

BDOHP Biographical Details and Interview Index

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BRITISH DIPLOMATIC ORAL HISTORY PROGRAMME

Foreword

The interview transcripts, which follow, record my reminiscences as a stream of consciousness rather than as considered reflections on my life in the Diplomatic Service. For that reason they are very different from many of those of my contemporaries; moreover, they are not as I would have written in a book for publication. Memory can be deceptive and different people will remember the same events in different ways. I did very little preparation for the interviews and no checking of facts beyond the spelling of names. The reminiscences are all very subjective and, however much I would like to have avoided it, are bound to sound self-promoting and self-justificatory. I can only apologize and ask for the reader's understanding. When editing the transcripts, I have tried to avoid removing all those extraneous expressions, which may occur in everyday speech, but not in writing, in order to preserve some spontaneity in the anecdotes and enhance the "local colour". In that way, I hope that these reminiscences will be of some use to future historians.

I also wish to record my thanks to Moira Goldstaub for her remarkable ability to make sense of my musings and for her apparently infinite patience.

Richard Dales,
Southwold

November 2017

**RECOLLECTIONS OF SIR RICHARD DALES KCVO CMG
RECORDED AND TRANSCRIBED BY MOIRA GOLDSTAUB.**

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MG: It is 02/11/16 and Moira Goldstaub is in conversation with Sir Richard Dales who is recording his recollections of his career for the Diplomatic History Project.

M.G. Sir Richard, I need to know how you came to join the service, did you have any connections to the diplomatic life?

R.D. I'm not sure myself! I had no background whatsoever in diplomatic service. I'd never been to the FO or an Embassy, I had no idea. I think the main attraction was dealing with foreigners. My father taught languages and insisted that I spent time abroad learning my languages, which I did every holiday from the age of about 13. I enjoyed dealing with foreigners and that's what I decided I wanted to do, I wasn't quite sure how: export company or whatever ... I had an interview with the British Council at Cambridge and the chap made it quite clear that he didn't think I was at all suitable, I presume because he discovered that I was a rower and I think anybody who did sport in those days was considered not quite right for the British Council. I don't know, perhaps that's prejudice. Either way, I was encouraged by a friend to take the exam for the Diplomatic Service, which of course I failed, and I wasn't too surprised. I then got a letter saying that they were introducing a new programme for recruiting graduates to the Executive Branch, Branch B as it was called then, of the FO, and would I like to come for an interview - it was solely on interview. I was advised by the University Appointments Board that this would be not the right thing to do because if I entered Branch B I would be forever tarred, as it were, as an NCO and would never be a Senior Officer. I decided that perhaps I was not destined to be a Senior Officer and in any case what I wanted to do was work abroad, work with foreigners and also work for my country; the now old-fashioned idea of service. So I went to the interview and I was accepted; I had some doubts when I first arrived because the way we started in Branch B was that we were put in a registry - then called Archives - to learn to manage the paper and of course a lot then did come in on paper. That was, in retrospect, extremely valuable. First of all, one learnt the procedures and what was going on, but one also learnt what the view was like from the bottom and I valued that ever after. I had three weeks under a dragon-lady, whose name I cannot remember, in the archives' vast room, full of people who prepared what were called temporary jackets. When a letter, or a piece of paper, came into the registry the

archivists first wrote a précis of what that paper was about – two or three sentences – on the top of the jacket and then it was put to the desk officer, who then decided whether that should be retained. These built up, so on the file in those days, you had a précis of each document in it so you could quickly run your eye down its essential contents. It also meant that you had a great sense of what had gone on in the past and that is one of the things that was lost, when we went over to computers and digital memory. I never got used to the idea that I could use the digital memory. I was used to seeing it as a thickness of the file and my brain used to work photographically, I could remember that a particular piece of information was on the right hand side of a paper somewhere. Anyway, that was the beginning.

M.G. You haven't told me what you actually read?

R.D. Modern Languages. Well, neither Modern nor Languages. I read French and German at Cambridge and it was mainly literature and philosophy.

Foreign Office, Consular Department, 1964-5

M.G. Yes, that's always been the problem. I understand. So you were at the FO then, in Central London.

R.D. Yes, I was sent - after this three weeks' training in Archives - to the Consular Department.

M.G. And where was that?

R.D. That was in Petty France, where the passport office still is, I think. I was in a section, as the most junior of three or four of us, where we were dealing with consular problems brought to us essentially by the embassies abroad. Some members of the public would come to us with a problem and we would then get in touch with the embassies and consulates. In those days we worked on Saturdays as well as during the week, and we also did duty hours on the weekend – so on the Sunday – and also over Christmas; and what I remember was how grief really does distort people's judgement and reason. I can remember we were once informed of a death in a road accident, in Yugoslavia as it then was. What we did in those days was to ask the police to inform the relatives: we didn't phone them direct but they were given our

number by the police. I found myself talking to a lady who clearly believed that I was responsible for the death of her son in this dreadful road accident. I was completely fazed at the time, shocked, really shocked, by being blamed for this accident. As it went on, the blame was no longer so much directed at me personally but more at the FO who “should never have allowed (this person) to have driven down this road”. To be honest I found it quite difficult to deal with. My superiors at the desks explained to me how grief could be quite a distorting experience, and I learned to deal with such people and also with the extraordinary things that do occur. One lady rang in on Christmas morning to say that she had been unable to talk to her son who was in Switzerland and could the embassy help. I was very reluctant of course to ring them. As it went on it transpired that the son was actually in prison in Switzerland and she said that she was having great difficulty getting through to him in any way; she couldn't understand why he was imprisoned in Switzerland, and etc. etc. It went through to the embassy after the holiday and they came back to me saying that they knew the son and had visited him regularly in prison; he had been caught – oh, I've forgotten – with something like a waistcoat concealing 200 watches that he was smuggling out of Switzerland at the time.

M.G. It honed your diplomatic skills, I would think, having to deal with these people.

R.D. I suppose it did, yes. I've always liked dealing with people, if that's the right way to put it. I've always enjoyed that, but I think this was quite a lesson in how not everybody is like your neighbour.

M.G. And you say it had no connection with the main FO, although you had to deal with the embassies all the time?

R.D. No, we dealt with embassies, but we were separate from the FO, I don't remember ever even going to the canteen in the FO. Occasionally we would have to speak on the telephone to somebody in the geographical department responsible but rarely. Most of the dealings were done with the Consular Sections of the Embassies; there were many more consulates in those days because we're talking about 1964. And so I suppose learned very little about the FO or indeed foreign affairs ...

Third Secretary and Vice Consul, Cameroon, 1965-67

M.G. You've said that you were in a sort of B grade. When you went to the Cameroon, to Yaoundé, in 1965 only a few months later, were you in Grade B? Cambridge wasn't proved right, because you *were* going to an embassy abroad.

R.D. Yes but I was still an NCO in the parlance, really.

M.G. Did things change when you got to Cameroon?

