

DOHP Interview Index and Biographical Details

Brian CROWE (Born 5 January 1938)

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**Sir Brian Lee Crowe interviewed by Gwenda Scarlett on Wednesday
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- 1) GS Sir Brian you joined the Foreign Office in 1961 and I believe this was in line with your family tradition?

- 2) BC Yes, I went straight from Oxford in the normal way. My father had been in the Foreign Office. He died young in 1952 as Consul General in Frankfurt. The person historians have heard about is my grandfather, Sir Eyre Crowe, who was PUS in the early 20s and who led the official British Delegation to the Paris Peace Conference at the end of the First World War and who was also quite well known for having written a famous memorandum on Anglo-German relations in 1907. My great grandfather, Sir Joseph Archer Crowe, was also a diplomat (among many other things, including being a war artist for the Illustrated London News in the Crimean War and the first serious art historian, with an Italian called Cavalcaselle) but hardly a conventional one: he was a sort of supplier of intelligence for the Foreign Secretary in the courts of the still un-united Germany). He failed to achieve his Ambassadorial ambition (Berne) when the premature disclosure of this prospect by his wife before agreement scuppered his appointment. He ended up as Commercial Attaché for all of Europe in Paris about 1890. So a long line in the FO.

- 3) GS Did you do some language training initially when you joined?

- 4) BC The Foreign Office taught me Russian first in London for several months (with Andrew Wood, who subsequently became Ambassador in Moscow) and then Paris for three months, staying with a White Russian family. Then they posted me to Moscow in October 1962. Humphrey Trevelyan was my Ambassador. A very distinguished Ambassador, who became part of my life again when he was appointed governor of Aden in 1967, which we will come on to.

- 5) GS This was the time of Khrushchev?
- 6) BC This was the last two years of Khrushchev. I left in October 1964. The day after I left Khrushchev fell. I don't know whether there was cause and effect. It was an interesting time to be in the Soviet Union, the period of the apparent unravelling of the Stalinist years following Khrushchev's famous 1956 speech denouncing Stalin, although he had been himself been intimately involved with Stalin all his life. There is a very interesting book just out by Simon Sebag Montefiore called "Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar", a fascinating account of Stalin. Khrushchev was deeply involved, up to his neck actually, in many of the monstrosities that Stalin committed. But anyway he made that speech denouncing Stalin and then there was the Cuban missile crisis, shortly after which I went to Moscow. So with that crisis in relations with the United States behind us and with the de-Stalinisation that was taking place progressively, after the 1956 speech, it was actually possible to believe, we did all believe I think, that the Soviet Union was starting on a new course of relative liberalisation. Artists were starting to come out. New works were starting to be published. Solzhenitsyn published his "One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich", a story in Novy Mir magazine about life in the gulag, which was a sensation. Novy Mir was sold out immediately and "One Day" became unobtainable. I was able to get a copy for myself because there was a Rank Xerox exhibition by chance at the time in Moscow and I was able to get a friend who happened to work for Rank Xerox to xerox (or photocopy) the Embassy's subscription copy of Novy Mir. I still have it (photocopying was still in its infancy in the West, or anyway the Foreign Office, we still used carbon paper and stencils for reproducing texts. Typists were divided into shorthand and copy typists, one of the daily chores of the latter being to copy-type the telegrams, which came as upper-case telexes, on to stencils for wider distribution). "One Day" was first republished, and then only in English, much later. But it was possible to believe that things were gradually loosening up and even that it was an irreversible process.
- 7) GS Was this reflected in your life there? Did you meet Russians at all?

8) BC It was reflected at the margin really. The old arrangements continued in place. The KGB was still active. Everything was bugged. You couldn't talk in your own flat without being overheard. It wasn't true that diplomats were always trailed, not normally anyway, but you were greatly restricted on where you could travel. You had to get permission to travel outside Moscow. Thirty, or twenty-five, kilometres it was, outside Moscow. You had to give an exact itinerary of where you were going, where you were going to spend the night, how you were going to travel, and large areas of the Soviet Union were closed. Your travel arrangements had to be made through the UPDK (administration for the diplomatic corps), so they had detailed tabs on you. Locally engaged staff, including cleaners etc, were hired through UPDK as well, and were obliged to report to the KGB, and on occasion to go further (eg honey traps etc). And Russians were still afraid to talk to you. Or if they weren't afraid, they either should have been or were working for the KGB. I remember picking up some Russians once when I was driving outside Moscow and getting lost. I stopped at a bus stop in the countryside, maybe in a village, and asked the people in a queue how to get to where I wanted to go. They told me and then a couple said well, if you're going there, we're going in that direction, can you drop us? So of course I said yes. In the car I asked them whether they thought it was all right to do this, and they said no problem. I dropped them where they wanted to be dropped, which was at a crossroads where there was a policeman who was in one of those sentry boxes common at crossroads outside Moscow then. They purported to be traffic policemen, but since there was negligible traffic, there had clearly other less benign functions. As I drove away I could see the policeman coming down from his rostrum and going over and talking to them, clearly about being dropped by a foreigner in a foreign car with a diplomatic licence plate. I don't expect anything happened to them, but I'm sure they were warned not to do it again. A bit further on down the road, at another crossroads with a similar sentry box occupied by a policeman, I was flagged down and interrogated. Why was I giving a lift to Soviet citizens? I explained the story I have just recounted. Didn't I realise that this was illegal? I rejected this: how could it be? But in your country a foreign diplomat would not be allowed to give a lift. The policeman genuinely couldn't credit that this was rubbish, even as he sent me on my way with a warning to sin no more. That was the mind-set. Most of the contacts I did have --

- and it was possible to have Russian contacts then --- they were sort of authorised, the officials, and the people on the fringes of the diplomatic world who were sort of licensed to deal with foreigners.

- 9) But there were some brave souls mainly from the cultural community, actors and people like that, film directors, who wanted to branch out and have access to the West, and for them that meant either journalists or diplomats. So it was possible to have friends and I had a handful of good Russian friends. It was obvious at the time that they had real difficulties over it with the authorities, the KGB, but it was only when I met them outside the Soviet Union later when they were visiting the West that I heard the details. For example, there was Oleg Tabakov, subsequently a famous actor and film and theatre director including of the Moscow Arts Theatre, but then an aspiring young actor and leading light in the dissident (as dissident as it was possible to be) theatre called the Sovremenik (ie Contemporary) theatre. Very distinguished. He was allowed out of Moscow in a group in 1965 after I had left. He escaped his minders, although not before they had warned him what an evil character I was, and we saw each other privately, to arrange which he had had to take lots of evasive action. He then described to me the pressures, the warnings he had received and the threats they had made which he very bravely ignored. His wife (sadly first wife, they divorced and he married again) was always scared and suspicious of my motives. She was very nervous about meeting. So yes, it was possible to have friends and they were brave people. Things were being published and plays were being put on that hadn't been allowed before and art exhibitions were being put on. There was one in the "Manege" Exhibition Hall, which Khrushchev visited and referred very disobligingly to something as being painted by a donkey or something like that, which gave the lead for the media. But the fact is the exhibition took place in one of the leading exhibition halls in Moscow. Then Khrushchev fell and we went back to the Brezhnev era. There was - I think in last week's Sunday Times Magazine section - a reprint of a chapter from a book by Martha Gellhorn about her visit in 1972 to Osip Mandelstam, the great Russian poet, and that was very much a description of Russia as I recognised it, but even more frozen up than it had been when I was there, because under Brezhnev it had gone backwards of course. It was ten years after I was there. It had definitely gone back into the

deep freeze. And there were restrictions, self imposed, on us too: no romantic/sexual relations with Russians for fear of blackmail (I remember my Australian counterpart was not subjected to this rule and had a great time with Russian girls. He made the sensible point that you can only be blackmailed if you do something you are afraid to own up to, and bachelors at least would only be afraid to own up to relations with Russian girls if it was forbidden). And I got into trouble with my own authorities for bringing in a package of paperbacks of British and American novelists and playwrights to give to Russian friends who had asked for them. From the British authorities' point of view it might have been a trap to catch me doing something illegal and blackmailing me. I knew, or certainly thought I knew, the Russians concerned well enough to trust them. I am sure I did, but you can see how easy it would be to be mistaken. I can't remember whether I was allowed to give the books or not, I rather think I was since I could hardly be blackmailed for it. So there was this atmosphere that the Soviet authorities were trying to get you into trouble and your own authorities were trying to keep you out of it, both combining to produce a network of restrictions on what you could or couldn't do. But it was much better than it had been before, or than it would become again shortly.

10) GS Well you were actually rather lucky to be there at a relatively free time?

11) BC I was very lucky to be there. I enjoyed it very much. It was my first post. It was a new country, a new experience, job, everything. The routine of Chancery work was alleviated by contacts with important visitors and, for that matter, important Russians. I met Rostropovich, for example (though I am sure he wouldn't remember that), I shook hands with Khrushchev and interpreted for Nina Khrushcheva and Lady Douglas Home, then wife of the Foreign Secretary. I was there for the final agreement and signature of the first (partial) Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, when I was tremendously unimpressed with Lord Hailsham, leading our delegation, at sea and very indecisive he was. I came within stabbing range of Fidel Castro. Hugh Gaitskell and Patrick Gordon Walker came and dined in our bachelor flat on a visit to Moscow when the Ambassador (and also I suppose the Minister) was too tied up to look after them. I met Harold Wilson then too. And so on. And life outside work was fun, summer and winter. Theatre, opera and

ballet were easily accessible and very cheap. Travel also was cheap, and I got to places like Soviet Central Asia (Tashkent, Samarkand etc), the Caucasus and the Baltic states (which the Ambassador was not allowed by London to go to since this would have resembled recognition of their incorporation in the Soviet Union. The Russians for their part made visiting western diplomats travel by night train from Leningrad so that they wouldn't be able to see anything on the way). Russian history and culture were fascinating, with the countryside studded with romantic, often decaying old churches, monasteries and villages. I was able to acquire some good icons, legally I hasten to add (and legally exported, with the right certificates from a proverbial little old lady in the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow who certified them rather humiliatingly, but necessarily, as of no artistic or historic importance). There was skiing (mostly cross-country) in winter and skating on the flooded embassy tennis court, also the occasionally famous---or at least written-up in the newspapers from time to time as a new discovery---game of broomball). The embassy had a dacha outside Moscow in a settlement of dachas at Serebryanny Bor (silver wood) in a loop of the Moscow River. The whole diplomatic corps also had the use (pre-booked) of the nomenclatura's hunting dacha settlement at Zavidovo, some 100 kms out of Moscow.

12) I lived in bachelor quarters at the back of the compound, where we sampled bear paw and saiga antelope and other culinary delicacies provided by Russian friends. Caviar (and vodka) were widely available. I had good friends and colleagues in other embassies, notably the Americans. And there were secretaries and nannies for female company and romance. So it was actually a good life. But then I never actually wanted to go back and was never posted back, only coming on visits much later. I didn't want to go back to do a job at a level less than Ambassador because in the Brezhnev years Moscow had become a less interesting and less fun place, with fewer openings than I had had when I was young. So I did actually manage to avoid that. Whether that was a good thing or not I don't know, because some of my colleagues did go back, more than once, finally as Ambassador. People like Rodric Braithwaite and Andrew Wood, who stuck it out with their Russian through successive postings and returned as Ambassador to witness and indeed participate in the fascinating transition arising from the collapse of the Soviet Union, the end of the division of Europe, the fall of Gorbachev, the rise of

Yeltsin etc. That was an exciting time to be in Moscow as British Ambassador, the possibility of which I forewent for myself by preferring not to soldier on in the trenches of the Brezhnev years.

13) GS So following Moscow you were posted to London; to which Department?

14) BC From Moscow I came back to London after the statutory two years there to look after a section of what was then Northern Department, which dealt with the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, the Communist countries and also Norway and Iceland. It was a slightly paradoxical name to call Northern Department, a Department whose main job was related to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. But there you are, that was the Foreign Office in those days. So was the continued existence of coal fires in every room, prepared in the early hours by the cleaners every day and burning away during the day (in winter, of course). Part of the ritual also, long since disappeared, was tea in the “third room”, the room where the desk officers sat at separate desks: the Head of Department and assistant heads would come in and share it and socialise. I was there from '64 to '67 and was Desk Officer for Rumania and Hungary at that time. I was also a Resident Clerk at the Foreign Office. You know the Resident Clerk function?

15) GS Duty Officer weekends?

16) BC Out of office hours. Evenings and weekends. In exchange for your services on top of your daytime job you had a free flat at the top of the building, shared with three colleagues (plus another two or three when the FO amalgamated with the CRO (Commonwealth Relations Office) in 1967), with cleaning etc free and breakfast cooked for you, and a small allowance. The institution of the Resident Clerks (my grandfather, Sir Eyre Crowe, had incidentally been one) changed over the years and is being abolished this autumn, to be replaced by a more fully fledged and modern operations centre type of thing. In those days we were all bachelors and that's where we lived, in the FCO. It was already changing when I left, first with women resident clerks and then married ones. In recent years most people have I think been married and have had their own homes, using the free accommodation only when on duty. We did our work as the resident clerk on

duty actually in our own flat, our living room (we each had our own living room and bedroom and shared other facilities). Later they put in a sort of operations room there with telephone lines and equipment, so that the duty resident clerk worked there. In many ways being Resident Clerk was more interesting than my daytime job in the Department. I mean, Desk Officer for Hungary and Rumania in the mid-60s was hardly front line stuff, whereas being on duty as resident clerk made you the FO's interface with the whole world as well as UK ministers while everybody else slept or took their leisure time. So you witnessed and participated in exciting or interesting events which cropped up out of hours, and saw fascinating papers which passed through your hands. I had once to put the stand-by battalion on full alert for some crisis on my own authority because I couldn't find anyone whose decision it properly was. I remember stopping the MOD/RN from sinking an oil-tanker in the Beira Strait because they thought it might be sanctions-busting over Rhodesia (it wasn't). And I had to tell a worse-for-drink George Brown, who was standing in as PM when Harold Wilson was in Moscow, that he could not send British troops into Uganda because Obote had just arrested half his cabinet. And advising Arthur Bottomley, then Commonwealth Secretary, on what I thought he should do and say to George Brown. I also had things like someone ringing up the FO and being put through to me by the switchboard because there was nobody else to be asked what the capital of Albania was. Asked why she wanted to know, my interlocutor explained that she was a geography teacher and it was in the next day's lesson.

17) GS A quieter time in the department?

18) BC There was always work to do. Always visits to arrange and we had an official visit, the first one, from Rumania by a man called Birladeanu, who was a member of the Politburo and deputy to Ceaucescu. Ceaucescu came subsequently, long after I'd left, and got an honour from the Queen, you remember.

19) GS Yes

20) BC It had to be taken away from him after he was killed. Well, it was interesting. Rumania was pursuing a sort of dual policy of loyalty to the Soviet Union internally and independence externally, which we were seeking to encourage. Hungary was doing the reverse. It was trying to liberalise internally, while being slavishly devoted to the Soviet line externally. So, you know, there was that sort of interplay to follow and observe. I never went to Rumania. I went to Hungary to a conference organised by the Quakers, actually where I was talent spotted by Hungarian intelligence who identified me as a possible target because I'd been nice to Hungarians, which seemed to me quite a soft criterion by which to identify possible agents, but there we are. I know that because there was a Hungarian defector shortly afterwards in London.

21) GS But you weren't aware of it at the time?

