I got involved in a whole battle about the OPCW, since the United States decided that the Brazilian head of the OPCW at the time, Bustani, had to be sacked. So that again led to much hullabaloo. There was very real substance in the OPCW story at that time, too, the build up to the deal with the Libyans to get rid of their chemical weapons.

Another leitmotif was the Budd Salon. I think we all have our different attitudes to the question of entertainment, derived from experience over the years. Like many of us, I couldn't abide cocktail parties, and didn't much like the inflexibility and limitations of formal dinners. Following earlier experiments in The Hague in the 1980s and Bonn in the 1990s, we had become convinced that the best solution was to have, every two months or so, the house open from about six to midnight, with hot food available all the time. Sit-down dinners are not something that many people like in this era. There are many people who are prepared to come to your house for half an hour or two hours, but do not want to be tied down for three or three and a half. So our solution was a salon, and we had quite a clever invitation card, produced with some skill.

Our house was physically less than a mile from the Dutch Parliament. The Dutch Parliament only numbers a hundred and fifty, so if you get twenty plus of them in your house, you've got a really good slice of the Dutch body politic. We also had various sub-sets to that ambition: to mix, as the best salons always have done, all kinds of people - partly cultural, partly military, partly business, partly media, partly political people, to mix them all up. In the Netherlands the precise manifestation of that challenge is to mix Amsterdam people with non-Amsterdam kinds of people, because Amsterdam people are wild and arty and rather un-Calvinist, whereas Utrecht, The Hague, Rotterdam people, particularly Rotterdam people, are square, feet on the ground, strong businessmen. My delight was always to mix the different types up, so we had no *placement*. We said on the invitation: come when you want, eat when you want, leave when you want, dress as you like, sit wherever you want. The whole notion of freedom of this kind was so antipathetic to the Dutch mentality (as it had been to the German) that it took them quite a long time to get used to it, but after they had got used to it, they really loved it. We also added a conjurer, who we had wandering round pulling chickens and rubber balls out of people's ears. My idea of heaven was to get the Chief of the Defence Staff sat next to some Amsterdam artist, or a big businessman next to radical left politicians - people, in short, who wouldn't normally meet. When the Populist Party started, we got Christian Democrat ministers sitting down on sofas with representatives of the Populist Party. A lot of fun.

All that we did about twenty times in four years. It was very, very hard work to organise something as fluid as that - but the result was an extremely successful and very utilitarian social mechanism, which in its day became almost legendary in the public life of The Hague. It was a journalist's heaven. There were certain standbys, like the Editor of the Dutch Economist equivalent at the time, and the best sociologist in the Netherlands, who was the head of the Government Sociology Bureau. They came nearly every time. We once had 32 members of the 150 member Parliament, and once 26. All in all, life in the Netherlands turned out challenging and busy enough. A good way to bring my career to a close.