R.D. No, the issue that was posed at the time was that my predecessor – this was a relatively new embassy - Cameroon became independent in 1961 and the embassy was set up virtually straight away – had been a Branch A officer, what we now call a fast-streamer, and it was his first posting. He later went on to great things. He was a Branch A Officer and the ambassador at the time was very reluctant to accept a Branch B Officer, an Executive Officer in this slot, which was basically the dogsbody do-it-all. I was Vice-Consul; I had to do the consular work. I did commercial work and I did the political work as well. This was very good for training, I covered a broad field of activities and that was the purpose of it. Sir Edward Warner, the ambassador, managed to get me an entertainment allowance which matched what my predecessor had but only after a huge argument, because in those days the Branch A had entertainment allowances but, basically, Branch B didn't. The ambassador saw it as essential to the job. My allowances were all of course adjusted to Branch B and I complained about it: I said I'm doing the job for Branch A. They had sold me to Edward Warner on the basis that I was part of a new programme of bringing in graduates to Branch B to do some Branch A jobs. Anyway, I failed in all these attempts to improve my conditions of service and it rankled a bit, to be honest. I was a Branch B all the time there. In career terms I had arranged to go off and do hard language training, I was going to learn Czech, and the office had arranged for me to go to SOAS and then I was going to spend some time in Prague. The Head of Chancery at the time was a fellow called Terry Empson and he said: No, this is wrong, you haven't been in the FO, you've been in the Consular Department and you've been abroad now, you've got to go back to the FO, learn what the FO is about and take the exam again, because, he said, you're basically in the wrong slot.

M.G. Who was Terry Empson?

R.D. Terry Empson – he has since died – was the Head of Chancery, in other words the Office Manager of the Embassy in Yaoundé. He was my Line Manager, in modern parlance.

M.G. Were the ambassador and the staff happy with you after initial reluctance, thinking that you would simply be an A-level person?

R.D. In fact, I got on very well with everyone.

M.G. You did well, so they were then battling for you to get your increase in your allocation and you were there for three years?

R.G. Yes, that's right, I was there for three years; Edward Warner left in the middle of my tour and was succeeded by Alan Edden who was very different. Edward Warner was of the old school, his father had been a Major-General, he had been Minister in Tokyo, he was already knighted and he was sent to this brand-new, potty embassy; there were only seven of us there. He didn't like that much, and he could be very prickly to deal with. His wife had done some of my job in the gap, leaving me an enormous mess to clean up when I arrived!

M.G. Was he cognizant of this, do you think?

R.D. I doubt it, no. I was very young – I was 22 – his children were my age, or just a bit younger and I found myself on one occasion asked to go on holiday with them up in the wilds of North Cameroon and basically he treated me like one of the family then, which was very good. I'd earlier had a stand-up row with him. I had been told before I left that he was a very difficult man to get on with, because he was very demanding, and also slightly old-fashioned; he wasn't always right, but always thought he was! I was told that he respected people who stood up to him when he was wrong. That was a tip that I got from one of my colleagues in the Consular Department before I went out there. So I put it into practice, had a stand-up row with him after about a month, and we got on pretty well after that.

M.G. When you say it was a new embassy, the country had only been independent for five years; that was independent from France?

R.D. Yes and Britain. Actually, the independence in 1961 followed a UN referendum, because they were both UN mandate territories: both the British Cameroons and French Cameroun. In this referendum, they voted to form one country, although parts of the British Cameroons voted to join Nigeria. Two British bits joined the French part and the whole became a Federal Republic. So we had West Cameroon, which was the former English-speaking, British administered part. East Cameroon, the former French part, which had been part of French Equatorial Africa. So in effect, from an administration point of view, part of Nigeria moved east and part of French Equatorial Africa moved west and formed this new country.

M.G. The French have a different attitude to their former territories than we have: when we give independence, as I understand it, we let them go, but the French retain good relations with the Head of State, they often retain personnel in government. Was that your experience? Can you talk about that? It must have been a bit of a problem.

R.D. Yes, absolutely. There were a number of facets; one way it was expressed in colonial times was that the French would happily sleep with the Africans but they would never eat with them. The British attitude was said to be the other way round! In effect, the French wanted to convert their colonial peoples into Frenchmen, so they taught them proper French, in many cases gave them French citizenship and tried to turn them into, in this case, black Frenchmen. With the British in the West African colonies, right from the start, it was assumed that eventually they would become independent; the interest was not in settlement but in bringing them up to be good trade partners. The colonial administrators had to learn the local languages; local courts run by district officers would be conducted in the local language and the District Officer would have to speak that. One consequence was that a lot of local African customs remained, with legal force, in the British West African territories, whereas the French territories became essentially part of France, with French laws. The standard of language spoken in the French-speaking countries was excellent French; the English-speaking countries often hardly spoke English, they in fact spoke mostly pidgin, which was the lingua franca all the way along the coast. So you had a serious situation in Cameroon where when you had a Federal Cabinet, with ministers from both the East and West Cameroon, the language they spoke was pidgin, not French or English. And it's quite an amusing language but it was amazing to hear senior politicians using it in this way as a lingua franca. The justice systems, the legal systems, were completely different, so the

amalgamation was very difficult. They wanted to unify the republic; it is now a unified republic. They brought in Canadians who would be experienced with the French and English systems. They tried to draw up a new legal code to combine the best of the two. Some difficulties were very obvious, for example the police; in West Cameroon, the English-speaking part, they basically were like Bobbies, they were unarmed, and they did their job in a rather relaxed way. The prison officers when marching their prisoners to work on the land had a column of prisoners marching along with two warders and the warders' truncheon would be carried on the head of the last prisoner. In East Cameroon, the prison had watchtowers with machine guns on it, like prisoner-of-war camps. It was a very, very different attitude to policing and so it went on through everything. They, the French, also ran the country in a very much hands-on way and so when it came to independence every ministry had its 'Conseiller technique', (its technical adviser), a Frenchman, and whenever we went to a Ministry to propose some new policy or particularly commercial arrangements – they're very jealous of their market – there would always be the French technical adviser sitting there. On some occasions the technical adviser would overrule the minister. We tried to get a big telecommunications contract and the technical adviser in the ministry basically fought us all the way.

M.G. You were in charge of the commercial side of things, you were commercial secretary. Did you find that you were able to sell British interests, in light of this animosity?

R.D. Yes, to a limited extent, I mean there were some things that obviously went very well, good sales of whisky! But more important, larger things, such as a telecommunications contract, which Plessey was chasing, for a new telephone exchange throughout the country to replace the rather rudimentary, existing one. They did actually win it in the end but it was a really hard-fought. The French tried very hard to say, "we're not compatible". Another example, which takes you into different territory I suppose, is that they had a tobacco factory, which was obviously a subsidiary of a French company producing cigarettes for the local market. The tobacco came from Rhodesia, which was British but, as you know, mostly independent. In 1965, we had UDI and UN sanctions against Rhodesia so this tobacco factory was not supposed to be buying Rhodesian tobacco. The French ignored sanctions in all sorts of ways, they continued to sell their cars to Rhodesia in a big way. However, I went to the tobacco factory, not directly in connection with sanctions, it was in connection with something else and I was taken round and in their great warehouses was all this Rhodesian

tobacco, it was actually marked as such. So I asked about it and they said, “Oh it’s not actually tobacco from Rhodesia, it’s marked that way because it is that type of tobacco” (wink, wink) and they just carried on. At the same time, the Foreign Minister of the country was standing up in the United Nations calling for more sanctions and for Britain to invade Rhodesia to dislodge the illegal regime. I went with the ambassador when he was called by the foreign minister to receive this message officially from the Cameroonian government and the Minister ended this great spiel about Rhodesia by saying “and I expect Britain to send a gunboat.” As Edward Warner reported afterwards, “I referred the minister to the map and left.” Rhodesia is of course landlocked.

M.G. At the same time, there were problems on the Nigerian front. What happened with that?