22) BC I wasn't aware of it at the time. I'd been given to him as one of his targets on my return from Hungary. The Department called me in and told me about it, but it wasn't held against me. I had been approached earlier, before my posting to Moscow, by the KGB. When I first came to London after leaving Oxford, the KGB had tried to trap me first by getting me to do something (translating a German magazine article into English on the grounds that their translator was on holiday) and then paying me, and then when that failed, following up with the old honey trap.

23) GS Before you joined the Foreign Office?

24) BC No, I'd joined the Foreign Office. But I'd known a Russian in Oxford; a Russian lawyer who was a graduate student and we got to know each other, and he knew I was going to the Foreign Office. When he went back to Moscow he passed me on to his friend in the Soviet Embassy who cultivated me. I remember that he took me to the Kirov Ballet. It was for me perfectly above board because I reported every move to Security Department and they didn't prevent me. But he did try to pay me for translating something from Der Spiegel, from German to English, on the grounds that the Russian translators were away on holiday, it was August. They were going to have to be paid, and this was the money and he'd

already drawn it. I'm sure that someone lurking behind the coats in the pub was there to witness this transaction take place in the pub, a chap with a camera. I managed to avoid that, and then at that point I broke all contact with him. It was obvious what he was trying to do and Security Department at that point required it. He contacted me some months later. I'd moved, so he didn't know where I was, but he found out. He tracked down my mother in Oxford. My mother gave him my home 'phone number and he 'phoned me and said that he and his wife were having their tenth wedding anniversary, or something, and wouldn't it be nice if we could all get together and have dinner together in a restaurant, with dancing. So somewhat taken aback I said well that's very nice, but noncommittally. I said should I bring a girlfriend? No, no, no, no, he said. Don't do that. We will provide you with a girlfriend (laughter). I didn't go. I saw him in my time in Moscow. He'd been posted back to the Foreign Ministry and we met on a collective farm - on one of those visits to a collective farm organised to demonstrate the success of Soviet agriculture. He was from the Soviet Foreign Ministry and part of the escorting group. I can't remember whether I tried to be friendly or not. I don't think I did particularly, but I tried to be polite. He cut me dead. Absolutely froze me out. As far as I know the KGB had given up on me at that point, because I was unaware of any further attempts against me, but there were lots of other attempts on others including some of my other colleagues. By the extensive application of alcohol, they got one chap into bed with a girl, which he confessed to the next day and was immediately sent home. As I recounted earlier the Australians were much more relaxed about such things.

25) GS Interesting contrast. You're back in Northern Department. You didn't do that job for the whole of that time in London?

26) BC No, in 1967 I was whipped out, - but actually before I get on to the next episode I think there is a vignette from the 1960s that might amuse anybody who ever reads this archive, about the Zinoviev letter. The Zinoviev letter was an episode in 1924 when a letter purportedly written by Zinoviev, the Head of the Comintern, to the British Communist Party sowing sedition and calling on them to stir the army to mutiny and dockworkers to strike. It fell into the hands of the authorities and a note of protest was drafted to send to the Soviet Trade

Delegation, I think it was called in those days, with a view to the publication of both the Zinoviev letter and of the protest note. We didn't recognise the Soviet Union, but they had a Trade Delegation. Ramsay MacDonald, who was both Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary at the time and who had authorised the idea of a protest and publication, was in Wales. My grandfather supervised, indeed amended, the draft of the protest and sent it to Ramsay MacDonald in Wales. MacDonald looked at it, amended it (probably firming it up) extensively and sent it back to the Foreign Office. At the same time the Daily Mail had got hold of a copy of the Zinoviev letter and was going to publish it, so it became urgent to act. Anyway the draft came back to the FO from Ramsay MacDonald, initialled. Now the crucial question that only people working in the Foreign Office would know the significance of - I don't know if it's true anymore, but it was when I joined - was where he initialled. According to FO procedure (actually invented by my grandfather two decades earlier when he had been in charge of FO administrative reforms), if he initialled under the draft at the bottom of the text, it meant he approved it for issue. If he simply initialled it in the margin, it just meant he'd seen it and he was not approving it. But to complicate things in this case, MacDonald apparently wrote his extensive amendments (amounting even to a complete redraft) in the (wide) margin and initialled under that, ie in the margin but under his own text. And so the key question was did he approve it or did he merely amend it without approving it. MacDonald always maintained that he had not intended to publish, nor to authorise the protest at that point. My grandfather (Sir Eyre Crowe) however, convinced that MacDonald had authorised this, issued the note of protest, sent it to the Soviet Trade Delegation and published it with the Zinoviev letter itself, which the Daily Mail was in any case about to publish. There was an outcry. It was in the middle of an election campaign. Labour lost the election and for many years the story was - it was not true, but it was a belief in the Labour Party - that the Zinoviev letter was the deciding factor in the election. Since then it has been shown to be a forgery. It wasn't sent by Zinoviev, but was cooked up by Russian emigrés in Riga, or somewhere, fell into the hands of MI6 and (probably) leaked by them to the Daily Mail. But all that's by the way. The Zinoviev letter gave ammunition to the Conservatives against a Labour government which had negotiated trade agreements with the Soviet Union and

they went on to win the election. So when George Brown became Foreign Secretary in 1965/6, whenever it was....

27) GS He was the third of the Foreign Ministers under Harold Wilson?

28) BC Yes, Michael Stewart before him, in turn following the unfortunate Patrick Gordon Walker who had had to resign because he failed to get a seat in the house of Commons. He succeeded Michael Stewart, so it may have been '66. One of the first things he wanted to do was to track down who had authorised the publication of the Zinoviev letter. Was it Foreign Office officials, i.e. my grandfather, or had the Prime Minister/Foreign Secretary done it? So he issued instructions to find the draft and see where it was initialled. They searched the archives for the draft and couldn't find it. The search was so desperate that they even came up to Northern Department, to my room in Northern Department, which had been responsible for the subject way back in 1924, and searched all the cupboards in Northern Department, including mine, just in case the draft happened to be lying around in the pile of papers preserved forty years later by some accident of history. Of course they didn't find it. I think it has been since accepted that the draft disappeared in the weeding process. It's sometimes probably difficult for weeders to know what's important to keep and what can be thrown away. They kept the final version, the one that actually went, and I believe they kept the first departmental draft, so why, maybe they thought, bother to keep the intermediate draft? Unless you realise that the draft, as in this particular case, was significant.

29) GS George Brown was Foreign Secretary while you were there?

30) BC He was Foreign Secretary while I was there.

31) GS But also Michael Stewart had been?

32) BC Michael Stewart had been Foreign Secretary before, and Patrick Gordon Walker, whom I had met in Moscow, briefly before that. Patrick Gordon Walker

having lost his seat in the General Election in '64, was nonetheless appointed Foreign Secretary while a new seat was found for him (Leytonstone, if memory serves me right) and he made the mistake of losing that by-election and so they couldn't keep him on as Foreign Secretary. Michael Stewart took his place from being, I think, Secretary of State for Education. He was a perfectly nice man but a non-entity. I think not the kind of Foreign Secretary that Foreign Offices like. He read his briefs and did what he was told. He was not a man who provided any leadership, any ideas of his own. George Brown did. George Brown was brilliant in many ways, up until about mid-day before the drink got to him. He had an extraordinarily trenchant mind and the ability to grasp things and see things, and see through things, which was truly impressive. I got to know him not in Northern Department where I was too low down the pole, but a bit over Aden. In that capacity I saw both the brilliance of George Brown, and also his totally unacceptable side, brutish, a terrible bully, with no regard to other peoples' feelings or rights, be they ever so senior or ever so humble. He upset the FO lift operators, the lift at the St James's Park ambassador's entrance, because he insisted on pressing the buttons himself, refusing to let them, as they saw it, do their job. He sacked people at the drop of a hat if one of his political friends put a word in his ear: I saw that over an appointment in Aden. But he was brilliant too.

- 33) I was transferred on to the Aden side in 1967 when Lord Shackleton was appointed at a few days notice, no more, to be sent out to Aden as sort of Minister Resident in response to a crisis that was then taking place in Aden. There was a general strike and a mutiny and British authority was being challenged and the Governor was apparently not coping. It was a huge crisis. People forget now. Aden was in the headlines back in '67. Aden was a colony, a Crown colony, but it was also becoming part of the South Arabian Federation, which was to include the tribal states which had protectorate status, with tribal sheikhs and traditional tribal societies. The new British Labour Government had decided that South Arabia with Aden should become independent by the end of 1967, by November 1967, for financial reasons largely, it was the beginning of retrenchment from East of Suez. And so this ill-fitting group of tribal Sheikhs and the cosmopolitan rootless urban Arabs in Aden had been put together, and were being forced into a single country with a federal regime and we were trying to create a constitution for them

and a means by which they would run themselves after we left. There was a rebellion going on in the urban areas mainly manipulated by Egypt under Nasserite influence through the Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen, acronym FLOSY. And then there was another nationalist group which came out of nowhere really, but was indigenous, based in the South Arabian tribal areas, and tribal rather than urban, which called itself the National Liberation Front. This was genuinely nationalist, not Nasserite, and basically what happened in '67 was that FLOSY and the NLF had a war between each other at the same time as we were trying to create a Federal Government for this country that we were launching into the big wide world on its own.

34) Shackleton was sent out to deal with the crisis that developed and I was appointed as his Private Secretary and Sam Falle was his Political Adviser. Sam Falle was an Arabist and had served in a number of Arab countries including certainly Iraq. I can't remember where else he had served. He finished curiously enough working for the European Commission as the Commission's delegate in Algiers. I think he was High Commissioner in Nigeria. But anyway he was the Political Adviser and his function, basically for Lord Shackleton, was to find out who the NLF characters were and get to meet them, which he managed to do surreptitiously, only to find them completely uninterested in a deal. They made no bones about the fact that they wanted to throw the British out; this was their *raison d'être*, to throw the British out, to be seen to be doing so, and not to arrive at some compromise.

35) Shackleton decided very sensibly that he shouldn't stay on in Aden as Minister because you can't have a Governor and a Minister in the same small place. The "need to do something" was met by a decision to change the governor. So the poor unfortunate then Governor, Richard Turnbull, had to make place for a new broom Governor. Humphrey Trevelyan was brought in to replace the unfortunate Richard Turnbull who hadn't been doing a bad job. It was just that the political requirement was to be seen to be doing something, and that was the thing they did. It was no coincidence that both Sam Falle and I had worked in previous incarnations for Humphrey Trevelyan. We both had the highest regard for him

and pressed his name for the appointment; perhaps something he would not actually have thanked us for!

36) GS Rather than postpone the British departure?

37) BC No, there was never any question of postponing the departure. It was an absolute requirement. There then followed a process during the summer. I went back to London with Lord Shackleton, for whom I continued to work as his “Aden” private secretary in the House of Lords (the other part of his responsibilities, at this moment very much déjà vu all over again, was Lords reform), but I was also repatriated to the FCO, to the Aden Department. Its Head was Don McCarthy, who taught me a lot about drafting, although his technique was totally different to my other great instructor, Howard Smith, who had been my Head of Department in Northern Department. Howard Smith taught me to be concise, halving the length of my drafts. Don McCarthy taught me to include important information, doubling the length of my drafts. The trick was to combine both skills. I was in this curious position of drafting Lord Shackleton’s letter to George Brown, saying “Dear George, I think we should do this, that or the other” about Aden. George Brown’s Private Office in accordance with ordinary office procedure sent them down to the Department for advice and a draft reply. And Don McCarthy would say: “Take this. You wrote it, you reply to it”, so I had to draft replies to my own letters. It was quite amusing. But it was interesting for me because again I was still in my twenties.

38) There were a lot of negotiations going on on the side and secret contacts taking place in which I was involved. There were meetings with FLOSY nationalists in Athens (to which I went with Lord Shackleton travelling incognito on a specially issued passport) and in Geneva with the tribal Sheikhs. All the parties were invited to Geneva for a sort of grand get together to try and sort the problem out. We stayed in the Beau Rivage, on the lake front, one of the grand hotels then sufficiently down-at-heel for the British taxpayer to afford it, I suspect they couldn’t now since it has been done up, while the sheikhs stayed in the Intercontinental, down the road, also at the British taxpayer’s expense. Only the tribal sheikhs came, the two nationalist parties (FLOSY, NLF) would have

nothing to do with it. So we had rather useless meetings in Geneva while the situation on the ground in South Arabia, in the tribal states, not just Aden, was breaking down. NLF-led rebellions were taking place in tribal lands, so after the conference broke up the sheikhs were supposed to go back and resume control of their territories. But somehow or other they ended up in Beirut on the way back and stayed there. I was sent to Beirut to get them to bloody well go back (we were after all paying their hotel bills!), which again I enjoyed. It was quite fun, but actually hopeless in the literal sense of the word, the situation was too far gone to be saved. Some went to Saudi Arabia, perhaps cowardly but actually realistic. Some did go back to Aden, to South Arabia and got killed for it. One flew back to his capital from Aden in a British Army helicopter which was shot down as it landed and he was killed, so basically the country was breaking down. This was I think September, and the unalterable deadline for independence was 30 November. The final independence negotiation took place literally in the last few days of November in Geneva, right up to the deadline set many months earlier for independence day. Lord Shackleton led our side, the other side being these shadowy NLF nationalists who'd won the civil war with FLOSY and taken over the tribal areas. Their leader was Qahtan al Shaabi, but we really had no idea what they wanted. They had told Sam Falle that they wanted to be seen to throw the British out and there was real concern that they would attack our departing forces, in effect forcing a fighting withdrawal. The tactic was to buy them out as cheaply as we could get away with while sitting them out in the negotiations, so that they got tired and were willing to settle.

39) GS In one negotiation?

40) BC In one long negotiation. So we sat through one long negotiation, because we thought we could out-sit them, but it was difficult. The main objective was to get them to settle on the lowest price which would allow our troops to withdraw. Again people have forgotten this. Most of the British Navy, or a large part of it was offshore. There were two aircraft carriers plus escort ships sitting just over the horizon in case the last of the British troops and of the British community (not least the Governor himself and his staff) had to be evacuated militarily. It was incredible. People have forgotten that. I remember an Office meeting with David

Owen about ten years later when I was back in the Foreign Office and we were talking, as we did a lot in 1977, ten years on, about Southern Rhodesia which was then the decolonisation crisis. David Owen referred to our glorious decolonisation record, we'd always handed over the colonies to properly elected democratically controlled governments when they became independent, we could do no less for Rhodesia (which we indeed managed in the end to do). But I had the temerity to say "Well, not quite, Secretary of State, there was the small matter of Aden, South Arabia, which we handed over to an unknown gang of violent thugs whose only credential was that they beat another gang of thugs in a civil war". He didn't like that at all. But it was true. The way we dealt with Aden was, well I think it was, a great exception to the generally honourable record of our decolonisation, but we basically got out because we didn't want to stay. We handed over a total mess to the gang of thugs who had been most brutal during the civil war, and there it was.

41) The other thing I remember was that Lord Goronwy Roberts, who was Minister of State at the Foreign Office, was sent out to reassure the rulers of the Gulf States, who were worried about the implications for them of the British withdrawing from Aden. Aden had after all been our big strategic base, if we gave that up, why would we stay in the Gulf?

42) Goronwy Roberts was sent round to reassure them that our withdrawal from Aden was just a sort of tidying up with no implications for them. On the contrary we would need them all the more once we no longer had Aden, so they were not to worry. That was sometime in 1967. At the beginning of 1968-- when was the sterling crisis? It must have been after the sterling crisis—the strategic decision was taken that we would after all withdraw from East of Suez. The end of empire, the lot out. Lord Goronwy Roberts was sent round the same Gulf States, the same Sheikhs to say "What I said last time is no longer valid, we're leaving". I'm sure he tried to be reassuring and all the rest of it, but I always thought, how can a Minister do that rather than resign.