R.D. Well that was in 1966. It began with essentially racial incidents in Northern Nigeria and in the South. In Nigeria, there’s a racial difference between the North and the South. Ethnically Northerners differ in race as well as religion. They come originally from north and east Africa. Down in the south, the people who live in the jungle and in the heat are not as vigorous, more indolent in a way. There are exceptions in all this. The Igbo people are one of these exceptions; many of them live in higher-level country where it is less hot and sticky. Anyway, what happened was that the northerners resented the southerners and attacked them; there was an issue as to who would hold the Presidency. There was ultimately a military coup, but in the outbreak of the civil war, when this violence started, the Bantu, that is the southern peoples, left the north as refugees for the south. They started attacking the northerners in the south who then became refugees and needed to go north. In September 1966, when I’d just got married to Elizabeth and we were going back out to Cameroon, we were on a cargo ship to Bonny. From there, it’s up the Niger river to Port Harcourt, a major town in those days, with big department stores and so on. The ship had hoses playing around it and the dogs were let loose on the deck. We had these precautions because people were trying to board the ships in order to escape and the quayside was absolutely lined with northerners, refugees. We went ashore. At that moment there was no actual violence but later the eastern Nigerians, mainly the Igbo, got fed up with what was going on and decided to declare independence; that was the beginning of Biafra. This became a civil war then because the Federal government decided that they were going to suppress the revolt to maintain the Federation (an objective shared by Britain). General Gowon, Yakubu Gowon,

came in at some stage and he was regarded as a good, incorrupt likely to hold Nigeria together. I remember that when eventually he left office, he was given asylum in Britain. He was given a scholarship to Cambridge or somewhere, which illustrates how he was regarded as sound. I'm sorry that I can't remember more. Cameroon had a border with Biafra.

M.G. Did it affect you? Did you have refugees?

R.D. Yes we had some refugees. Cameroon was determined not to be brought into the battle. There was some sympathy for the Igbo on the part of one particular tribe. In West Cameroon people were very similar, very get-up and go people called the Bamileke, and so there was a certain amount of support, physical as well as moral. When the violence got to such a level in Enugu - in those days we had a Deputy High Commissioner there – that we had to evacuate them, then obviously the best way to bring them out was into Cameroon. Actually they went south from Enugu and then came out down the river in dug-out canoes, through the creeks in what is nowadays the Rivers State, as the River Niger has many prongs. They managed to escape that way and we picked them up from West Cameroon. We were also accredited to what was called Spanish Guinea at the time, Fernando Po and Rio Muni, as well as to Chad (which of course had a lot of relations with the Northern Part of Cameroon), General Bokassa's Central African Republic and also Congo-Brazzaville who broke relations with us over Rhodesia: so we had a big area to cope with. Fernando Po was where the oil companies, who were looking for oil in the Bay of Biafra, based their operations. So we went to see what was going on. At that time the Biafrans had got some people in light aircraft, some of them were Rhodesian mercenaries, who were flying little light aircraft and dropping Molotov cocktails as bombs onto the oil service ships and on anybody connected with oil, trying to burn the whole operation. The oil company service vessels crews stood on the deck with hoses to put the bombs out and to wash them over the side. They would occasionally try to fire their rifles up at these little machines; it was a music hall war in many ways. In contrast, in the interior, sadly, a lot of people were killed.

M.G. You mention General Bokassa of the Central African Republic (CAR), how did he figure?

R.D. Well, he came to power while I was there. The French regarded him as a good thing, certainly to begin with. The reason we had contact was because we were accredited to the CAR. We had very little to do there, but we had an honorary consul and one of my jobs was to go and visit him periodically. On one occasion we had a visit by what became the Royal College of Defence Studies, but I think was called the Imperial War College at the time; a team of officers led by a major-general with very senior civil servants, not all British, came out on an African tour and asked to go to CAR. One of the very unstable areas of Africa at that time was in the east and north of the CAR, where it borders Sudan, there's a whole area that was very, very dangerous

M.G. It's not very much better now, is it?

R.D. No, it's not much better. Anyway, I went over to set up a visit. It wasn't my first time in CAR and of course I accompanied them. This involved calling on various military installations, e.g. the French still had troops there just outside Bangui. We called on some government ministries, (come to think of it, I don't remember any French technical advisers at this stage). However, what I do remember very clearly was that all our programmes were very tight. The RCDS were going on to Nigeria in the morning. We got a message that the President, General Bokassa, wanted to meet this group and would give us lunch. And of course this completely upset the programme and that gave me a problem! Anyway we all went to lunch and we found ourselves in a kind of theatre in the presidential palace where there was a dais. We were all seated in the stalls as it were, where the tables were and on the stage, on this dais, were chairs for the entire cabinet. General Bokassa came in and there was one empty seat: the Minister of Education hadn't arrived. So we sat there, and we sat there, waiting for this minister who had obviously been sent for and when he arrived, Bokassa gave him a dressing-down, rather like a sergeant-major would to a squaddie. It wasn't physical but it was almost physical and it was extremely embarrassing, both for us to witness and obviously for the Minister of Education, who was rather more intelligent than most. Then we had an audience where we talked about what we were doing and Bokassa talked about his regional activities, and what he was trying to do in the country. He was trying to revive the economy and he went about distributing cottonseeds to help the rural poor earn a bit of money. This is why he was considered to be "a good thing".

M.G. It all sounds very plausible and laudable as well. But his temper was a little unusual?

R.D. Yes, that was a sign of things to come but at the time I don't think he was in the business of eating his enemies or anybody like that. And I suppose in 19 - whenever this was, I'm not sure when actually-... '66, he was probably quite early on in his reign, we saw this other side to him and so I was not at all surprised when he became Emperor Bokassa; absolute power does go to people's heads, it did to his, it has done to others.

M.G. Did he end up going to France, fleeing the country?

R.D. Yes. One principle, which is sometimes very difficult for the public to accept, is that if you're going to get rid of some of these awful dictators, as indeed we tried in quite a lot of cases, you've got to give them an escape route. When I say we, I mean obviously we weren't the people who were actively doing the dislodging, we might have been encouraging, but we certainly did help provide these escape routes. It was we collectively – it wasn't just the British, the Americans were involved and the French – and that is what happened with Papa Doc in Haiti; it happened with Bokassa, it happened with General Amin, it happened with Mengistu, the Ethiopian dictator who went to Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe got a lot of stick for that and Mugabe used to say quite rightly that actually he had been asked to host him.

M.G. We'll come on to Mugabe himself later on in our talks, because he's stayed the course, hasn't he, surprisingly.

R.D. Yes. Of course I'm not sure this (the absence of an escape route) is entirely the reason but I would point out that this whole trick has become very much more difficult now we have the International Criminal Court. These people know that even if they have an escape route they can still be prosecuted and imprisoned. Whereas Bokassa was able to go to France.

M.G. It sounds as if, although you claim you were a B grade, you were doing very testing and troubling things. You had a lot of really quite difficult matters to deal with. Is that why you think they suggested that you must get into the FO proper?

R.D. I don't know and in any case I was a junior member of a team. I like to think that Terry Empson – my Line Manager then – recognized that I perhaps had something of what it took to get into what became the Administrative Branch. Another issue at the time was the merger

of the Commonwealth Office and the FO. We had a lot of dealings with the High Commission and the Deputy High Commissions in Nigeria and it seemed to us that their conditions of service were incomparably better than ours.