43) I think this is a forgotten, or perhaps more accurately, repressed period as far as the British public is concerned. They remember a lot of the decolonisation, but Aden is forgotten. If they remember it at all, people remember it because of Mad

Mitch leading the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders to retake Crater. Crater was the business district of Aden and as the name implied, it was in a former volcano, and the British security forces had been forced to withdraw from it by violent demonstrations. In fact my Defence Attaché when I was Ambassador in Vienna was one of the platoon commanders. He told me that Mad Mitch, who had had to send his operational plan to his brigade headquarters, knew that the politicians would chicken out at the last minute and call it off. So he told HQ that his zero hour, the start time of the operation, was going to be something like 10 or 11 o'clock at night. He then quite deliberately moved it to say 7 o'clock and by the time he got the expected order to call it off at say 9 o'clock, he was able to say it's too late, we've already reoccupied Crater (laughter).

44) GS But it didn't change policy?

45) BC No. There were no casualties. It was a good operation. But it was a dangerous time. There was a lot of murder going on. Brits were being shot by terrorists in Aden. A friend of mine was shot - there was stretch of street called Murder Mile. It was too dangerous to move around without an armed escort. Aden became independent at the end of '67 and I continued in the Department tidying up the loose ends, eg the provision of aid. We organized things like training pilots for their small airforce, twelve Provost jet trainers which we had given them as part of the aid package on independence, a fairly primitive plane which they couldn't do much damage with. It's extraordinary to think of the sums involved -- I think we gave them something like £12 million and at the time it seemed like quite a lot of money. You wouldn't pay for a parliamentary enquiry with that amount of money these days. But anyway in that final independence negotiation in Geneva we had bumped it up from something rather less in order to sort of buy them off from attacking our troops as they withdrew. We discovered subsequently that they never had any intention of doing so, but I suppose somebody assessed that they might. I remember we had to send one pilot back because his legs were too short to reach the pedals. (laughter). Obviously Aden was winding down, as it were. There was a whole Aden Department in the Foreign Office at the time. But in 1968 Aden Department was wound up and incorporated into Arabian Department and I was posted to Washington.

46) GS It must have been quite a contrast?

47) BC Which was a big contrast, yes. I had come back from Aden and was resuming my Resident Clerkship so I continued that and by longevity had become Senior Resident Clerk, In that capacity I presided over the break-up of the male monopoly, welcoming into our mixed accommodation the first female resident Clerk (Tessa Solesby). Some modification had to be made to the bathroom arrangements, but otherwise life went on as before, each Resident Clerk with his (her) own bedroom and sitting room, with a shared kitchen and dining room (and one TV between us, black and white located in the dining room). The whole time I was in Aden earlier in 1967 I had continued to keep my resident clerk's flat in the Foreign Office, but of course I had to leave it when I went to Washington.

48) GS Where you were First Secretary Information?

49) BC I was posted there as First Secretary Information, that's right. My job was to be in contact with the press, the media, and be responsible for the peddling of ... what's the word, not propaganda - we never called it propaganda - information about the UK. Positive information about the UK to the American media. Dealing with journalists is always interesting, but recycling official information and news about Britain I found a bit stultifying. Britain then was the sick man of Europe economically, our great comparator was the thriving social market economy of Germany. We had to duck the UK's dismal economic performance, the appalling industrial relations, strikes etc by playing up the quality of life in the UK, for example democracy, the rule of law (unarmed police), civilised society/culture etc, the Beatles, the Forsyte saga and Lord Clark's Civilisation. And of course transport (wonderful railways!), education and the wonders of the health service.

50) GS Did you deal with all the press corps?

51) BC Dealing with the Washington Press was our responsibility, directly under the Ambassador. The Head of the British Information Services (BIS) in New York, who in turn answered to the Ambassador, was responsible for the rest of the

American press and the overall British information effort throughout the US, including the Washington office's regional responsibilities (the Greater Washington region, Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, I think). Our Consuls General in US cities had regional responsibilities, answering to BIS. So in Washington I, and my boss the Information Counsellor, had a dual function: the Washington press and press corps, answering to the Ambassador, which was political; and the regional information effort (including commercial information) answering to New York. We had mailing lists, we would also go around and talk to the editors of the small town something or other asking whether they liked getting our material, did they find it interesting? Yes we find it interesting. Do you use it? Yes we use it. Is it valuable? Yes, it's valuable. What else would you like? Nothing, it's all just fine.. "Do you want to be/remain on the mailing list?" "Absolutely". All quite untrue: I'm quite sure that they binned it. There was evidence they binned it. I binned it when I was on the receiving end of this sort of stuff from foreign embassies or whatever.

52) Dealing with the press itself, the journalists and commentators, of course was interesting. If it was high-level stuff (and leading journalists and commentators, especially in an information-circus like Washington, tend to be prima-donna-ish, although there were agreeable exceptions) it was dealt with at a high level by the Ambassador himself, his deputy the Minister or by the Information Counsellor who was my boss. But it was fun for a while. I got into a couple of minor scrapes.

53) One was to be sued for one and a quarter million dollars by the founding Church of Scientology for allegedly libelling them. In the Supreme Court of the United States - I'm the only person I know who has had a case brought in the Supreme Court itself. I had to claim diplomatic immunity for that. It got that far and the State Department had not done their job and prevented it. I was responding to a write-in campaign against the British Government for stopping Scientologists going to a Scientological conference in East Grinstead. So there was a lot of protest in the States. In response to hundreds of curiously identical letters from members of the US public (mainly from California) I had written a letter criticising the Church of Scientology in the terms used by a British Minister

defending the Government's action in the House of Commons. His words, and so mine, were pretty disobliging and trenchant. But I had overlooked the fact that a Minister's statement in the House of Commons is privileged, the words of a mere information officer (identical though they may be) are not.

54) I also got into a spat over Northern Ireland, which was before Bloody Sunday. Bernadette Devlin had come to the States to put the Nationalist case to the American public, followed hotfoot by a Unionist MP called Stratton Mills to present the opposite case. He challenged her to a debate on American television in the course of which he was taking the unreconstructed view that there had always been equality in Northern Ireland and all this nonsense about discrimination was untrue. In response she produced a letter purportedly from the British Ambassador in which, she said, even the British Ambassador admits there is discrimination in Northern Ireland. She read out this letter on prime time TV in which there was a sentence which I will always remember. Which was "If you want an admission that discrimination has existed in Northern Ireland, then you can have it". I didn't see the television show, but there was a telegram the next morning from the Head of BIS in New York saying that Stratton Mills had come into his office, steaming with fury, how could the British Ambassador possibly have written such a letter. Francis McGinness, who was Head of BIS, sent this telegram saying he hoped it wasn't true or words to that effect. It certainly wasn't written by any of his staff or by him. I saw this telegram and I recognised the fateful words, so I went and owned up. I had written them, again in response to a write-in campaign. A stock letter had gone out and then somebody had replied to my letter with reasoned arguments. I responded in turn with a one off letter in which I used that sentence complained of, which seemed to me then and seems to me now to have been factually indisputable, especially in the past tense that I had carefully used. But Stratton Mills complained. John Freeman was the Ambassador. He sent a telegram to London saying that I had been well-intentioned but perhaps a little overenthusiastic through inexperience, or something like that. So he didn't take me to task, but nor did he really stand up for me. I think he should have been much tougher with the likes of Stratton Mills, who had a lot to answer for over what has happened in Northern Ireland (without of course meaning to imply any justification for the IRA and all its works).

- 55) But these were minor things. Then I moved on, I don't think as a result of these faux pas, but you never know. I was moved out of the Information Department into Chancery, the political section and I suppose the heart of the Embassy.
- 56) GS I'm sure you were jolly pleased to move out of the Information Department. Did the Scientologists let you be, by the way, after that?
- 57) BC No they didn't. No. When I left Washington I went to Bonn and they then pursued me in the English Courts. They brought a case for libel there and the Treasury Solicitors, the Law Officers anyway, came out to Bonn to see me. They said you can plead that you are out of the jurisdiction, since you are in Germany. Or you can accept jurisdiction and fight the case. They made it plain that they wanted me to fight. Once I'd been assured that the government would cover all costs, including if I lost and had to pay damages, I said I'd fight it. Of course they never had any doubt that I would win. And so, in effect, it turned out. They made the requisite submission on my behalf to the court in response to the charge, or whatever it was, and as I remember it the Church of Scientology had a certain amount of time to file a response, and they failed to meet that deadline. No doubt deliberately. And so the case stopped. I can only suppose that once they knew the British Government was going to defend it, they thought better of continuing to harass me. That was the end of it. But I still have in my scrapbook the State Department's submission to the Supreme Court of the US re. the case of the Founding Church of Scientology v. Brian Crowe
- 58) GS They have not been in touch since?
- 59) BC They have not pursued me since. Back in Washington I was transferred to Chancery, where I worked on, well, it varied a bit. It depended on the manpower at the time. Who was there and who wasn't. I was basically Desk Officer for European Affairs, but I also did quite a lot on the politico/ military side, which at that time included CSCE (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, now transmogrified into the OSCE, O for Organisation), the start of the process that led to the Helsinki CSCE Summit Conference in 1975. The Americans were

initially reluctant, the CSCE being a Soviet initiative designed to legitimise their hold over Eastern Europe and the division of Germany. There was also the issue of Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions, MBFR, which again the Americans were very reluctant about. But CSCE and MBFR in the event became important Western policy objectives, the CSCE once we realised that we could use it against the Russians, and MBFR as a means of holding off Congressional pressure on the Administration to reduce US troop levels in Europe unilaterally: the pressures were enormous in the light of what was seen in Congress as inadequate European burden sharing within the North Atlantic Alliance. The objective frankly was not to achieve mutual and balanced force reductions, although that on satisfactory terms would have been nice, but rather to argue---successfully---that we couldn't withdraw unilaterally without losing the pressure on the Soviets to reduce too. In CSCE what we achieved in 1975 was in effect the right to interfere in Soviet internal affairs through the standards set by the Helsinki Final Act, which played some role in the eventual end of the Soviet empire. We also achieved language legitimising the changing of borders peacefully and by agreement, extremely important for the Germans to keep open the possibility of German reunification despite the principle of the inviolability of frontiers. But these subjects have been extensively written up and I don't recall anything of significance for historians or researchers which is not better related elsewhere. The SALT (Strategic Arms Limitation Talks) were also of great importance at the time, but I did not deal with them.

60) I was responsible for the four-power/quadripartite talks, the Bonn Group, on Berlin and access to it from West Germany. One aspect of that was an annual, or maybe it was biennial, exercise involving a NATO planning cell at SHAPE in Mons, Belgium, called Live Oak. This was responsible for contingency planning against the eventuality of the Russians or East German blocking autobahn or rail access to West Berlin. They were command exercises, but nonetheless serious for that, with the military exercising their top planners and commanders in an exercise scenario lasting some three days. The political command for Live Oak and control of the Berlin access routes in a crisis was the Washington Ambassadorial Group, composed of the US Secretary of State and the three western ambassadors concerned (UK, France and Germany). However these top people didn't play, but

delegated their function to more junior representatives at my level, in the UK case me. We had a great time considering the military recommendations of the generals from Brussels, and from the admirals in person since they came up from SACLANT in Norfolk Virginia. They did not at all like their recommendations being deliberated and often overturned by us young diplomatic whippersnappers, but we enjoyed it. We didn't do it gratuitously, it was an object lesson in where you stand depending on where you sit, and we sat with diplomatic and political responsibilities which the soldiers didn't have, however savvy they unquestionably were. The other more depressing lesson was that we (ie the West) always lost however the scenario shuffled the cards, or perhaps more accurately would have lost but for some totally implausible deus ex machina event which the scenario-writers/exercise planners introduced into the scenario so that it should come to a happy end.

61) On the European front, this was the time of Ted Heath's successful negotiation for our entry into the European Union (as it subsequently became). So part of my job was just keeping in touch on that with London and with US government agencies, taking part in the information effort, eg drafting and making speeches etc. I did a certain amount of speech-making myself around the US on why Britain should join the European Union, so I remember quite well the arguments we were using. It simply is not true, as the antis would have us believe today, that the government sold it as an economic issue. The economic arguments were judged to be finely balanced, or neutral; it was the political, Britain's-voice-in-the-world arguments that tipped the balance after the loss of empire etc

62) GS This was after the Election of 1970? Mid-way through your time?

63) BC Yes. I was in Washington. I went in 1968, just before the November '68 Election when President Johnson stood down and decided not to run and Nixon won. So I was there through most of the Nixon period and left in, I think, April 1973 just as the Watergate scandal was starting to build up. The Vietnam War, and the domestic uproar, mass demonstrations with tear gas drifting up Massachusetts Avenue and the whole peace/flower-power movement dominated my time there. That was the general background. These were Henry Kissinger's

glory days as well, the famous visit to China and all that. I wasn't directly involved in any of that, but it formed part of the backdrop to normal daily life and work. Demonstrations took over Washington. It was a very interesting time to be there, in the States. Of course it's always an interesting time to be in the States. And we travelled a lot, notably the usual drive out west, and also in the Caribbean and Mexico

64) GS And Washington's always a lively city.

65) BC Washington wasn't actually always a lively city. In fact, its old reputation as a sleepy southern city lingered on even in the late 1960s, although this was also the time when Culture with a capital C was being brought to Washington with the Kennedy Centre, and I suppose the start of the beltway expansion which brought a lot of light industry and services to Washington, making it no longer just a government town. But politically, of course, Washington was always an exciting city, certainly for foreign diplomats, partly because of the US' importance in the world, partly because "working" the US government machine (including Congress) was a fascinating challenge. Dealing with the State Department was just the beginning of what needed to be done to influence the Americans or even know what they were up to. And of course there was the fascination of US domestic politics. In the final months I was there we had Watergate. I left in April just before the crucial event that turned the tables over Watergate. This was when Mr. Butterworth, I think it was, on the White House staff told the Congressional enquiry, rather incidentally when he was being questioned, well, he couldn't quite remember, but it would be on the tapes. What tapes? The tapes in President Nixon's office, which Nixon had had wired for history. That was the first anybody knew about the tapes. Then followed the whole process of getting the tapes, forcing Nixon to release them. That happened after I had left. I asked an American friend who was quite a well-known and wise political commentator why Watergate really wasn't taking off with American public opinion (this was in the early days when it was little more than a campaign run by The Washington Post particularly and The New York Times). He replied, and I paraphrase, that "We expect our politicians to be corrupt so when they are it doesn't surprise us and, you know, life just goes on". That turned out to be totally wrong.

66) GS So you then went straight to Bonn?

67) BC I went straight to Bonn and then, years later I was posted back to Washington for another Republican Presidency, Ronald Reagan. So I missed the Democratic years. Yes, I went straight to Bonn where I was in Chancery from 1973-76. I was sort of double-hatted. I did the European Community which we were just joining, and on that I worked to a Counsellor in the Economics Section. On the rest of Europe, including bilateral relations between the UK and Germany, I worked to the Head of Chancery. It was a sort of experiment, to combine the EC/economic and political aspects of Europe in a single desk-officer working in two different sections of the Embassy, in effect double-hatted. It worked fine and continued after me for some years, though it was eventually changed, I don't know why. European Community membership, on the political side, involved an interest in areas outside Europe, like the Middle East. The European Community was taking its first steps in the process, then called European Co-operation, which led to the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). I of course had no idea then that I would end my professional life as the senior official in the EU in Brussels responsible for the CFSP. The first informal meeting of EU (then of course still EC) foreign ministers took place in 1974, at Schloss Gymnich half way between Bonn and Cologne. They have continued ever since, once every six months in each Presidency in a pleasant place outside the capital of the Presidency. In my time in Brussels subsequently I must have been to about sixteen of them.