M.G. Well, talking about that when you were there in Cameroon, what was your accommodation, you've acquired a wife, what were the quarters like?

R.D. I went out as a bachelor and I had a half a bungalow in what was called the Air France compound because that was what it had been at some stage; it was a colonial bungalow divided into two. I had two bedrooms, a reception room and a kitchen. It was entirely adequate and it had a good garden. I also inherited what in French was called 'le boy', a house-servant who did everything. He was the same age as me though I didn't let him know, he was called Christophe a Bamileke, from, as I mentioned, one of these get-up-and-go tribes. I had a gardener, who used a machete to cut the lawn half the time because he kept breaking the mower. I also did a bit of gardening, but I left him to cut the grass. And then we had a night watchman, because we were guarded at night. I was right on the edge of the town: across the road was jungle. One of my clearest memories, the first time I'd ever been out of Europe, let alone anywhere like Africa, recalls a time when I hadn't been there very long; there was an almighty racket going on in the next-door neighbour's house (who was an African) a terrible row, chickens and goats all screaming. A leopard had got into their compound and was enjoying a meal. Leopards will kill a lot of animals before they eat one ... I was terrified by this noise and when I discovered what it was it was hugely exciting. I was of course also afraid of snakes and on one occasion in the garden I found I'd stepped over one and there it was between my feet. I thought what am I going to do; eventually, it slithered away and I moved off. I looked it up and it was common house snake, harmless, and to be encouraged because it eats rats and things. My cook, this young lad, was extremely good, he'd been taught by a Belgian family so I was able to entertain my African contacts and some diplomatic people and aid-workers for example — we were very keen to know what the Canadians were doing with amalgamating the legal systems.

I married during my mid-tour leave, that meant that I got a different house in a new part of town away from the jungle where it was broadly European-type houses and ours was a house built up on stilts with some washing facilities for laundry at the bottom but otherwise one-floor raised up to catch the breeze. Obviously we took Christophe with us and carried on

entertaining. One of the problems was that you would invite people but you weren't always certain how many would actually come so you always had a buffet, and always catered for more because somebody you'd invited would say I brought my friend along or on one occasion he would bring two wives instead of one. I recall an Italian that we used to invite sometimes whose wife looked, and knew she looked, like the Queen Mother and wore similar dresses. Extraordinary! He was an Italian Count who had great airs but they were always late so when we sent invitations to them we put a few hours earlier on the card in the hope that they would arrive somewhere near the time. This entertainment allowed us to, yes, make friends with people whom we wanted to see in their offices for example the desk officer in the Foreign Ministry that dealt with us and therefore Rhodesia and that sort of thing; we got to know him well. While I was Ambassador in Oslo I got a phone call out of the blue and he was Ambassador in Italy and wondered if there was a chance we might meet. And it is a big element of diplomacy I think that you get on informal terms with people that basically you want to do things for you, either to reveal what they're up to or to actually take action of the kind that we want. And so I think the entertainment element was important even in Cameroon.

When I married Elizabeth, who was a musician, she and the Peace Corps director – a Broadway theatre producer, a black American – put on *Carousel*, the musical; she did the music, he did the theatricals and the performers were all from other embassies (there might have been one Cameroonian) including the Russians because we were only fourteen embassies and that included the Russians. They put on this musical and of course we invited all sorts of people to it and that went down actually pretty well. It may sound trivial but it does make a difference to the depth of human contact that you are making as part of your job. This of course is where it was revealed how important it was that I should get an entertainment allowance and Edward Warner had been successful in persuading the office that I should have one.

M.G. So what did you do then about applying for the interview, the exam and getting back? Were you going back anyway, did you arrange it? You were on a three-year appointment.

R.D. I was coming to that point where you had to begin to think about where you're going next, and I told Terry Empson that I was going off to learn Czech; it had already been

arranged. That's when he said it was wrong. I therefore wrote to the Personnel department I suppose and I said look I've changed my mind, I need a job in the office advised by my line manager ... They said they were unhappy about it because they'd made all the arrangements for language training; I was letting them down. They said I needed to come back to London straight away. My successor was a chap called Roger Westbrook. He couldn't come out in time for me to get a ship home which was the great privilege in those days, that you could go home by boat, essentially a cruise. I was told I had to report to the office so we flew home via Chad and Marseilles to a snow-bound London which was a horrific shock just before Christmas in 1967 and I turned up at the office as instructed. My so-called postings officer revealed his resentment at the fact that I was a graduate in this otherwise non-graduate branch and then said "Well we've got nothing for you I'm afraid, so I suggest what you do is go off, have a bit of leave and we'll get in touch with you some time in the New Year, about the end of January." Which, having been instructed to come home quickly, really rankled. So I said to my wife that I'd do just that, we had Christmas at home and we went off to visit relatives in Wales. While I was there, in very early January, I got a message to say that the FO wanted to get in touch. I rang back the postings officer who said they wanted me to start the very next week in the South-East Asia department on Vietnam. You didn't argue in those days so that's what happened.

FCO South East Asia Department (Vietnam Team), 1968-69

M.G. Was that your metamorphosis then?

R.D. No, I was part of a team of three. By this time we might have become the FCO and I think I'd become what was called a Grade 9 instead of a B5, I don't know whether you know about these minutiae?

M.G. No.

R.D. Anyway, there was a desk officer who was I think a chap called David Waterstone, brother of the book man, and there was another person, assistant, and then me as very much the junior. We sat in a smallish room with four of us in it, each with two telephones. My job was to answer the correspondence, and prepare answers to MPs' questions: we were the public face of our Vietnam policy.

M.G. Was this a bit of a hot potato, because Harold Wilson didn't support the Americans, earlier in the 60's – Lyndon Johnson, as I understand it, was quite annoyed about this?

R.D. Yes, well we supported the American objectives, but we didn't give them practical help. Except that we did supply them with let's call it 'technical advice'. There was a British Major or Colonel who had become a specialist in counter-insurgency operations in Malaya for example and we helped the Americans with counter-insurgency. This was the first case in my experience where it was quite clear that while we supported the American objectives, we weren't prepared to help materially. We were in a situation similar to what we have now seen in Iraq. The British government in effect had to take responsibility for some of the things the Americans were doing without any power of decision. There was a constant criticism from a portion of the public and Wilson insisted that every letter should receive a personal answer and not a standard reply, which was customary otherwise. So I was kept very busy and in those days we had a typing pool of blind typists who operated on audio machines, I would sit in my office with all these phones going and dictate replies one after the other. Obviously, there was a very similar pattern to many of them. The ladies would type them; they were wonderful but I don't think they exist any longer as a resource.

M.G. It was such an important time because it was the time of the Tet Offensive.

R.D. The Tet Offensive came very soon after I'd joined – February 1968 – and there were lessons to be learned actually in all sorts of ways. The first I think is that it was quite clear, because I used to see the intelligence, that militarily actually the Americans and South Vietnamese were fending off the offensive, they were not going to be knocked back, but they lost the PR battle in a big way. There were all sorts of arguments; that they allowed the press to get too close to the action for example. Well you can't stop it because in an insurgency it is not like a country-to-country war, you've got journalists who are going to be there without the military and who are going to focus on incidents. If they're dramatic they'll blow them up; they can distort. Either way nobody likes violence from wherever it comes and it was pretty horrific some of the things that were going on.

M.G. I think it was about this time that the American public turned against it all, is that right?