68) My Ambassador was at that time Nicko Henderson, Sir Nicholas Henderson, not related to his name-sake predecessor before the Second World War. He had been Ambassador in Warsaw and went on to be Ambassador in Paris and then Washington, where he had a very good Falklands War. The Minister was Reg Hibbert who also became Ambassador in Paris. A controversial character.

69) GS Had Sir Nicholas Henderson already been Ambassador in Paris at that stage?

70) BC No. Paris came after Bonn. He had been Ambassador in Warsaw. He and Reg Hibbert were chalk and cheese, very different personalities.

71) GS So it was a strong cast, strong characters?

72) BC Yes, there was Reg Hibbert as I said. A difficult man, very clever with a very analytical mind. He was always able to put things into a single picture so that all the pieces fitted together in a beautiful construct. I always thought it was very clever, but not necessarily what the real world was like. In real life everything does not fit neatly into a pattern with no loose ends. But Reg was an extremely able man. This was the time of the Ostpolitik and Willi Brandt, with Willi Brandt handing over to Helmut Schmidt as a result of the Guillaume affair, on which Michael Frayn has written a play, "Democracy", which is doing very well at the National Theatre.

73) GS Sold out

74) BC I've seen it. Is it sold out?

75) GS I rang weeks ago. It was already sold out.

76) BC. Bad luck. It's an interesting play. But in my view less interesting than his "Copenhagen". But in part it's all about my time in Bonn. It's about the relationship between Willi Brandt as Chancellor and Guillaume, an SPD party official who became his confidant but was actually a STASI agent. This was the time of the Ostpolitik, Willi Brandt's great contribution ending West Germany's determination up to that point to isolate the GDR, including refusing to recognise it, and to pursue instead what his close political associate, Egon Bahr, called "change through rapprochement". We don't even have a word for it in English, in German "Wandel durch Annaehrung". Over the years rapprochement-induced change would change the nature of the GDR, a German equivalent perhaps of Hungarian goulash-communism. Willi Brandt is also famous for his kneeling before the Warsaw war memorial, in an act of German reconciliation with Poland. It seems that Willi Brandt never liked Guillaume, which comes out clearly in the play - didn't really trust him, at least not to begin with, indeed had asked for his removal, but somehow or another Guillaume stayed on and became part of the

furniture. He went with Brandt everywhere and so saw confidential papers which he was passing back all the time to East Berlin. Guillaume himself, according to Michael Frayn, always regarded the loyalty that he had to Willi Brandt personally, whom he admired, and his loyalty to the Communists, his bosses in the GDR, as perfectly compatible, because what Willi Brandt was trying to do was what the GDR wanted him to do. Other interesting things about Brandt emerge, like his indecisiveness in every other field, in general social and economic policy, so that by the time he had to go it was well past time. The Ostpolitik was an important part of life in the Bonn Embassy at the time, with the Embassy representing the UK in the Four Power negotiations with the French, Russians and Americans - in the Quadripartite Group. I was not involved in that side, but the Ostpolitik was really the main work of the Embassy, along with EU relations, because we had just joined the EU in 1973 and I arrived just afterwards. So there was quite a lot of work involved in that.

77) I suppose one of the main events I remember was after Ted Heath lost the Election in '74, and Harold Wilson became Prime Minister. Jim Callaghan, was sent out to Germany as his first foreign visit on becoming Foreign Secretary, to explain to the Germans what the British Government meant about the need to renegotiate the terms of our membership of the European Community, failing which the UK would withdraw even though we had just finally joined. That was the policy of the Labour Party. So Jim Callaghan came to Bonn to explain this. The Germans didn't know what to expect. I don't know what they were getting from their Embassy in London about it. And of course we at the Embassy didn't know what to expect either. Much of this was above my pay grade at the time, but I remember that Callaghan went to the evening meeting and dinner with Helmut Schmidt, who was Chancellor by then. Apparently after dinner the Germans, deeply shocked by what they had heard, continued into the night till two or three in the morning discussing the implications and what exactly it all meant. I wasn't there and I don't know exactly what Callaghan said, but I remember Callaghan's comment to us afterwards: "I learnt as a trades union negotiator to go into a negotiation and as you get to the hard part you don't make concessions, you raise the stakes". He said that with great satisfaction, so he clearly had done his best to

scare the hell out of the Germans. He succeeded because they were in deep shock for a long time afterwards.

78) GS You must have been in shock too in the Embassy?

79) BC Yes, I think we were. Nico Henderson took it very personally and was very distressed. He worked hard with others in the succeeding months, up to the referendum in 1975, to try and ensure that the terms we pressed for from the other members of the European Union were both achievable and presentable in a way which would enable the Labour Government to go to a referendum with a recommendation that we should stay in. This is in fact what happened. The referendum result was overwhelmingly in favour of staying in. Henderson worked closely with people like Michael Palliser, who was our Permanent Representative in Brussels, and Michael Butler, who at the time was Under-Secretary in the Foreign Office. For a long time I thought this was a somewhat subversive effort by these senior officials and ambassadors in effect to undermine what Harold Wilson wanted, but I've been reading around since then and I think it's quite clear that this was always Wilson's intention. His main objective was to hold the Labour Party together and not allow Europe to split it. He was always pretty determined, as was Callaghan, that they would get the best terms they could, settle for what they could get and recommend that to the country. I believe that now to be the case. For a long time I thought it wasn't the case, but rather that it was people like Nico Henderson, Michael Palliser, Michael Butler, Roy Jenkins, a leading figure and pro-European in the government and who obviously was very important, as well as other senior members of the Labour Party working to the same end. But even if it was sort of pre-ordained, it need not necessarily have been so, the law of unintended consequence could have wrecked the best laid plans etc. It was a shock at the time.

80) GS Did they succeed in getting reductions in the terms?

81) BC Yes, they did. I can't honestly remember what they were; they were not great. Something back on the budget basically, but not enough for Margaret Thatcher who then continued the campaign. She was much tougher actually. She didn't

threaten to withdraw in the same way, but she just held out and made it clear that she'd veto other things. Disrupt Community business until she got her way. But that was in the future. Meanwhile we got on with our lives. I had married at the beginning of my Washington posting. We had our second child in Bonn (the first in Washington). I renewed contact with the German side of my family (Eyre Crowe had a German mother and wife), contacts having been interrupted by the Nazi era (sadly some of the family were Nazis, or anyway in the Waffen SS) and the Second World War. That has given us a lot of interest and pleasure since, and we are now in regular touch with some of the German relatives.

82) GS Is this why you spoke German?

83) BC No, I learnt it at school. My family were very anglicised.....

84) GS You returned then to London?

85) BC I returned to London in 1976. I was plucked unexpectedly out of Bonn to be promoted to head the Policy Planning Staff in the Office as a Counsellor at the early age (in those days) of 38. I did find it very difficult. I had been out of the Foreign Office for the previous six years, and when last there had been just a junior Desk Officer and suddenly I had to come to a key job at head of department level in an Office which was largely strange to me. Anyway that's what happened, and the reason it happened, I was told recently, was that Michael Palliser had been talking to Nico Henderson, I suppose in the course of the renegotiation of our accession terms. Palliser, about to become Permanent Under Secretary, said he needed somebody younger with more ideas to succeed the incumbent head of the Planning Staff and Nico said I've got just the chap for you. Brian Crowe. And I was sent - it was a very odd expedition, I remember it well without having a clue then, or until much later, what it was really all about - I was sent by Nico Henderson to Brussels to talk to Michael Palliser (before he became PUS, and still PermRep) on the pretext of planning a common approach between the Bonn Embassy and the Permanent Representation in Brussels on the whole question of the renegotiation. It struck me at the time as odd and now I have the explanation. I remember dutifully listening to Michael Palliser, who I continue to

see from time to time, dispensing seeds of wisdom which I promised duly to pursue with Nico Henderson on my return to Bonn. Palliser always had a wonderful ability to synthesize and to assemble with great fluency all the elements of a problem and present them in a policy-oriented way to enable decisions to be arrived at. Which he duly did and I was full of admiration. But I now realise it was all a charade. It was just for him to meet me before appointing me to head his Policy Planning Staff when he became PUS.

86) Anyway I went to be Head of the Policy Planning Staff, mostly under David Owen, although I started with Tony Crosland as Foreign Secretary. That was okay. I took a while to get the hang of being back in the Foreign Office and finding out what I was supposed to do. It was always a difficult job for various reasons, but anyway I was getting the hang of it and aspects of it were great fun. The only time I have been to China was with Tony Crosland in, I suppose, 1976, when we went to Peking (as it was still called), Nanking and Shanghai, everybody tells me now totally changed. I remember standing on the Great Wall of China chatting with Ewen Fergusson, Crosland's Private Secretary, with Ewen doubting the way ahead in the Foreign Service: he would not accept an honour since he didn't believe in them, and he certainly wouldn't want to end up as Ambassador in Paris as a glorified hotel keeper. He ended up having to accept an honour in order to go to Paris since the French would not have understood not having a knighted British Ambassador!

87) One of my early policy papers was one on détente. I must dig it out in the Public Records Office and see how well it has stood the test of time. In parallel with that I was working on a major policy speech for Tony Crosland on détente, with Christopher Meyer, subsequently our Ambassador in Washington and now Chairman of the Press Complaints Commission among other things. He had just been given to me in planning staff to be the Secretary of State's speech writer (his only job in the FCO, he told me recently, which he hated). He and I worked together on this speech for Tony Crosland on détente. It was while Crosland was working on it at his house in the Cotswolds that he had his stroke and died. So anyway, David Owen, - I think he was Minister of State at the Foreign Office, having been Minister of State in the MoD, - was appointed Foreign Secretary. He

was 38, exactly my age and you know his reputation as Foreign Secretary. He was a very difficult man to work for, or for that matter with, very abrasive, and the Office didn't like him at all. His officials disliked him intensely, and he was a bully and intolerant. I can't say I took to him any more than anyone else, but I was actually one of the people who thought highly of him, I respected him. I thought in many ways he was a good Foreign Secretary because you need a Foreign Secretary who does have ideas i.e. he was his own man. He was someone with personality and drive and ideas. He had all that. He was in control. So I respected that. But he wasn't an easy man to work for.

88) But there were lots of interesting occasions and meetings, not least Southern Rhodesia when I made that remark about Aden which I recounted earlier. In the defence area, I got Paul Lever, who more than a quarter century later has just retired as Ambassador in Berlin, to come to the Planning Staff from Defence Department, where David Owen had been working with him, more or less in a personal capacity, behind the back of the Head of the Department. A very difficult situation.

89) GS Did they know each other?

90) BC Only in the sense that Owen had liked Lever's ideas and had started going to him direct. That was the way David Owen worked. There was this young Desk Officer in Defence Department who was very good on whatever it was at the time, MBFR or NATO issues, and David Owen could see that the work coming out of this Department was being done by this chap. These days Heads of Department sign the notes that go up to Ministers, but in those days it was still Desk Officers who wrote them and then the Head of Department sort of annotated, commented on them. Anyway, for one reason or another, David Owen took to working directly with Paul Lever. John Wilberforce was the Head of Department so the answer was to move Paul to the Planning Staff where the relationship continued. Paul behaved absolutely correctly and kept me involved at the time, so I had no problem with it, I wasn't being bypassed the way Wilberforce had been.

91) And then there was the usual stuff about policy planning papers and also commenting on and trying to influence the work of other parts of the Foreign Office. Planning Staff had the function of challenging or questioning the policy advice other people were producing, which was interesting. I remember one policy paper I produced with my staff because it was so wrong, one on South Africa. We got South Africa completely wrong, deciding in our wisdom that majority rule could never be achieved and looking at territorial partition options instead. It illustrates one of the problems of Policy Planning Staffs, that of trying to write policy on issues about which none of us had any experience or real knowledge. They wanted us to write a paper on South Africa. None of us in the Department knew anything about South Africa. We had to look it all up from scratch. You develop ideas and in the end we got it all wrong. David Owen's instincts, to the contrary, were right. He supported majority rule, indeed could hardly do otherwise in view of what was going on in Rhodesia, and the Americans strongly supported majority rule, one man one vote. I suppose it could be said we were exploring alternatives, but really there was no alternative, even though I admit to believing at the time that majority rule, while achievable in Rhodesia, could never be achieved in South Africa. To his credit Owen allowed us to present the paper to Chatham House, if rather unhappily.

92) My time in Planning staff, 3 years, coincided also with the appointment of Peter Jay to be Ambassador in Washington. It must have been about 1977 when David Owen first went as Foreign Secretary to Washington and decided, I think on that trip, to replace the Ambassador, Peter Ramsbotham, to whom for some reason he took a dislike. I'm not sure that it was a personal dislike or whether it was just a feeling, a view that this young dynamic Administration of Jimmy Carter's didn't need a 57 or something, fuddy-duddy old style Ambassador. They needed someone younger, dynamic, who would speak to the Americans in their own language as it were, and Peter Jay, who was a friend of Owen's, was in his view just the man. So that's what happened. Ramsbotham was summarily removed to the great distress of most of us in the Service. We thought it was a great injustice indeed because he was well respected and actually, by all accounts, successful and well thought of in Washington. He went on to be Governor of Bermuda. And Peter Jay went to Washington and Callaghan, his father-in-law, was accused at the

time of nepotism. It wasn't him at all. He did question the wisdom of it, but David Owen insisted.

93) GS And the appointment didn't last long, did it?

94) BC I fear I don't remember how long he was there. But he was not a success. He was not liked in Washington. I did go over there for planning talks with the Americans and had a long chat with him then. He was very intelligent, very busy, but it was a mistake.

95) GS An experiment that hasn't actually been repeated?

96) BC It was hardly experimental. John Freeman had been a Labour political appointee as Ambassador in Washington in 1969, a successful one in that he made it his job to have a personal relationship with Henry Kissinger as National Security Adviser, a friendship which was extremely useful to the UK. But the idea that Jay could develop such a relationship with Cy Vance on the grounds of being more attuned was absurd: Vance was closer to Ramsbotham's age than Jay's. More recently it depends on whether you count Nico Henderson and Oliver Wright as political appointees. In a sense they were, since they were appointed to Washington when they had already retired from the Foreign Service on reaching the then compulsory retiring age of 60.

97) GS But they had been diplomats.

98) BC They had been career diplomats, retired and brought back in. They were not outsiders. There have, as far as I can think, been no non-career appointments to Washington, or anywhere else as far as I can think, other than Alastair Goodlad as High Commissioner in Canberra by way of compensation for Chris Patten being sent to Brussels as Commissioner instead of him. Although come to think of it, Goodlad's predecessor in Canberra, Alex Allen, although a civil servant, was from the Treasury (by way of being the Prime Minister's Principal Private Secretary) rather than the FCO. And actually it has recently been announced that Helen Liddell, former Secretary of State for Scotland, is to succeed Goodlad. So for

some reason Canberra is becoming a sad exception to the rule that there are no political appointees in British diplomatic appointments.

99) The first Falklands crisis took place while I was in the planning staff and I was a bit involved with that. The Argentinian navy had fired on (and missed) a British survey ship in 1976. One result was a reversal of the decision to withdraw HMS Endurance, whose eventual withdrawal 15 years later is widely believed to have convinced the Argentinians that the UK would not defend the Falklands. Fearing a possible Argentinian attack on the Falklands, David Owen took a decision in 1977 to send a nuclear attack submarine down to the South Atlantic just in case. The Argentinians did not attack. I don't know whether they knew about the submarine. In my recollection we went to great lengths to keep its deployment secret, but I think they must have known (a couple of frigates went as well), the idea was deterrence, which would hardly have worked if they had not known about it. How different it might have been 15 years later when the Argentinians did invade the Falklands if we had had a nuclear attack submarine down there in time.

100) GS Then you went to Brussels, back to Europe?

101) BC Back to Brussels in late '79. After three years in the Planning Staff they transferred me to Brussels, where I succeeded Rodric Braithwaite as Head of Chancery in UKRep. I succeeded Rodric Braithwaite again in 1985 in Washington as Minister for Trade Policy. When I went to Brussels, he came from Brussels to succeed me as Head of Planning Staff. A job switch. He brought to fruition something that I started in Planning Staff, which was to bring in an outside academic to Planning Staff and the person he got was Helen Wallace which was an extremely good appointment. She benefited from it and I'm sure the Planning Staff benefited from it. She has since become one of Britain's most distinguished experts in European Union Studies and is at the moment head of the European University Institute in Florence. Towards the end of my time in the Planning Staff I made her appointment possible in a difficult negotiation with the Trade Unions. They said if we wanted an academic in Planning Staff we didn't need to go outside. In Research Department there were lots of academics. I said

that's not quite the same, the whole idea is cross fertilization, bring people in from outside. But that is exactly the job of all these academics in Research Department, they said, they could do all that for us, we could have as many as we liked from Research Department. But they conceded in the end, Helen Wallace was the first beneficiary and I think it has become established practice. Anyway I was on my way to Brussels...

102) GA You were in Brussels, Head of Chancery?

103) BC Head of Chancery. It was reasonably traditional, well, except that Brussels is a very different mission to anywhere else. There are more civil servants from home departments in UKRep than from the FCO, or maybe half and half. These days there are even people from the Ministry of Defence as well as from the Treasury, Agriculture, Social affairs etc. My job was to ensure that it all worked, that there was coherence among the different sections in UKRep, that we were all in effect marching to the same drumbeat despite having very different subjects and working to different departments in Whitehall.

104) GS Was it there that the "money back debate" really got under way?

105) BC Yes the "my money back" debate was at its height during this period, played out at high level European Councils, but with preparation, drafting etc at Coreper (Committee of Permanent Representatives, ie Ambassadors) and other levels. I did occasionally deputize in Coreper when Michael Butler, UK PermRep for most of my time, wasn't there. I remember the Belgian PermRep next to whom I sat leaning over to me once when I had made an intervention on instructions and saying "You should be ashamed of yourself" (laughter).

106) Our instructions changed on many subjects with the advent of the Thatcher government. One very small example which comes to mind, nothing to do with foreign policy, but indicative of a number of things about Brussels. It was the setting up of something which became the well-known Brussels think-tank, the Centre for European Political Studies in Brussels. It has had its ups and downs but it is successful and respected. In 1979, someone had come forward with a

proposal, I think it was the Belgians with support from others, for a European equivalent of the Brookings Institution in Washington; the EU should have something comparable. Peter Ludlow, a Brit who happened to be at Magdalen Oxford with me, was the leading light and motivator of the project. HMG supported the idea and was going to contribute financially. Then Jim Callaghan was defeated in the general election and our instructions changed dramatically overnight. Not a penny, there was no value in such an institute, certainly not at public expense, a total waste of money. So in the working group I had to stick the knife in despite having been highly supportive the week before, which I did with some lack of enthusiasm. But, rather against the spirit of my instructions in the privacy of the meeting, I made it clear that if we were in a minority of one, then London might be prepared to think again. So I did manage to convey that. The interesting thing was that no one took advantage of it. They all sheltered behind the UK. So in a small way a little lesson about the bandwagon effect. People don't like to say no if they haven't got a strong view or are interested to get on the bandwagon, but it doesn't actually mean that they genuinely support something, and are often relieved if somebody else will take on the onus of saying "no". So that was the end of the idea of support from the EU, but CEPS survived. They rethought their business plan, or whatever the jargon word was in those days. They still got money from the Ford Foundation, a lot of money from the Belgian Government and money from industry, which remains still their primary source of finance, I believe. It was probably a good thing actually that they succeeded in establishing themselves without EU funding. Paradoxically the European Union does now have its own think tank. It inherited one from the WEU, based in Paris. The WEU had an institute of defence studies. When the EU took over the functions of the WEU about three years ago it inherited this institute and turned it in effect into an institute for foreign and security policy studies.

107) GS You returned to London to another European posting in 1982 where you were Head of the EC Department External.

108) BC Yes, European Community Department, External. There were two EC departments, Internal and External, the names being self-explanatory. I remember one of my tasks was lining up the Europeans behind Britain retaking the

Falklands, which was quite difficult. There were two elements. One was political support including getting the French notably not to supply Argentina with further Exocet missiles, the air-to-sea cruise missiles which did such damage to our ships off the Falklands. That was a bilateral defence matter and not the responsibility of my Department. The French co-operated. It would have been a serious matter if they had not: the Argentines were unable to do more damage simply because they had run out of air-launched Exocets. On the economic side, which was the responsibility of my Department, we wanted in addition to political support from our EC partners in resisting this armed aggression, their agreement to imposing EC-wide trade sanctions on Argentina. In a sense this too was actually more of a political demonstration than an economic one, because the war was not going to last very long, and by the time the sanctions had taken effect it would be all over. But as a political demonstration it was important. It was quite difficult to achieve. A number of European countries were reluctant. They had mixed views on the historic rights of Falklands versus Las Malvinas and they didn't approve of our retaking them by force. They thought there should be a negotiated settlement, and there were all these peace initiatives, supported also by the Americans actually. But in the end we did get them to impose economic/trade sanctions for a limited time.

109) GS Spain wasn't a member of the Community? They agreed.

110) BC Spain wasn't a member, no. Italy was the most difficult. There is a large Italian community in Argentina and the Italians were decidedly flaky. They signed up in the end, but only for a limited period, I forget for how long, something like six weeks or something, and then the sanctions would have to be renewed and it was going to be a hell of a battle, with no assurance of success, to renew them. Fortunately the war ended in time, just in time, so the renewal was not put to the test, but I think the European Community's solidarity with the UK would not have survived had it gone on longer. I mean, it sounds small and unimportant and in a way it was. What was done was done in the end militarily, with vital logistical and intelligence help from the Americans not the Europeans. But we felt that we had the right to expect European support, and it wasn't all that

readily forthcoming from some countries. It was quite hard work to get it. I remember that.

111) Gibraltar, then as before and since, was an issue with Spain. Gibraltar fell to the Southern European Department, but since it was a member of the European Community via our membership, there was a strong EC element which fell to my Department. The greatest living expert on the subject was Glynne Evans, my desk officer and subsequently Assistant Head of Department, who...

112) GS Glynne Evans who is now Ambassador in Portugal?

113) BC Yes, Francis Richards was Assistant before her and also became very expert and is now actually Governor of Gibraltar, having in between been inter alia Director of GCHQ.

114) GS What about the Middle East? Were there any sort of European developments?

115) BC Yes, the Middle East. So much has happened in the Middle East, even if it sometimes seems like little more than running to stand still, time runs together and I can't now remember what the particular issues were then. Within my Department was the European Political Co-operation Section, headed for most of my time by Tony Brenton. They tended to work directly to the Political Director rather than to me, so I didn't take that much interest. I concentrated on the trade and economic side, if you like the subjects within Community competence. This included things like the Lomé Convention, relations with the ACP countries, and trade policy issues and negotiations generally, including EC trade relations with the US (which are always difficult and sometimes fraught) and the GATT. There were some big issues around at the time, like the steel pipeline dispute (supply of gas pipeline to the Soviet Union), the extraterritorial reach of US law, the Laker dispute etc. These were all issues on which other Whitehall Departments than the FCO had the lead. We just had to watch the foreign policy interest. I don't think I have anything to contribute to the sum of historical knowledge on any of this.

- 116) GS ACP?
- 117) BC African Caribbean Pacific countries.....former French colonies first signed up under the Yaoundé Convention. When we joined the European Community we insisted on our colonies having the same status as the French former colonies. The Yaoundé Convention became the Lomé Convention, with the African Caribbean and Pacific former colonies included, but not India, and Pakistan, Malaysia (or Aden/South Arabia!). These aid and trade arrangements have been modified and renegotiated from time to time (and extended to include South Africa and Mozambique), and continue to this day as the Cotonou Convention.
- 118) GS Cotonou?
- 119) BC These were the capital cities in which the successor versions of the convention were signed. They gave important advantages in terms of aid and market access for the countries concerned, some of which mattered enough to impact on EU-US trade relations. The ACP countries include a number who are very dependent on one commercial crop in which they are not even particularly efficient, notably sugar and bananas. Sugar and banana protocols gave them access to the European market with preferential prices and quotas. We are protecting them
- 120) GS Against companies like Chiquita?
- 121) BC Against countries in Central and Latin America, with large American corporations heavily invested there (like Chiquita), growing bananas much more competitively than the ACP Caribbean islands. ACP sugar (eg from Fiji) is also expensive, but given an assured market in Europe. However the Americans are in no position to complain because their domestic sugar production is also heavily protected. Mind you, European sugar farmers are even more heavily protected (as are the banana growers in the French overseas departments)

122) BS I went to Fiji, I remember, for one of those ACP negotiating conferences and I also went to Libreville, Gabon, where I was mistaken for Giscard d'Estaing. I was with Charles (now Lord) Powell (who at the time was in charge of the ACP dossier in the UK Representation in Brussels). We went into a restaurant and everyone stood up. We duly took our seats at the table we were shown to and asked the maitre d' why everyone had stood up. He said because they thought you were Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. I'm not sure it was a compliment, but there we are.

123) GS So that was London 1982 to 4 - back to Washington?

124) BC Back to Washington, succeeding Rodric Braithwaite (whom you will remember I had already succeeded in Brussels). My second posting to Washington where I was - I always find it hard to describe the job because there isn't actually a word that suits it. The word that's easiest is economic. But there was a separate Economic Minister, always from the Treasury, who for most of my time was Tim Lankester. He was our representative at the IMF and the World Bank as well as the Embassy's Economic Minister, responsible for contact with the US Treasury and reporting on the US economy. I was responsible for a whole lot of other economic issues, trade policy issues, the environment, aviation, shipping, agriculture, science etc. Aviation was a big issue at the time, anti-trust. I don't quite know how to categorise those. My actual title was Commercial Minister, but that gives a wrong impression because (other than for the Washington region), I had no responsibility for actual trade---export promotion, inward investment or the other issues which most people think of as commercial--other than a purely local responsibility for the Greater Washington region. I suppose my achievement in this last area was the foundation of what is now a thriving British American Business Association in Washington. I set it up with the help of my deputy Tom Harris and half a dozen British or Anglophile American businessmen and lawyers. It had difficult early days getting going, but is now going great guns.

125) But coming back to the overall job, I didn't know then and I don't know now what a succinct job description would be. The job has since disappeared

(Christopher Meyer, my successor, was the last holder of it before it was merged with the Minister/Deputy Head of Mission job). Maybe trade policy is the best generic term. Much of the job involved EU, or in those days EC, trade relations with the United States. Although those are in community competence and so dealt with by the EC Delegation to the US on behalf of the European Community, the UK is one of the major actors and played a very active role in Washington on these issues, of course normally in support of and complementary to the EC delegation. We were, and are, one of the countries with better contacts in Washington than anybody else. So we were always active over trade issues and negotiations mostly in support of the general cause in bringing home to the Americans the seriousness of whatever it was they were trying to do, but partly in our own interest, notably in persuading the Americans that if they were going to target European exports for some reason, they should avoid targeting ours. The American way of trade retaliation is to draw up a list of products from whoever they are trying to punish. Our job was to try and get Shetland sweaters, or Scotch whisky or something off their list. It was interesting job, with consequences that mattered to our industry and economy.

126) We had a constant flow of UK trade ministers coming through Washington, which was always one of the first ports of call of newly appointed UK trade ministers. At that time Margaret Thatcher got through quite a few of them. So every few months we would have a new visitation, and it was my job to organise a programme, make sure they saw the right people and were properly wined and dined etc. And of course it was always interesting accompanying them on their calls, participating in their dinners with Senators etc. It always struck me how ineffective they were. Some had digested their briefs better than others, but all (except one) were on the very edge of their knowledge and understanding of their subject. Perhaps it was unfair to expect anything else, they were after all new in their jobs. At the same time they were representing the UK interest. Their hard-bitten and experienced American interlocutors treated them, I must say, in a completely gentlemanly manner and did not take advantage of or expose their ignorance. The exception was Leon (now Lord) Brittan, who with his sharp barrister's mind came completely on top of his subject matter. At the time, as so often, it was US steel quotas/protection. He really gave no quarter, which came to

the Americans as a shock, they didn't expect it from new British Secretaries of State for Trade. I am not sure they ever forgave him, he wasn't ever much liked in Washington, with which of course he later had much to do as EC Commissioner for trade.

127) GS What happened with the aviation issues?

128) BC Aviation. There were a number of issues. It started off with the Laker case where the Americans took anti-trust action against British Airways under US law basically for conspiring to drive Laker out of business. British Airways, our flagship but not our only carrier, was still a state-owned airline on the way to privatisation, but it could not be successfully privatised - a key ambition of Margaret Thatcher's - with open-ended law suits hanging over it in the US courts, both criminal (brought by the USG) and civil (brought by Laker). Quite aside from the merits of the case (which in my mind are far from clear, BA has shown that it can behave absolutely outrageously, and the aviation world takes no prisoners), our strong argument was the it had nothing to do with the US, which should refuse jurisdiction over a case between two British airlines for alleged conspiracy taking place in the UK. The applicable law was UK law. This question of extraterritorial jurisdiction was a major issue between the US and Europe in the mid-1980s. The ghosts of it live on in the increasing tendency of people from all over the world to bring cases before US courts even where any US involvement is marginal because of the awards obtainable there. In the end Margaret Thatcher uniquely and amazingly got President Reagan to call off the anti-trust action - the criminal one. That really was an act of almost personal friendship and respect. And the civil one. I forget actually what happened in the civil one. It too was dropped and British Airways came through unscathed, with a lot of support from the British Government. And Laker remained out of business, though others have stepped in, Virgin and now the low-cost airlines, which is in effect what Laker was trying to be.

129) Similar issues over the extraterritorial application of US law arose with the gas pipeline case to which I have already alluded. As a result of the declaration of emergency in Poland in 1981, I think, the Americans wanted to stop the supply of

steel pipe to the Soviet oil and gas industry not only from the US (which was their undisputed right), but also from European firms like John Brown and Mannesman, in those days a steel giant although now a telephone company owned by Vodafone, as well as Europe-based subsidiaries of US giants like Bechtel and Brown and Root. We regarded these subsidiaries as European/British because they were separately incorporated in a European country/the UK. They were supplying steel pipe for the Soviet oil industry (actually to build pipelines to western Europe, another thing that made the Americans unhappy: for strategic reasons they did not want their allies to become dependent on Soviet energy supplies, an argument which may or may not have been sound but was for the Europeans rather than the Americans to determine).