R.D. Yes, that's exactly the point. I think that the British public also shifted, there had already been people opposed to the Vietnam war, but the I think it became almost a mass movement after the Tet Offensive, as it did in America where it was much more decisive. And yes it generated the first of the movements within the US administration to try and do a deal, but of course what we often forget these days, was that what people were worried about was this whole thing spreading right across SE Asia and right through to Thailand and Indonesia and so on. Laos and Cambodia were in essence part of the Vietnam War, not just because the Viet Cong were using them for supply routes and diversionary actions, but also because the West wanted to try and stop the spread of communism into that whole region. That was why Wilson supported it: there was a strategic objective. There was of course, fighting, "confrontation" in Indonesia too which had that element to it.

M.G. I hadn't realized that the Vietnam War went on for about 19 years, from 1955 with the French who had then pulled out.

R.D. Yes the French had been involved; it was a colonial war then. It was resolved with UN intervention and the arrangement was that the North could be communist and the South would be capitalist with a dividing line; it was supposed to be temporary until they could arrange some agreement. There was a Control Commission in which the Canadians were participating which was supposed to administer this agreement. We had a Consulate General in Hanoi as part of Vietnam's continuing to be legally one country. So while the Americans were bombing Hanoi we had Brits there. Of course that was very important, I mean if you have people on the spot you can actually get first hand intelligence even if they're hunkered down in the cellars. They can still undermine some of the propaganda that was coming out from both sides. Indeed I remember when one of the consulate general people came home on leave, I asked how are they were managing to survive because they depended on the control commission for their supplies for anything other than rice. With the bombing campaign, the control commission couldn't fly in a lot of the time and I asked how he was getting on. He was fine, he said, provided you can get used to surviving on rice and dog meat which is what they did. Bombs fell fairly close to our consulate general building and this chap's hearing was impaired, I don't know whether permanently or temporarily. Some of our officers were actually on leave, quite genuinely over the Tet holiday, not in Saigon but in another area when the Viet Cong attacked. They hid under the floor of a bungalow for, I think, a couple

of days until the Viet Cong were driven out. They managed to escape, but it was quite an experience for them. I was sent occasionally to attend the JIC meetings on Vietnam.

M.G. Who was the Foreign Secretary at the time?

R.D. I think it was Michael Stewart.

M.G. So would he be at the JIC?

R.D. No, the JIC – the Joint Intelligence Committee – is made up of officials.

M.G. I think I'm getting it confused with COBRA, now.

R.D. No it's not the same as COBRA, which didn't exist at this stage. The JIC did and was usually chaired by the FCO, occasionally Ministry of Defence. Usually an FCO official would be seconded to the Cabinet Office to chair this outfit. There would be a secretary who brought all the bits of paper together, decided essentially with everybody what they should look at, what assessment should be made, because their job was to produce assessments of a situation based on intelligence and other information, such as what the embassy reported. It was an attempt to bring it all together. So the assessments are extremely important, I mean we saw later on over Iraq and weapons there just how they can be misused.

M.G. So when you say the CIA were so dominant, were they pushing a certain view?

R.D. Yes, they were pretty insistent on getting their view across and we were pretty supine at accepting it. And of course it was difficult because there we were with our stance, "yes we support you but no we don't". The Americans did resent that.

I wasn't really involved in the policy-making on Vietnam, David Waterstone; a very, very clever man was doing this. I may have got the wrong name ... I know that he was really trying hard to get some influence over the Americans but it was very difficult because unless you were going to support them materially, be properly alongside them, then you didn't have much influence. Why should they take any notice? I on the other hand was involved with an MP, Tam Dalyell, he was the bane of our life as he had a penchant for tabling Private Notice

Questions at the weekend. Well now PNQs, if they were accepted (and that decision would not be taken until Monday morning), had to be replied to immediately in the House (i.e. when the House reassembled on Monday morning). That was the procedure at the time. So he would table these wretched questions and on Sunday after Sunday I would be in the office drafting replies to PNQs from Tam Dalyell, (who knew bloody well what the answer was), which would be disallowed on Monday; I'm sure he would have been most upset to have known just how much family disruption he caused to a junior official! But that was politics at the time.

You asked who was the Foreign Secretary; I've no idea, I think it was Michael Stewart, I really never met them, and I did not meet a minister under any circumstances until they came visiting in Copenhagen. I probably didn't see anybody higher than my head of department throughout that time.

M.G. I can't help noticing that between January '68 and the end of '68; you had two heads of department called Murray! Was that a coincidence or were they related?

R.D. Yes, a coincidence, unrelated, and very different. Donald was a marvellous character. He had been parachuted into Yugoslavia during the war and had been – I'm not sure if he had his leg shot off or he broke it on landing or whatever – but he had an artificial leg and he had a habit of coming in and marching up and putting his artificial leg up on a chair like that with a resounding click! He was a great character, nothing fazed him. And I should have explained, I suppose, that the other people in my room were dealing with Laos and Cambodia and so I heard a lot of what was going on there. I enjoyed that time, and yes I did learn about how the FCO worked and a bit about politics, which is essential, and a little bit about Whitehall and it was the first time I'd been cleared for what was called code word material.

M.G. That's because you saw all this intelligence coming in?

R.D. Yes, and the handling of that was fairly strictly controlled but nonetheless it was that that gave me the feeling that I was being trusted.

M.G. And much to your credit, before you'd taken the exam.

R.D. Not to my credit - but then the person coordinating the material in our registry would almost certainly be a Grade 9 as well or more junior. I think the FCO has always trusted its staff, however junior, perhaps I didn't realize it quite so much at the time because of these particular experiences. I should have explained that I discovered after this what I call maltreatment over my posting by a man, who clearly resented the graduate grade 9 experiment, that ten of us had been admitted in this particular way in '64. All of us had been told we would get a year of training, which was the norm in the Foreign Office and then would be sent abroad. I was sent abroad as you know after four months, suddenly, with very little training. And the others had broadly similar experiences. I found, when I looked back later on, that of the ten, five had passed the exam and the other five had left the service. No one stayed on at that level. When I was 24 and asked about promotion I was told that I had only been two years in the service and was not eligible whereas others who had joined at 18 and had done National Service, rather than university, were eligible.

M.G. Weren't you too young for National Service?

R.D. I just missed it, yes, but there were some who did service and then applied, anyway it counted towards seniority but time at university didn't, so I was four years behind my age group. I thought that was wrong actually; it would mean that I couldn't expect to be promoted until I was 30 when the others were all being promoted at 26, because it was automatic. That's one of the things that made me determined to make the transfer to the Admin Branch.

South East Asia Department, Far Eastern Department (Korea and China Economic Desk, 1969-70)

M.G. So when you passed this exam you then were under James Murray, now did you notice a difference in the treatment or the type of work you were given?

R.D. Yes, I became a desk officer proper rather than a member of the Vietnam team, which had a desk officer, two assistants and two staff. I was desk officer for China Economic and Korea and my job in China Economic was really to interpret what the Sinologists – the experts, the desk officer was a Chinese speaker at the time – were saying about China, their assessment and conveying this to business men and others.

M.G. And was this at the time of the Cultural Revolution?

R.D. This was just after the Cultural Revolution, but we still had people imprisoned: the most famous one being Anthony Grey. I became very much involved in that business, but I also was the Foreign Office representative, sort of non-executive as it were, on the Sino-British Trade Council, the chairman was Lord Keswick, or John Keswick as he was then, from one of the big Hong Kong trading families, and he was very much Hong Kong-orientated, but the group was trying to do trade with China as a whole.