130) Since the companies concerned were incorporated in European countries, in our view they were subject to our, not US law. This was not the US view: the Americans arrogated to themselves the right for their own policy reasons to determine the commercial behaviour of European firms, acting in accordance with the law and indeed policy of their countries of incorporation. The trouble was that all these companies had assets and a large market interest in the US, so were subject to US pressure. So in order to prevent them from obeying US law rather than our own, we passed laws forbidding them to comply with American law. Actually the companies welcomed this stand although it appeared to put them in an impossible position. They wanted to be told in effect “You are a British company and it is British policy to export to the Soviet Union”. So there were a lot of those quite inflammatory issues at the time and we had to get the Americans to back off and not to apply, or rather to find ways to waive, US law to British companies, and not in practice to penalise those companies which continued to trade in breach of American policy.

131) So this was an area in which I was quite active, although I have forgotten the details now. It involved dealing not only with different parts of the Administration, State, Commerce, Defense, NSC, but also the Congress. Influencing Congress was an important part of the job, well understood in Washington, including the administration (with which indeed one was often working in alliance), but not so clearly understood in the UK and our own

Parliament (even though the US Embassy in London is good at it), because some of our parliamentarians see it as interfering in the domestic affairs of the host country. This was brought home to me once, in the summer of 1988, when I was chargé d'affaires. In that capacity I wrote a letter to the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations committee arguing against an amendment to legislation imposing sanctions on South Africa which would have had the effect of denying US exploration leases to British companies with investments in South Africa. I added for good measure that similar action might be taken against American companies in the North Sea. The letter leaked to the press and was raised in the House of Lords, where one noble Lord (Hansard for 12 October 1988, col 873) actually said “does (the Minister) not agree that this is an intolerable form of blackmail against the elected representatives of the United States who were doing what they saw as their duty in bringing forward legislation to tighten sanctions against South /Africa?” I am glad to say that Ministers were robust in their defence of what I had done and written, even having to explain to their lordships that it was “indeed established practice for letters of this kind to be sent. In fact it is one of the ways things are done on the Hill...” It was not the only such letter I wrote as chargé d'affaires, and of course the Ambassador was constantly called on by his senior staff to intervene with one or other Congressman or Senator on different issues. My letters were in fact credited by journalists, rightly or wrongly, with influencing the course of events, since in both cases (the other related to extraterritorial reach in the banking system over money-laundering, which also got into the press) the objectionable amendments were dropped. But actually the best way to influence Congressional opinion, and US opinion more widely actually, is not directly at all: Congressmen (not least with their two year election cycle and massive electoral financing needs) and Administration are much more responsive to domestic than external pressures. Much the most effective external influence is through a domestic constituency. In the South African sanctions case, for example, I worked closely with British oil companies which are important also domestically in the US

- 132) One of the lessons for me in all this, as in other dealings with the Americans, is that you have to stand up for yourself and stand up to them. And it helps to

have the clout to do it, something you can do either for or against them. A lesson with applicability today in transatlantic relations.

133) Agriculture was always another of the trade issues. There were preparations for the Uruguay round which we were involved with. Again the European Commission represented the European Community, but the British were always active. Sorry. Yes, you asked about aviation, where extraterritoriality was a major issue certainly in my early days in Washington over the Laker case. Another aviation issue was Air Service Agreements which were always the subject of very tough negotiations, which linger on to this day, essentially about the terms for freeing Heathrow from the monopoly (or near monopoly) control of British Airways. In return British airlines, not just BA, must get better access to the US market, which our great free-trading competition-demanding American friends have always rejected on indefensible protectionist grounds. While insisting on what they call open skies in Europe, with the right to fly passengers between European cities, they have consistently refused open skies with the corresponding right, the right of cabotage, within the US. Only now, with the European Commission negotiating (over the dead body of HMG and BA) for the EU as a whole, can we bring to bear the bargaining weight of access to the European market as a whole for US airlines against access to the US market as a whole for European airlines. But, back to anti-trust, these were the golden years of the Reagan/Thatcher friendship which enabled Margaret Thatcher to get rid of these anti-trust actions in the United States against British Airways.

134) GS Was this when Nicholas Henderson was the Ambassador?

135) BC No, he'd left. My Ambassador was Anthony Acland. I started with Oliver Wright for a short time. In fact I went to Washington because Oliver Wright had asked for me, because he had been my Ambassador for a short time ten years earlier in Bonn. He succeeded Nico Henderson in Washington as he had earlier in Bonn, and he asked for me, that's how I came, unusually, to have a second posting in Washington. But I might equally have gone back to Germany because Julian Bullard, who had been Minister in the latter part of my time in Bonn and had just been posted there again as Ambassador to Germany, asked for

me as well. But by that time I had already been posted to Washington. I don't know what would have happened if I'd gone to Germany instead of Washington..... It would presumably have changed my life. As I say these were the halcyon Thatcher/Reagan years. Other than my work I found Washington interesting and enjoyed it. The transatlantic relationship is always interesting, and Washington as the seat of world power is always stimulating and alive. There were wonderful extracurricular activities, like white-water rafting through the rapids of the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon, in a party including senior people from the private sector and the Administration. Or taking my family on camper holidays. There was also the occasion when I reduced the President of the United States to silence. It was a party for Margaret Thatcher

136) GS At the end of a visit?

137) BC No it was her last visit to the United States before Reagan's Presidency ran out. So it must have been 1988. There was a dinner for her at the White House to which I was not invited, but there was a reception after dinner and we were invited to that. Everyone was milling around with drinks and so on and a chap came up to me and said have you met the President of the United States. I said no. "Come on and meet him". I was taken round to meet him and joined the queue with a couple of people, and then it became my turn and I shook his hand and he was friendly and he told me about how he'd changed the music on the White House lawn for the arrival ceremony, because they had been going to play "Yankee Doodle Dandy" but that was a song from the Revolutionary War, the War of Independence and maybe not appropriate for the British Prime Minister, and so he changed it. It was just a typical little Reagan anecdote. And then - I can't remember what I said, but basically I ran out of things to say, and he ran out of things to say, and the worst of it was that there was no one behind me. There should have been somebody waiting to step in and be introduced to the President of the United States, but there wasn't. So we were stuck together, both of us reduced to silence. I didn't like to say Mr. President, have you enjoyed your time in Washington or what are going to do next; perhaps I should have. Anyway the embarrassment didn't last very long.

- 138) GS An aide moved in? (laughter)
- 139) BC Yes.
- 140) GS So they were enjoyable years. Then you went to Vienna as Ambassador?
At a very interesting time?
- 141) BC Yes as it turned out. Yes, I mean when I went to Vienna in May 1989 the world was still - just - in a sort of stable state. Europe was divided, the iron curtain stood, but the world had learnt to manage the relationship, arms control negotiations continued, the CSCE continued to establish principles of good behaviour. But underneath all that things were changing in the Soviet Union under Gorbachev and in Central and Eastern Europe (and for that matter in Yugoslavia) with a speed and suddenness which took everybody by surprise.
- 142) GS That was the time when Gorbachev was travelling around the different countries in Eastern Europe. Was he already doing that?
- 143) BC I'm sure you're right.
- 144) GS There seemed to be a lot of optimism and change in the air?
- 145) BC Things were starting to fall apart in Eastern Europe. The most obvious aspect sitting in Vienna was that there was a large number of East Germans gathering in Hungary on holiday, young people with young families, and camped at places like Lake Balaton, the traditional place they went. But they didn't go home, they stayed on and they were starting to come across the border, which the Hungarians decided to stop policing. It became in effect an open border and came to be known as the green border. East German families drove from their campsites on Lake Balaton to near the border, dumped their cars in the woods and walked across the unpoliced border and then often made their way somehow to the German Embassy in Vienna. It all happened quite suddenly. The Hungarians then went one step further. Alois Mock as the Austrian Foreign Minister and his Hungarian counterpart ceremonially cut the barbed wire at the frontier crossing

point on the Vienna/Budapest road, opening the way for all the East Germans still left in Hungary no longer to leave their Trabis behind, but to drive them across into Austria. We came home one hot summer Sunday evening and there was a huge crowd of Germans round the German Embassy. It must have been before the cutting of the wire because none of them had cars. We and the Germans were neighbours. They were all East Germans in their twenties with young children. My German colleague had also come back from the weekend and found these people on his doorstep and they had no money, in any case everything was shut in Vienna on Sunday, so he came over and said "I've got all these people and they are hungry and I've got to do something about them; get buses to take them on, but we've got to feed them". So we ransacked our kitchen and did our best to feed them. It was very moving. They were all so young. Buses arrived and they all went on to West Germany. And then it became organised. They then went straight through. Once the wire was cut and the border officially open they started to come over in their cars. On the Westautobahn out of Vienna to Salzburg and Munich, if there was a great traffic jam it was because the Trabis, those low-powered two-stroke-engined East German cars, were going so slowly that the traffic built up behind them. And so they poured through to their new lives in what was still the FRG.

146) That was where it started, on the Austrian/Hungarian border, but of course there were other borders. The Austrian/Czech frontier was still almost completely closed. There were crossing points, but ordinary people couldn't get across. People on the Czech/Bohemian and Austrian sides of the border who lived within a couple of miles of each other for decades had never been in each other's countries at all because it just wasn't possible to get across, nor had they learnt each other's language. There was simply no contact. Then, following the velvet revolution in Prague later in 1989, it suddenly became possible and the Czechoslovaks (still one country then) poured across in tourist buses to see Vienna, only just down the road. But of course they had no money and could only window-shop and gawp, filling the shops and crowding out the paying Austrian customers to the fury of the shopkeepers. That Christmas, 1989, I remember Vienna being clogged with these warmly-dressed but penniless visitors from Austria's neighbours. I think Helmut Zilk, mayor of Vienna, imaginatively made

travel on Vienna's public transport free for the Christmas period to make things easier for them. That spirit was less obvious sometimes at the customs posts: these communist countries seemed to have a particular type of woman they put on the frontiers, big brassy women who would eventually let you through grudgingly when they could find no reason to stop you, but obviously preferring not to, and giving people without diplomatic number plates a hard time by turning out their luggage etc. Nonetheless it suddenly became a different world. Instead of being in a dead end at the far end of known Europe with nowhere to go except west, or maybe south (people even in Vienna often don't realise that Vienna is east of Prague), you were suddenly back in the Central Europe of the past in which you could travel very easily in any direction, with Bohemia, Bratislava and Western Hungary hardly more than one hour away. Until the roads to the frontiers (especially Budapest and Bratislava) got so clogged with traffic just because there was just one narrow road and one or maybe two lanes at the frontier post; and you still had these fearsome women! But of course that was only the start, and now these countries are joining the EU. It was very moving and exciting, although frankly we in Vienna were only observers, perhaps grandstand observers. My colleagues in Prague and Warsaw and so on were deeply involved. In Moscow Rodric Braithwaite - he's written in his book, I've forgotten what its called -

147) GS "Across the Moscow River"?

148) BC That's right "Across the Moscow River". About his, and maybe more particularly his wife's, involvement at the time of the coup against Gorbachev. They were exciting times. I remember Margaret Thatcher's aversion to the reunification of Germany, if only because I had to make a speech at the time and I had to use the party line of course. The party line was Germany must of course have reunification yes, but not for a long time. At that point Helmut Kohl produced his ten-point plan. I can't remember any of the points, but basically there were stages which would have to be followed for reunification to take place. So even Helmut Kohl for a short time didn't see it as something coming immediately. The ten points didn't last long, Helmut Kohl went with the tide, leaving Margaret Thatcher exposed (along with Mitterand, who also subscribed to the thesis that we love Germany so much that we want two of them).

- 149) GS And the Austrians were all very sympathetic to the changes?
- 150) BC Yes, so these were big developments which we witnessed ... if not on the pitch, then from the grandstand. The Yugoslav Wars were another which blew up in my last year in Vienna. But before that I was involved in my first year as leader of the British Delegation to the CSCE. There was to be a CSCE Summit in Paris - Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. It is now called the OSCE: Conference has been replaced by Organisation. But they didn't have an organisation then, just a tiny Austrian-run secretariat. The negotiations on the summit document lasted many months. Then London decided that summer (1989) that they wanted a more senior head of the British delegation and, because I was available and frankly underemployed in Vienna as Ambassador to Austria, they asked me to do it. A Summit was planned for Paris in 1990 and I took over the British delegation at the rentree in September 1989. We met several times a week in the Big Redoutensaal of the old Habsburg Hofburg palace, with much caucusing in between within the EU/EC, and also more informally among the Brits, Americans, French and Germans. There was one dramatic, or anyway symbolic moment when the GDR delegation disappeared; there they were on one day (basically keeping their heads down), the next day they were gone with the disappearance of their country. There was a nice chap at the head of it. I felt sorry for him because he was going to disappear into total obscurity or at best a GDR State pension which in terms of German purchasing power was negligible
- 151) The Paris Summit is now remembered, at least in this country, not as the CSCE Summit that adopted the Paris Charter for a new Europe (incidentally a title I invented). Nobody remembers it for that now. They remember it as the occasion when Margaret Thatcher, having failed to win the ballot for leadership in the Conservative party by a sufficient majority, had to quit or go to a second ballot. She stood on the steps of the British Embassy and told the press in effect that she was going to fight and go for the second ballot. But, as we all know, once she got back to London it became apparent even to her that she didn't have the necessary support and she gave up the leadership. In a sense I witnessed all that. I was there as the leader of the official British delegation which had negotiated the

summit document in Vienna, but of course I wasn't involved at all in these high-profile domestic British politics.

152) There was a great State banquet for the Summit at Versailles. It was memorable alone for being of medieval splendour. With Heads of State and Government from some forty-odd countries. It was amazing. The French cleared the autoroute to Versailles. Nobody other than the official cavalcades could use it. Meanwhile Margaret Thatcher, preoccupied with the Conservative leadership issue in London and on the phone to London most of the time (along with Douglas Hurd, who was also working out his dispositions) hadn't made up her mind whether to go or not. The rest of us (actually a very small party of the top officials) were hanging around waiting for her decision and then she decided she would go, but not yet. The autoroute was by now long since being kept open for her alone. Eventually we set off very late and sped down there in about ten minutes - I don't know exactly how long, but very fast. I went in a car with Douglas Hurd. I've just read his recently-out memoirs in which he describes this episode in some detail. He doesn't refer to me of course, nor to this particular ride, but he was considering whether he should run in the second ballot, which I didn't know at the time, so all this as going on his mind. And there was I, sitting next to him, and the one thing he couldn't talk about was this, on the other hand it was the only thing that was on his mind. So after a few preliminary remarks we lapsed into silence all the way down to Versailles which as I say was fortunately only about ten minutes. Anyway it was a banquet of unrivalled splendour, in the food, in the wine and in the surroundings. The Heads of State and Government were in the Hall of Mirrors, the delegations, small for each country but with forty countries still a lot of us, in the Salle des Batailles, a very memorable occasion in itself. As well as for the performance (which had been put on hold for Margaret Thatcher to arrive) in Versailles's gem of a theatre.

153) That was in my first year in Vienna which I did alongside my responsibilities as Ambassador to Austria. In my last year I had another extracurricular activity in the break-up of Yugoslavia through my participation in the Hague Conference chaired by Lord Carrington which tried to control the break up. In between was the first Gulf War in which the Austrians played no part, but because Austria is on

the way there from the UK and Germany, both we and the Americans had a lot of dealings with them to allow our “stuff” through their territory (in the case of the Americans) or airspace (for us, and no doubt the Americans). The Austrian government really wanted to help, but allowed themselves to be tied into knots by their neutrality legislation. I had to persuade them to allow trooping overflights, which I succeeded in doing so long as there was no military equipment on the planes, but they were having real difficulty squaring overflights carrying bombs with their neutrality legislation. Fortunately the war ended before crunch point was reached. Throughout this time there was the internal debate on whether Austria could apply to join the EC without infringing its neutrality.

154) With regard to the Yugoslav Wars which had started by the time I got involved, the Dutch had taken over the EU Presidency from Luxembourg in the second half of 1981. The Americans had distanced themselves from events and the war that was going on, taking the line that this was a European problem, which the Europeans should solve. The Luxembourg Presidency had distinguished itself when Jacques Poos, the Foreign Minister in a visit to Yugoslavia, proclaimed this to be “the hour of Europe”, a statement which I am sure he came to regret. Milosevic was leading the Serbs into a strident nationalism against the Albanian majority in Kosovo (a Serb province) and alienating the other Yugoslav nationalities and ethnic groups. The Slovenes had won, or rather the Yugoslav army had withdrawn from, a brief war which cleared the way to Slovene independence. But there was no way Croatia would stay in Yugoslavia without Slovenia (if at all), and no way Milosevic would grant independence to Croatia with its large Serb minority in the Krajina. The Macedonians and Bosnians were in a difficult situation. They weren't necessarily set on independence, but could hardly stay in a Yugoslavia totally dominated by Serbia without the leavening of Croatia and Slovenia. So the situation was desperate, with full scale war between the Yugoslav National Army fighting on Serbia's behalf against Croatia. With the Americans standing back, it was up to the Europeans to solve Yugoslavia.

155) There were successive initiatives. The one I got involved in was the Carrington peace conference in the Hague, which was convened by Hans van den Broek, then Dutch Foreign Minister, during the Dutch Presidency in the second

half of 1991. After the preliminary stage of negotiations with Milosevic, Tudjman et al, Carrington decided that he needed three working groups to get the work of the conference going. He asked the Germans and the European Commission to provide people who could chair two of the working groups, and the Foreign Office to provide the third. The Commission provided Jean Durieux for the economic working group. The Germans provided Gerd Ahrend for what turned out to be the ethnic minorities working group and the British provided me. I chaired the constitutional working group. I had never been to Yugoslavia and was really totally unfamiliar with the country, but I had to learn on the job very rapidly, which I think I successfully did. My job was to chair these people coming from all the Yugoslav republics and try to get them to arrive at some constitutional or institutional framework, which would avoid them fighting each other.

156) GS In a federal way?

157) BC In any way which they could agree among themselves so as to arrive at a peaceful resolution of the differences between them. We explored new concepts. Like sovereignty and international recognition for each republic that wanted it, but within a structure, federal, confederal, the name was unimportant, which involved mutual recognition, secure borders, safeguards for human and minority rights and the preservation of economic links. From the beginning the Slovenes made it plain they were not interested, they just wanted independence. Given this and Serbian attitudes, and possibly in any event (remember there was a war in progress, with tremendous brutality), the Croats also wanted their independence, but were prepared to talk about links. The Macedonians and Bosnians were out on a limb, victims rather than primary actors, willing to stay in a loose federal or confederal Yugoslavia with Croatia and Slovenia, but unwilling to remain in one which those two republics had left and which would have left them at the mercy of Serbia. There are very good books about this so there is no need for me to go into it here. But it was a fascinating experience. Fierce fighting was taking place in Yugoslavia as the Serbs drove the Croats out of the Krajina and other Serb territory, there was the siege of Vukovar and then of Dubrovnik by the Serbs, or rather the Yugoslav National Army on behalf of the Serbs. I was commuting from Vienna to the Hague to chair meetings of my working group on the future

constitutional arrangements among the republics, a fruitless exercise, obviously, as well as for the plenary meetings chaired by Lord Carrington, to which the leaders themselves would come up to the Hague, Milosevic, Tadjman, Kucan etc. Half the time Lord Carrington was trying to get them to sign up to cease-fires, and indeed got them to sign up. But they all lied through their teeth about their intentions: they were all accomplished liars actually. The generals particularly. The leaders brought their generals, commanders, and they all promised cease-fires. But they never meant it. Commentators these days say that it took us too long to realise the dishonesty of these people. That is absolutely not true, it was clear to us all from very early on that they were all inveterate liars. So it was fascinating but at the same time very discouraging. The deal, which was the European Community's agreed position, was that nobody would recognise any of the republics, in practice Croatia and even Slovenia, until they had all agreed succession arrangements and relations among themselves. We were all fully conscious that Slovenia had no ethnic minorities to speak of and had a clear case for independence: there were no loose ends, minority rights issues, border issues between it and its neighbours. But Croatia, which also wanted to be recognised, had a large Serb minority as well as large Croatian minorities (locally indeed majorities) inside Serbia. Bosnia was split ethnically three ways and Macedonia had a large Albanian population closely related to the Albanian population in Serbian Kosovo. So, in this complex situation, our only pressure in the absence of any willingness on the part of anyone to intervene militarily was the withholding of recognition for anyone, even Slovenia, until they had agreed among themselves what the arrangements should be. The conference under Lord Carrington was trying to work up what those arrangements could be, involving the kind of double sovereignty I have referred to for the republics that wanted it as well as for the federation/confederation. Not obvious how it could work in international law, but we had some very imaginative lawyers, one in particular, Tony Rushford from the FCO whom I got hold of, sadly died of a heart attack on the job and was succeeded by another FCO lawyer, Henry Darwin. We produced a report setting out these arrangements and a whole lot more about political, economic and minority arrangements. And at a very dramatic plenary we got all the leaders to accept it, even the Montenegrin satrap of Milosevic (the story afterwards was that he had received a large bribe from the Italians), all except Milosevic himself. He

refused, so the thing fell apart. What also fell apart was the European Community's position, which was much more serious.

158) The Germans were by now insisting on the recognition of Croatia (and Slovenia, but their interest was Croatia), come what may. There was very strong public pressure in Germany for this, the Serbian military victimisation of Croatia and the brutal ethnic cleansing being seen as justification enough. That was of course a serious issue, but so should have been the knock-on effect in Bosnia in particular of unconditional recognition of Croatia. But the Germans were not to be dissuaded. The Austrians (and I was still Ambassador in Vienna, so I saw this at first hand) were under similar pressure of public opinion. Actually Austrian political leaders felt just the same way as their public opinion, without even the constraint of being party to the EC's common position (non-recognition of any Yugoslav republic until agreement among them) because they weren't in the European Community. They strongly supported the Germans. The upshot was that under this German pressure our Ministers decided that having a common European position was more important than what the common position was, it was better for Europe to act together than to be divided in dealing with the Yugoslav crisis. Given German intransigence, the only possible common position was the German one. So the compromise was that we would all recognise any republic which met certain criteria relating to democracy, the rule of law and treatment of minorities. The distinguished French jurist and President of the Conseil D'Etat, Robert Badinter, was appointed to investigate which republics seeking recognition met these criteria. He found that the Croats were not quite up to standard, I think with regard to the treatment of minorities, but the Croats tidied that up and received his blessing. The Bosnians were also judged to qualify. Bosnian plurality/multi-culturalism had been a standard for Yugoslavia and a referendum showed a majority of the population for independence and recognition, so this was a correct arithmetical result. But it was a very static one: a more dynamic view, had it been possible within the terms of reference, would have taken account of the fact that the ethnic Serbs in Bosnia did not want independence. If there was to be a break-up of Yugoslavia, they wanted to be integrated into Serbia, ie a border change, which the international community totally rejected. The internal borders of the old Yugoslavia were to become the international borders of the new ex-

Yugoslav states, a point which the Serbs never accommodated themselves to: they argued that what had been internal administrative borders should not become internationally sacrosanct. Rather than lose the referendum in Bosnia, the Serbian part of the population boycotted it. So with about forty per cent of the population abstaining there was a natural majority for independence from the Moslem and Croats in the population. So we had to recognise Bosnia, with the vicious civil war which then took place the inevitable result. The tragic thing is that we all saw it coming. We all knew it was going to happen, but we went ahead anyway. Genscher's view, which he holds to this day and maybe he is right, was that it was going to happen anyway so we had better accept the inevitable and stop standing in the way of the legitimate aspirations of Croatia and Slovenia for the sake of an unrealistic policy. In my view it was a pity to give up so easily and wrong to smooth the way to disaster.

159) The upshot nearly a decade and a half later is one country (Slovenia) about to join the EU. A second (Croatia), having achieved all its war aims territorially and in terms of ethnic cleansing, is successfully refurbishing itself and its democratic credentials and is increasingly likely to join the EU not much if at all after Romania and Bulgaria. The other three (Serbia/Montenegro including Kosovo, Bosnia and Macedonia, plus Albania, remain unfinished business, or rather part of the unfinished peace achieved at Dayton in 1995, bedevilled still by the issue of minorities and ethnic cleansing, above all involving the Albanian populations in these countries. It was all a most interesting experience, but I then left Austria and was posted back to London. So I left before even the Hague conference closed its doors (it staggered on into 1992), but the death of Yugoslavia continued to haunt Europe for years, and also therefore came back to haunt me two years on when I went to Brussels.

160) GS Dealing with foreign policy?

161) BC Yes. But I had two years in London first. I went from Vienna back to London. The newly appointed Permanent Under Secretary, Sir David Gilmore, on a visit to Vienna had asked me whether I would like to be one of his Deputy Under Secretaries, an offer one could hardly refuse even though it meant

abandoning the Hague conference prematurely. So I became Deputy Under Secretary and Economic Director for a couple of years, where my responsibilities were things like the GATT Round and many of the trade policy issues I'd dealt with in Washington actually, and also the G7 process, the annual summit meetings of the Heads of State and Governments of the seven leading powers, now eight with Russia. Actually the G7 started haltingly to become the G8 while I was dealing with it. So I had a lot to do with the Whitehall lead departments on these issues, notably the Department of Trade and Industry, the Treasury and other Whitehall Departments. The G7/8 meetings were prepared at senior official level by so-called "sherpas", three per country. Each country had its own formulation for its three, which could vary from year to year. The sherpa himself was the personal representative of the Head of government, in our case Prime Minister, and was either the PM's senior private secretary (always a Treasury man) or a Treasury mandarin who had been at No 10. The two "sous-sherpas" were Deputy Secretaries from the Treasury and FCO, and it was obviously the FCO slot that I held. I attended two of those G7 Summits, in Tokyo and Munich, and of course the preparatory meetings for them, normally in the country holding the chair (ie Japan and Germany in my case, although the Japanese held one meeting in Hong Kong).

162) This was the time of talk of a Marshal Plan for Russia, what could/should be done to help Russia towards a market economy and the rule of law (very interdependent). Marshal Aid was not really applicable to Russian conditions, but nonetheless there was much to discuss in terms of amounts and conditionality, not to mention where it should come from, should there be debt relief as well as re-scheduling etc. There was a strong wish to make a difference, but also concern about pouring money down a black hole in the absence of satisfactory domestic reforms in Russia, which seemed very elusive. The IMF was the instrument for achieving the conditionality. If Russia was the biggest issue for the G7, it was followed closely by nuclear safety, especially the Chernobyl reactors in Ukraine. Prime issues were the hugely expensive decommissioning of Chernobyl (how was that to be paid for, by whom and on what terms?); and the reform of the Ukrainian energy sector (electricity and energy use were unmetered and so profligately wasted), so that the need to rely on nuclear power would be reduced and the

building/completion of further reactors on which the Ukrainians were insisting would be unnecessary. Ukraine was an economic disaster.

163) During this time I visited Kiev (as well as Moscow and Saratov) with Nigel Wicks, one of my Treasury counterparts, it was very depressing. Ukrainian Ministers and senior officials on the whole knew the right things to say to us, but it was clear that nothing was happening on the ground, there was no administrative structure to make things happen. The energy sector was appalling. There being no meters, there was no incentive to economise, and there were no thermostats so you controlled the temperature in your flat by opening and closing the windows, no matter how much heat escaped in the process. Hot water for area central heating, which I had always thought of as an urban phenomenon, which might make sense for closely packed housing was piped for miles above ground (albeit insulated) in the countryside. The heat loss must have been gigantic.

164) GS It must have been the same throughout Russia?

165) BC That's right. A visit to Saratov, the site of the old Togliatti plant which built 1950s Fiats as Ladas, was also interesting: again the managers knew what to say to us, which was actually quite impressive given how recently they had been enmeshed in the centrally-planned economy. So did the manageress of the local super-market which had until recently been the factory shop. They had picked up the concepts of buying and selling in market conditions. I asked one of them how. The answer was interesting: we were taught capitalist economics at university so that we could know what was wrong with it. So once capitalism and the market economy were introduced, it was not difficult to make the switch. But of course in practice it was, not least to get an honest day's work out of the workers on the enormously long straight car production lines. In contrast to a Mazda factory I had recently visited in Japan, not a particularly high-tech or automated one, where all the workers visible were busy doing something and parts were in line for use, not just lying around. At the Lada plant parts and workers were everywhere except the production line, and along the production line long tables were set out at which the workers sat in large numbers taking time out. On the land the situation was worse: we visited what had been a collective farm, the peasants had

been given the right to buy, but were in practice being actively discouraged from doing so by being given the worst land, having access to the collective's machinery denied to them et. So naturally they weren't doing it. And the collective's bosses were the same old bosses who didn't even pretend that private enterprise was a good thing.

166) So I did that for two years, then, I was offered, or rather asked to apply for, this job in Brussels. The Maastricht Treaty created the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy and the FCO wanted a Brit in the EU Council of Ministers, the General Secretariat of the Council in Brussels, to be in charge of that. With my experience I was judged to be the British candidate most likely to be selected over other nationalities. I had actually been down this path before, unsuccessfully. While I was in Vienna I had been asked to allow my name to be put forward to head the European Political Co-operation (EPC) Secretariat. EPC was the precursor of the CFSP, took place outside the treaty framework and had its own small separate secretariat (all of which changed with Maastricht). I agreed. There were several candidates from different countries, but it finally came down to a choice between two, Pierre Champenois of Belgium and me. We had six votes each (in an EC of 12) at the deciding meeting of the twelve foreign ministers. Faced with deadlock someone suggested that the Ministers should flip a coin, one was duly flipped and I lost. A deal was offered under which Pierre Champenois would do it for two years and then I for two, for a total four year term, but I refused to take the second term and that was that. So it was ironical that about three years later I went after all to Brussels in a post senior to Pierre Champenois, he becoming my deputy. But we got on well until he returned to the Belgian service and went to Moscow as ambassador, to be succeeded by a senior Greek diplomat (Leonidas Evangelides, former ambassador in a number of places including Warsaw and Bonn, PermRep in Brussels (briefly) and Political Director). Actually I always wondered why, having adopted tossing a coin as a way of deciding deadlocked issues, the EU never adopted it more widely. It never even featured in the Convention on the future of Europe last year!

167) GS But you had retired from the Foreign Office?

168) BC I had a career choice. Either another posting as Ambassador or High Commissioner or going to Brussels to the Council, and Douglas Hurd twisted my arm. Eventually I said I would go, even though I wasn't sure I really wanted to do it, but I went to Brussels to take this job, which was a combination of fascinating and frustrating. I could have stayed on as a member of the Foreign Office, served my remaining three years or so on unpaid leave of absence before the compulsory retirement age of 60 and drawn my pension in the normal way at sixty. But there seemed little point in that against the alternative, which was retirement immediately with full pension and a golden handshake, while at the same time drawing my salary in Brussels as a Eurocrat. Because of my age I did not have the option of doing some time in Brussels and then finishing with a final posting for Her Majesty. So, for purely financial reasons, I did resign from the Foreign Office. In the end I stayed in Brussels for eight years where I participated in the development of the Common Foreign and Security Policy as it evolved after its creation a few months earlier in the Treaty of Maastricht.