M.G. Did you foresee our giving Hong Kong back at that stage?

R.D. No. The desk officers that I remember were John Boyd who became ambassador in Japan and Len Appleyard who was later Ambassador in China. Len Appleyard came to join the desk in 1969, he had done three years in Peking, had been one of those people who had to go out of the embassy to meet the mob, where they were spat on, and he told me there were two golden rules: one was to keep your mouth shut, and the other was to make sure that you didn't fall over because if you fell over you were likely to be trampled on. So as far as they could, they kept their backs to the wall, or the door. But in my view it took a lot of guts to do that sort of thing. They would speak to the crowd in Chinese. We all used to go, every couple of months, for a Chinese meal where these Chinese-speakers would order the whole thing in Chinese, in Chinatown in London. Those of us who were non-Chinese would be expected to do all the Chinese things, taking from the middle of the table with your chopsticks it was not easy but they were just completely Sinofied.

M.G. I imagine they would have been very much welcomed because the Chinese like it if you can speak Chinese.

R.D. Yes, but at that time the Chinese saw Brits very much as the evil ones! But there was a bit of ambivalence among individual Chinese with all this. The worst of the violence had passed, when we had a chap with a chopper outside Portland Place, that had all passed so relations were very sticky but they were gradually moving in the right direction and we were beginning to pick up both political and trade relations again. And we were beginning to get the release – we had 12 prisoners - of people put in prison. They were nearly all people who

were sympathetic to Mao and had gone out there to teach Chinese or whatever but were regarded with great suspicion as westerners. Some of them were simply released, others we had to negotiate about it. In the case of Anthony Grey, who was a journalist, it was very much more difficult and there was a bit of a campaign for his release and the then Evening News, I think it was, there were two evening newspapers at that time in London, had a journalist who had got quite a lot of information about Anthony Grey and who, with the blessing of his News Department, which you had to have in those days, came to me and I basically took him into our confidence about what we were doing about Anthony Grey in order for him to understand why he shouldn't publish certain things. Once you do anything, which calls into question 'face' with the Chinese, you're back where you started. Anyway, he rang me up one day and said 'look, I'm very, very sorry but my editor wants to publish this thing about Anthony Grey.' I said this is going to be very damaging, and is going to set back his release by several months, you will bear the responsibility. He said he could not persuade his editor, this was a story that his editor wanted out there and the story came out and Anthony Grey's release was indeed delayed. It was a nasty time and of course the journalists always get more attention than ordinary people because journalists are regarded as 'one of theirs'. This chap was very apologetic but it was a bit of a lesson to me.

The only other thing that I might mention about this time is that I dealt with Korea and there are three little anecdotes. One is that in my new policy job I thought it's crazy that we'd got nearly 100 servicemen in South Korea along with however many thousands of Americans and they were a bit of a nuisance. I asked why do we need them there? We can do without them. I put out a submission which argued that they should be withdrawn and got into terrible trouble because I obviously hadn't cleared it properly and the parts of the office that were looking at America were shocked because the real reason we had these troops there was nothing to do with Korea or the UN role, it was because of our relationship with the US. It was the converse of the Vietnam thing, it was a gesture, quite an expensive one, but it was a gesture of support, which continued. So my submission didn't get anywhere at all. The same thing happened about the sale of aircraft which I think was a VC10; there I did manage to overcome the resistance of the pro-American lobby. The Americans did object, they were very keen of course to sell their aircraft. We were very much more aware at that time that we had to be nice to the Americans after all we were much closer to the Second World War than we are now and knew how much we owed them.

The other Murray I dealt with, James Murray, was one of the last of the FO great characters, no relation to Donald that I know of; he was a bachelor, lived in The Albany, always sported a rose in his buttonhole, very beautifully dressed, very much a gentleman and with that air of cynicism which I suppose became almost a FO trope and he had it. He was very relaxed about all this, enjoyed his job and he applied his judgement when he needed it but otherwise he just let everybody get on with it and this meant that I had could virtually do what I liked with Korea. When it came to my leaving, the Korean Embassy wanted to give me a farewell party, James was invited - "Mr. James Murray and partner". He was very much a bachelor so I pointed this out to him, (I knew that he spent weekends in France where there was allegedly a duchess in a chateau that he went to visit and was very fond of!) He told me not to worry "I'll find someone," so when we came to the party in a restaurant somewhere James was accompanied by an absolutely stunning blonde, about half his age. This to me was James Murray to a tee. Later he went off to New York where he was minister, number 2, at the UN, and he was extremely fashionable and moved in the best New York society. He got into one of those apartment blocks in New York which don't normally admit foreigners and which vet tenants to ensure they are socially acceptable. It was said that he got into trouble later because he was used by an American company for adverts as a typical Englishman, while still serving. I'm not sure of course if that is true.

Well that's really a good place to stop. Thank you.

Second Secretary (later First), Copenhagen, 1970-73

MG: It's 22/11/2016 and Moira Goldstaub is meeting Sir Richard Dales for the second time to continue recording his memories of his diplomatic career for the British Diplomatic History Project. Now Sir Richard, we've reached 1970, and you're sent as Second Secretary, later first in Chancery, to Copenhagen. Please tell me how that was after your time in Africa.

RD: Quite a contrast - we went from Cameroon, very much a developing country in extreme poverty, to one of the richest countries in Europe. It was very instructive. Denmark was a monarchy, it was very closely related to us, and was where we had some substantial interests to promote and defend. It was a totally different context from the previous posting. I think the things that I remember most are that we were fellow-candidate-entrants to the EEC (as it was then). The Danes, the Danish government, were very keen to go in essentially because

we were; the same applied to Ireland and Norway, which were also candidates at the time. And the essence of it was that they could not afford to stay out, when one of their principal markets – the UK – was going in, and they saw considerable benefits for their agriculture from the common agricultural policy. That of course was something where our interests were completely divergent: they wanted maximum prices within the CAP and of course we wanted to reform the CAP to make it work more in our favour - shall we say – than in France or Germany's.

MG: Can you explain a little more why we had such divergent views?

RD: Essentially we at that time were a major food importer and we were importing from the world market where food was relatively cheap. The EEC, worked on a different basis; they set high prices within the common market in order to ensure that farmers had a good return on their activities, could earn lots from their crops in other words. We were interested in lower prices within the CAP. We also of course had a much smaller farming sector at the time I think the figures were something like 2% of British employees were employed on the land but that was 20% in France, so we were going to have to pay a lot with the CAP, we all knew that. The Danes, were primary producers, big producers of bacon— pig-meat— and dairy products, so their interest was in maximizing their sales and getting the highest possible prices. The CAP worked very much in their favour, they were efficient producers, or relatively efficient producers, so the high prices set in the EEC were going to benefit them enormously. But their main market at the time was Britain and every year before membership we had negotiations to agree on the quotas, the amounts of butter and bacon that they were going to be allowed to export to Britain. These negotiations took place at government level and a deal was struck. I may not have correct figures, but at the time about 50% of bacon sold on the British market was coming from Denmark and there was a similar figure for butter. Now, of course, there were other interested parties, New Zealand for example – a big butter exporter – so the negotiations were quite complex. What I remember about them was that there had to be a political standoff, each side – both the Brits and the Danes, officials, the government – had to show that they were fighting for their particular farmers' or consumers' interests and so there was a pattern to these negotiations. First of all, there'd be a meeting in one or other capital; this would be with officials from the Ministry of Agriculture from both sides as well as Trade and FCO people and somebody from the embassy always. The negotiations would take a whole day, there would be a good lunch in

the middle, perhaps even dinner in the evening, depending on what time of day they started but the thing was that they wouldn't reach an agreement on that day: there'd be a stand-off, the gap was simply going to be too wide, they'd have to come back and have another go and that happened each time. I can remember that I once went with our ambassador to call on the equivalent of the cabinet secretary in Copenhagen where the discussion basically was where do you think we're going to meet, really what is the bottom line for both of us? And these two officials would assess that and discuss it and nearly always the final deal would be almost exactly what they had provisionally estimated. It sounds a bit like 'Yes Minister' and to some extent it was but if you think about it, these are people who are able to a) see where the essential interests are and balance them, b) to see where that point of compromise is, where each side gains. And that, to me, was one of the great essences of diplomacy, being able to spot where that point is, where both parties would regard themselves as having benefitted.