169) The job was fascinating, but also very frustrating. For a start one's boss, effectively the Presidency, changed every six months, so there was no continuity of relationship, no trust built up which then served in good stead later. This was very tiresome. It meant you had to start again with a new set of people every six months. Set up new relationships. Relationships were inevitably different according both to the country and the strength of its own bureaucracy and their personalities. So the degree to which I could work closely with the Presidency, how much they did their own work and how much they relied on my staff and me, varied. The British for example were punctilious in keeping me well informed and involving me in that sense, but basically the British administration is highly self-confident and highly opinionated and does its own thing on the whole, but that's fine because they're good at it. Other countries can be opinionated and rather less effective and other countries relied on us a great deal. I remember the Dutch Presidency in 1997 relied on me a great deal. I enjoyed very much working with the Dutch. I had an excellent personal relationship with the Foreign Minister, Hans van Mierlo, who often insisted on not taking decisions unless he was sure I'd been consulted and agreed, that sort of thing. I think I gained his confidence in, of all unlikely places, Raffles Hotel, Singapore: he was having

difficulty getting the Portuguese Foreign Minister, Gama, to accept wording on East Timor for a communiqué for the EU-ASEAN ministerial meeting which was why we were all there. Gama understandably wanted some denunciation of Indonesia, equally understandably this was unacceptable to ASEAN and the whole conference threatened to go off the rails on this point. Van Mierlo made a rather poor fist of persuading Gama as we had a drink at Raffles until I could stand it no longer. To Gama's and perhaps van Mierlo's surprise, I weighed in with powerful arguments myself, powerful enough anyway to persuade Gama and to solve the problem. That was the sort of unsung role one could often play, but of course there was never any glory or even credit attached to it, nobody outside ever knew.

170) That occasion also brought home to me the advantages and also the limitations of English in international discourse. The common language on the occasion, as on so many, was English, which both spoke pretty well, though not perfectly. I think it may really have been van Mierlo's inability to express himself with the subtlety he could use in his own language which restricted his persuasiveness, a restriction which I using my native language did not suffer from.

171) Van Mierlo went on to use me a lot in relation to Turkey, launching a shuttle initiative to try and settle Greek-Turkish differences which at that time bedevilled Turkey's relations with the EU. 1997 was the time of one of those periodic pushes for Turkish membership of the EU. The initiative failed, which I never doubted it would, but it was fun trying (basically to get the Greeks and Turks to agree on a mechanism for discussing their territorial differences). I recall with particular pleasure a Michelin 3-star dinner in a restaurant in Apeldoorn with van Mierlo, his top Dutch advisers and me, summoned from Brussels to prepare the next day's informal meeting of EU foreign ministers, with all of them speaking English even among each other in deference to my non-Dutch-speaking presence.

172) Over my time in Brussels I kept up with and was involved in a number of issues as well as the institutional development of the CFSP back at the ranch, where I was after all responsible for the machinery, ie a management task. Turkey and its relations with the EU, in its many aspects, was one; others included

transatlantic relations, the Balkans, Russia, the Middle East - although I was personally less involved in the Middle East. We Europeans were always in the position of demanding to be listened to, without having the means to ensure that anybody paid any attention to us. I mean the Americans and Israelis of course, but even the Arabs, even the Palestinians: they courted us in the hope that we would influence the Americans, but they did not pay attention to us on substance nor rely on us for anything (except money) because they knew we couldn't deliver the Americans, who were the only outside power that mattered. Every Presidency foreign Minister used to go off on a quick tour of the Middle East capitals and I always preferred not to go on them. But Jacques Poos, who I mentioned earlier in the Balkan context in 1991, insisted I go with him on his tour. The turn of Luxembourg for the Presidency (its previous one had been in 1991) came round again in the second half of 1997. I'm glad he did. I didn't want to go but I found it fascinating.

173) GS Where did you go?

174) BC Well, you know it was one of those whistle-stop tours. You go to Cairo, you go to Amman you go to Jerusalem, you go to Gaza, you go to Damascus, to Beirut. Each for just a few hours, enough time to meet your interlocuters. It's no fun, and moreover did not do the slightest good. That's why I didn't want to do it. But it was very interesting to do it once. I went to Washington a number of times. To the UN General Assembly every autumn. There is a week during it when most of the world's foreign ministers are there, and they take the opportunity to see each other in private meetings. I always went to that, and I and my staff attended all the meetings which the Presidency foreign minister had with foreign ministers of third countries.

175) Another frustration was, as I discovered when I got to Brussels, that my lack of institutional authority mattered. When I had been representing the UK I might talk rubbish, but it was the UK speaking and they had to listen to me. In Brussels I might be sitting at the table speaking the most perfect sense, but because I didn't represent anybody except myself, it was easy for people to ignore what I said if it

didn't suit them: they didn't have to argue against me or my view (unless of course it got support from others), nor did they have to make any effort to convince me. And persuading the Presidency could also be frustrating because Presidencies had their own views, personality clashes and domestic agendas, sometimes known but often not. That was frustrating at times. You had to find allies just to be listened to, sometimes the UK, not always, to prevail on a Presidency trying to go its own way. Member states might sympathise with you, but be unwilling to get involved because they had other fish to fry and rationed the credit they were prepared to use on things that were not priorities for them. I remember the hopeless battle I fought during the German Presidency in the first half of 1999 from inside the Council Secretariat against the Stability Pact for South East Europe, a venture which, organised the way it was, was in my view condemned from the beginning to be a huge bureaucratic waste of time, effort and resources. I was right, but my arguments were hopeless because the issue was driven by Joska Fischer's domestic need to have something to show German (and especially Green) opinion that the Kosovo War was not all there was to EU Balkan policy at the time.

176) GS Were they your political masters?

177) BS Yes, the Presidency was in effect my political boss. I had a hierarchical boss, the Secretary General of the Council, who at that time was Juergen Trumpf, a German, a former State Secretary in the German Foreign Ministry and former PermRep in Brussels. Actually I had known him quite well as one of my Auswaertiges Amt contacts when I served in Bonn in the early 1970s. In Brussels he left me pretty much to my own devices. With the appointment of his successor, Javier Solana, who started effectively in January 2000, there was a big change in the nature of the job. Javier Solana was not only Secretary General of the Council, he was also High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). The latter function had been created in the Amsterdam Treaty of 1997, with the expectation that it would be filled at a lower, ambassadorial level. It was a result of the Kosovo War that the European Council in Cologne in June 2000 appointed a high-profile international figure, Javier Solana (former Spanish Foreign Minister and at the time secretary General of NATO) to the job. This was in recognition that the EU's foreign policy really had

to be represented centrally by someone with a more political profile than a senior official could command. The British candidate for the job for example had been Sir David (now Lord) Hannay, to give you an idea of the sort of level that people had had in mind.

178) The other important thing the European Council at Cologne did, which was also to change enormously the content of my job, was to create the European Security and Defence Policy. This followed the Franco-British initiative at St Malo the previous autumn and was given its parameters at the Helsinki European Council six-months later, namely a corps-level EU military capability by 2003 (60,000 troops deployable at 60 days notice sustainable for a year). Although appointed at Cologne, Solana didn't actually move in till the end of 1999/beginning of 2000. He had to phase himself out of NATO, not to mention take a (short) holiday and, I think, get a back problem he had (and still has) seen to.

179) The appointment turned out to be absolutely the right one. Javier Solana has been very effective, although that was not obvious from the start. It was very difficult, not to say discouraging, for him in the early days because although he had been given this title, and although he had got a high international profile and strong support from Heads of State and Government, he, like me for that matter at a lower level, had no institutional base. Under the treaty his job was only to assist the Presidency and the Council, hardly a powerful institutional base. So for the first many months he really found it hard to get a grip on anything. His PR was good, he is a politician to his finger-tips and fully understands the role of media profile, so he gave interviews, had an active spokesman (or rather woman), was on television a lot. He was a public figure, but he really wasn't cutting the mustard and people were starting to ask where's the beef. He wasn't making a difference, which he found immensely frustrating, because no Presidency would allow him to. Under the Treaty to this day it is the Presidency which is responsible for managing and implementing the Common Foreign and Security Policy. Even in the ESDP (European Security and Defence Policy) where Solana, coming from NATO, knew about defence and surely had a comparative advantage, he played no role. Presidencies did it themselves.

180) This created a problem for my staff and me. We were inevitably involved since everything had to be submitted to, discussed by and negotiated through the member-states. This was our bread and butter, with the Presidency relying on us for support, tactical and drafting advice, etc at the least, even if the policy emanated from their capitals. So there we were working for the Presidency in the traditional way, but Javier Solana was our boss and was resenting being excluded by the Presidency. The difficulty was compounded by the fact that Solana was often travelling and difficult for us to consult in the tight deadlines given to us by the Presidency for reactions. We had to tell successive Presidencies that we could not give advice, as we had in the old days, off the tops of our own heads as it were: any advice we gave had to be consistent with Solana's views, which was fine if we knew them, less fine if we did not and had to discuss things with him with no time available to do so. Presidencies continued frankly deliberately to give us very short turn-round times to prevent Solana from interfering.

181) So there were lots of awkwardnesses. It took a while for Solana to find his way round them, to establish any role for himself. It started gradually under the French Presidency in 2000 in the Balkans after the Kosovo War, when he and Chris Patten at the European Commission started to work together with the Serbian opposition to get them to co-operate among themselves, so that when an election came, and it did come, Milosevic would be defeated. This required too much day-to-day attention and presence on the spot for the Presidency to take it on, and so it gradually got delegated to Solana (with Patten). Or perhaps more accurately, he just took it on, and the Presidency heaved a sigh of relief. I don't know how much difference his activities made in the event, but they surely helped and from his point of view at last gave him something to get stuck into on behalf of the EU.

182) Then he got involved in the Middle East also. Hubert Vedrine as French Foreign Minister was I think determined to keep control of the EU's Israel-Palestine policy and saw no particular role for Solana. To the best of my recollection at the time of the Sharm-El-Sheikh summit (October 1998?), which took place just after the Biarritz European Council during the French Presidency,

Vedrine didn't want anyone to go for the EU. But then Solana was invited directly and personally by Mubarak, Egyptian President and host. Once he was invited off he went, without asking. A French official went with him. That was his first real entrée into the Middle East as High Representative. As a result of his work in the Middle East and more particularly the Balkans, where he acted for the EU in a series of crises, notably the Presevo/South Serbia crisis, Macedonia and then Serbia/Montenegro, his role as frontman for the EU became increasingly acclaimed, with an increasing recognition that his job should be “empowered” and the Presidency removed from the responsibility of management of the CFSP in favour of the High Representative. This also was an evolutionary process, the abolition of the Presidency in CFSP being especially resisted by the smaller member states who were jealous of their six months place in the sun, even if (in an enlarged EU) it would come round only every 12 years or so. The empowerment of the High Representative, or EU Foreign Minister as he may be called, is one of the main achievements of the Convention and the constitutional treaty now being discussed at the IGC. The new EU Foreign Minister would preside over the External Affairs Council and, more generally, be responsible for managing and implementing the Common Foreign and Security Policy.

183) GS So taken away from the Presidency?

184) BC The Presidency disappears. There is no Presidency anymore in the CFSP. I have my doubts about other things. For example he's responsible to the Council, he also takes over the job of Chris Patten at the Commission. So he is responsible to the Commission in some things. That creates is a conflict of interest, of loyalty, of responsibility and I personally think it's not a good idea, but they're going to do it. He's also responsible to the new five-year President of the European Council. It will be a strain wearing these three different hats and making it all work. But the important thing is that the new EU Foreign Minister would be given power, or at least authority, and someone like Javier Solana can make that work. One difficulty is that we don't have that many that good people around in Europe. When he goes who's going to succeed him? The job will rely more than most on having an extremely capable individual doing it. Member States have a record of

appointing to key positions in the EU institutions people of less than top quality. But anyway it is a step in the right direction.

185) I was very involved in the building up of the European Security Defence Policy. We had to create completely new structures. We had never had anything like this, any kind of military aspect, before, although we had liaison functions with the WEU. So a Military Staff was created in the Council Secretariat. A German General was appointed to run it with some 150 officers and support staff. Then there had to be a whole civilian “politico-military” side, which came under me. So we had to create that. We had budgetary, personnel, personality and even policy squabbles, but we created it. Not nearly enough people. I think it's amazing what the staff can do with the number of people they have. At the same time the organisation to run ESDP operations, civilian (eg police, “winning the peace” capabilities) as well as military, in the Council proper was having to be created and bedded down: the Military Committee, the Political and Security Committee etc. Also co-operation arrangements with third countries, the UN and OSCE. ESDP was formally pronounced operational at the European Council at Laeken in December 2001 and the first operation, in which I was quite instrumental, was decided immediately afterwards, taking over a police operation in Bosnia from the UN. Since then the EU has taken over from NATO in Macedonia and is planning to take over from SFOR in Bosnia in 2005. The EU also undertook a small French-led operation in Congo earlier in 2003. So the ESDP is developing and I hope the Secretariat is going to be given the resources to do the job properly.

186) That has been a very interesting time. My successor is Robert Cooper. He took over in May 2002 and had the excitement, for want of a better word, of the debacle in CFSP and ESDP from the Iraq war. At the same time it was an opportunity (as, in a different way, Kosovo was) for a relaunch. Iraq exposed serious problems, which have to be addressed if we are to have a real CFSP. I wrote about aspects of this in the Chatham House journal International Affairs in May 2003, which I suggest attaching to this interview as a reflection of my experience in CFSP in recent years in the light also of Iraq. CFSP in the context

of transatlantic relations is covered in a subsequent speech (February 2004), which may also be worth attaching.

187) GS You did this job until 2002.

188) BC I did this job until April 2002, when my colleague in the FCO, Robert Cooper, succeeded me. The Brits, having been keen to get a Brit into the position in 1993/4, were also very keen that my successor should be a Brit.

189) GS And generally you feel optimistic about the way things are going?

190) BC Actually, no. I would characterise my views as more hopeful than optimistic. The European Union at 25 is going to be unwieldy. Decision-making will be difficult. It will be very difficult to arrive at common positions. We'll need to go somewhat further in terms of mindset of the member States than has been achieved so far. There will for example have to be greater recognition that some countries are more important in the external relations field than others and do need to have greater authority. They'll need to give more authority to Solana and his successor; more authority than they are likely to. Above all we, mainly the British, French and Germans, need to arrive at a common approach to dealing with the United States. We all have to be ready to use or threaten force in some circumstances. And there are all the consequences of having 25 or more countries, with different mind-sets, priorities, the new ones not necessarily very stable, but rather poor, all trying to work together in an EU which has found it difficult enough to work together at 15. Just take Schengen, or the Euro. Basically I think the European Union in ten years time, twenty years time is going to be different from what any of us now expect. If you take any period in the twentieth century, predictions twenty years ahead were invariably wrong. That is true now for the EU in twenty years time, any predictions now will be wrong. The successors of the present policy makers will deal with the problems in a different way to the way the current generation can imagine. They'll have different pressures and different realities. Which is, I recognise, a way of coping out. Nobody frankly has a clue what is going to happen, but it won't be anything quite like what we would expect now. I'm sure the EU in some form will survive, but

maybe not in the way it has been, nor necessarily in a form we would now recognise.

191) GS That was a very interesting discussion about your career and thank you very much indeed, Brian Crowe.

192) BC You're very welcome