MG: I'm a bit lost. I understand what you're saying about that, and it is actually fascinating, it's not like Sir Humphrey because it's not manipulative, it's expertise isn't it?

RD: I would say so yes, although I can well see that others would look at it in a different way.

MG: Maybe. But what I'm not quite clear on is that, if both the UK and Denmark wanted to go into the EEC as it then was, but they'd both got polarized positions, how were they depending on one another? Or how were the Danes depending on us?

RD: Right, they were depending on us because they we were such a big market for their primary products, for their main exports, butter and bacon. So they had to keep unrestricted access to our market, and they would be able to do that in the EU; in fact it would improve it for them. So it was important to them that if we were going in, they should too. That's the essence of it. We had of course political motives for going into the EU as much as economic ones. Actually, at the time all our instructions were to explain, including to the Danes, how important politically it was that we should have this cooperation within Europe, not to build a Federation, that was never in Britain's mind, but to produce what amounted to a heavyweight political entity, a group of nations with common values working together to have a greater impact on the world. We were also much more conscious in 1970 of what had happened in

the 1930s with extreme nationalism and of course WWII. So for us the European enterprise was very much about making the nations of Europe work together rather than against each other.

MG: So you've told us about the butter and bacon negotiations, you've mentioned going with your Ambassador, which one was it at the time?

RD: At the time, that was Sir Murray MacLehose.

MG: Can you tell me a bit about him? He's got a wonderful name!

RD: Yes, a wonderful name! He was known by many, as the Dour Scot. He was a very tall man, distinguished looking and extremely clever, an expert on China. He'd originally joined the China Consular Service; he was fluent in Chinese, both Mandarin and Cantonese, I think. In the Residence near the Royal Palace there was a ballroom and they had balls which would be attended by the younger members of the royal family – Princess (now Queen) Margarethe and so on – and also the leading politicians and businessmen of the time, I mean it was a wonderful way of making sure you were in with the top set of decision-makers. And Murray MacLehose was extremely good at keeping his links at the top. One of the things that I think perhaps I should mention was that this was a country which had proportional representation so you very rarely had a government with a majority made up of one party. Sometimes the government party was in a minority so they depended on other parties within the parliament for getting their legislation through. This meant that it was no use simply lobbying the government about something that we wanted to do; we had to get the majority in parliament on our side as well! So a lot of lobbying went on on the backbenches, and with the parties, very different from the classic diplomacy, where you're speaking to the government. The same sort of thing goes on in Washington. Of course it has to be very tightly controlled if it's going to be effective. So we had a system ... the politicians were shared out amongst the staff and we specialized in it. I was the most junior and so I had the most junior backbenchers, but it was very good fun and when I went back ten years later, some of these backbenchers had become ministers. It was quite a useful grounding. We covered a range of issues - obviously EEC was the main one but there were also defence issues.

MG: What were they?

RD: The Danes had been neutral for a long time historically - they were neutral when they were invaded by Hitler in 1940 along with Norway, and they had joined NATO after the war with certain conditions. They were reluctant members and wouldn't have for example nuclear weapons or anything to do with that on their soil and they were very wary of nuclear weapons in NATO. In the 1970s, the Cold War confrontation was really acute, so these differences didn't show too much, didn't become a problem, but they did in the 1980s. Denmark became what was called a footnote nation, because whenever there was a NATO decision and Denmark wouldn't sign up to it, there was a footnote saying that Denmark did not support it. This was particularly true of deployment of INF missiles (intermediate nuclear range missiles) in the mid-1980s. Sometimes, later on in the 1980s when we were both EC members, there would be a lot of lobbying sometimes on extraordinary stuff. I remember being sent in to talk to Danish parliamentarians in their EU committee about permitted noise-levels for lawnmowers, crane-drivers' cabs and something else, I've forgotten what. This was where we were manufacturers of equipment. If the permitted noise-levels were reduced too far too fast, it could shut out a lot of what we were producing. The Danes were not producers but were very hot on environmental issues so they were going for the tightest-possible restrictions. We wanted obviously to protect our production.

MG: Again, I know we mustn't go into the present, but again this is happening now with the level of motor power in our vacuum cleaners and that's partly due to noise as well as ecology and I'm interested to hear that it happened back then too and yet now it's made into a big *raison d'être* for ...

RD: Within a market, even if you've got no tariff barriers, it is very easy for countries to block out other people's products by setting technical standards, which they either don't meet or sometimes cannot meet. A classic one was that the Scandinavians at one time banned disposable containers for beer, by which I mean that if you sell cans or bottles of beer in Denmark they have to be returnable. This is more difficult for foreign producers than it is for domestic ones!

MG: So this was used, although it sounds high-minded, again with an ecological basis, it was also a kind of trade tariff in a minor way?

RD: Yes it was protecting their trade interests and this goes on with all countries, no doubt with us as well. This is precisely what you negotiate when you're trying to get common standards within a common market.

MG: You mention the referendum, I'm interested in referenda now, so we didn't have one at the time of going in, did they?

RD: They did, yes. They required a referendum for what amounted to constitutional change. Of course that takes place after the agreement is reached: you know what the conditions of entry are, you know what the treaty of membership is, so the referendum then is "do you approve it or not?" And so we got involved for two reasons: one is that clearly we wanted to take Denmark and lead as many of the EFTA members as possible into the EEC so we were very keen to do whatever we could to help the government get the positive answer from the referendum. I remember George Brown came over to make some speeches about how important Denmark was to Britain and this sort of thing ... And it also meant sometimes that we would keep quiet about something in case it wouldn't go down well politically with the Danish electorate. But the thing that I remember most about it was that Jens Otto Krag, the Prime Minister at the time, a very popular Social Democrat, Labour if you like, was very keen to get Denmark in, but he was very conscious of a strong conservative element which would oppose. And Norway was going to vote as well (Sweden wasn't a candidate of course), and the Irish were going to vote. Now the Irish probably wouldn't be relevant in as much that they were to some extent competitors in this market we've been talking about, but the Norwegians were crucial, fellow Scandinavians, who worked together in the Nordic Union, so the order of referenda was very important. Jens Otto Krag had an unwritten agreement with the Norwegians that Denmark would go first, because Denmark was so obviously going to benefit from membership. It was less clear for Norway, not an agricultural economy, you see, not going to benefit from the CAP, in fact going to lose out, so the idea was that Denmark would go first, have its referendum, which would be positive and that would encourage Norway. All of a sudden, Krag got cold feet, said "oh God, this is not going well here, we must get the Norwegians to go first" so he suddenly postponed the referendum in Denmark and had it after the Norwegian one. He really did the dirty on the Norwegians frankly. And the Norwegians duly voted against in 1972, and then the Danish government and the establishment which were all in favour of membership, got very worried. I'm proud to say that we in the embassy were absolutely convinced that the reason they got

cold feet was that they were listening too much to the people in the towns. The majority, even then, of Danes lived in the countryside and the majority had very strong connections with the land. In those days, it was much less industrialized than many other countries, and it was so clear that the farmers were going to benefit that it was clear that a big majority would go for it. We actually had a little lottery in the embassy, to award a prize to the person who got the closest predictions to the actual result, and I won the bottle, which we drank on the day. My prediction was over the 60% mark in favour, which was the result - heavily in favour. And anyway Otto Krag soon after that resigned and a Labour leader came in who, unusually for Danes, didn't speak English or much English. He immediately came to the ambassador and said "Can you help me with some English lessons?" so we very discreetly provided some good English teachers.

MG: How did this leave things with Norway? Were you involved at all with that?

RD: No, we knew what was happening and we coordinated with the embassy there, but Norway was left out and stayed out. It was difficult for them in some ways. They decided to try again about 20 years later and a very good deal was done to bring them in but that was rejected again in 1994. With a very similar majority actually, perhaps a lesson we should have learnt over Brexit, but in Norway in 1994 the government and all the major parties, the CBI, the TUC equivalents all the big organizations were all in favour of this new-negotiated membership treaty. The referendum, which they were required to hold, went roughly 52 to 48 against, which was very similar to the result in 1972. And it was a horrific shock. The Norwegians had already been, ever since the treaty had been agreed, taking part in councils. They had been effectively part of the decision-making process and suddenly they had to leave again and look in from outside. The consequence of that was that countries like Britain, (we badly wanted like-minded countries in with us, Norway was one such as Denmark had been) were pretty upset about this result. Indeed the Germans made a great effort to arrange for an alternative which would be attractive and beneficial so the Norwegians got a very good deal in 1994, with the European Economic Area, which in practice made Norway a member of all the economic aspects of the EU together with some others: Lichtenstein and Iceland.

MG: Now you said going back to Denmark that in 1972 it was still essentially an agricultural economy and therefore there would be 60% in favour, how has that changed because you said it was much less industrialized, has it become more industrialized?

RD: Yes it has ... They had a small shipbuilding industry which actually collapsed in the late 60s or 70s, I'm not sure exactly when, because like everywhere else they couldn't compete with the Far East. Otherwise it was all light industry and that enabled them to develop some high-tech industries very early on. They were very clever at finding niches so they're very strong in pharmaceuticals and pumps; you know specialist pumps and of course brewing. They also had what has become since one of the big shipping companies of the world – the East Asiatic Company – just like the old East India Company in Britain really- an old colonial company which developed into what became Maersk, the big shipping company, which I'm sure you've heard of. The boss of the whole lot in my time was a chap called Maersk McKinney Moller (he has died only recently) and the company was AP Moller, which was the family name, but it included this East Asiatic Company and Maersk Shipping. It was an important family, almost but not quite like the Wallenbergs in Sweden. And they've been successful since in a whole range of relatively small world-class companies.

MG: So has their attitude to the EU remained as warm?

RD: Probably not. They have had a number of occasions where they've had referenda on EU issues which have gone against, so they've waited a while and had another referendum and got the right answer if you see what I mean, because their interests remain so heavily bound-up with Germany. Historically, they've always been very closely connected and really an extension of the German mainland. They have never liked this but they still are even more so since joining the EU, and it's very difficult to even conceive of operating outside the EU. But when it came to the Euro, for example, the referendum on joining the Euro went against and I don't think many people were all that surprised: very strong national feeling not to give up your Kroner. Actually it's almost irrelevant, because even before the referendum the Kroner was linked to the German Mark and the Kroner remains linked to the German Mark, which of course has become the Euro. So although they're not in the Eurozone and they don't use the Euro – they only use the Kroner – the Kroner actually is on parity all the time with the Euro.

MG: So if they're so closely linked to the Germans, how are they such an important ally of ours as well? In what areas does that combination materialize?

RD: In trade, our exports of goods have fallen immensely. The Germans have taken over a lot of what we used to supply and we've replaced them to a great extent with financial service exports where we still remain very strong, but don't all show in the trade statistics as such. Politically, at least until recently, we've had very similar views on human rights, let's call it liberal democratic values and this applied whether it was in the Cold War or elsewhere in the world. We found them very close allies and there again it's like-mindedness, which has been important to us. They are fellow members of NATO and among our closest neighbours so in the arrangements for reinforcing the Danish forces in the event of an emergency, Britain was the lead nation with annual exercises. I think that it was our common worldview, or very similar worldview, which was so important. Of course, they see us as a big country and so there's a paradox there: - on the one hand we're the Goliath and they're the David and so they are suspicious sometimes of big power politics – there's a long history going back of that – but on the other hand it's an opportunity for them to, as it were, influence a major player.

MG: So you've got several ambassadors down – who were they? Who was Sir Andrew Stark? He sounds a bit Scottish.

RD: Yes, he was Scottish too and very Scottish – Glaswegian. We had a lot of Scots in the Diplomatic Service at the time! We've always had a lot of people who were obviously either Irish or Scottish, not so many Welsh actually but there are some. Andrew Stark contrasted with Murray MacLehose who came from an aristocratic, landed, family. Andrew Stark was from a Glaswegian working class family, so very different origins. He was a very jovial Scot. I must tell you a story about Murray MacLeHose ... when I first arrived; I went to the Residence to meet the ambassador and his wife. I was ushered into the ballroom where they were. I of course knew immediately who the ambassador was because I'd seen him before but there were three others: two ladies and a dog, and the ambassador rather breezily said three names: "Sally, Penel and Squeak". I of course didn't know which was which! I rather assumed that the two ladies were called Sally and Penel and that the dog was called Squeak. It was actually the Ambassador's wife who was called Squeak so that got me into trouble in the first instance. Murray MacLeHose did that as a joke but you'd never have known that was a joke if you didn't know him: he was fairly dour in appearance but he had

this straight-faced sense of humour. Andrew Stark was very jovial, outgoing all the time, very much more in the classic diplomatic style really. I think I only had about nine months to a year with him. I met him in London during my next job.

MG: And what about Ivor Lucas?

RD: Ivor Lucas was the head of chancery, the number two obviously, and he was one of those superiors that juniors love to have because he basically said “this is where I want you to work” and he would then let you get on with it. He had high standards, he expected you to produce the goods, but he didn’t keep interfering, if you see what I mean, and I thought he was very discreet. There’d be a little touch of the tiller if he felt that you were going off-course. I admired him greatly. I didn’t know at the time but I think that he also rather liked what I did because I’m fairly certain, though I’ve never seen the papers, that it was partly down to him that I was put up as a candidate for the Private Office later on. I certainly went from Copenhagen to a really very good job and, considering what my background was, I was very pleased.

MG: So before we get onto your move back, let me understand your domestic situation. You’ve shown me this marvellous picture of this palace: were you in there?

RD: Oh no, no, that was the Ambassador's Residence. The place we moved into (and we had no children at the time) was a flat that had one and a half bedrooms. It did have two reception rooms and a kitchen and it was in a block of flats in suburban Copenhagen, which was modern. It had actually been built as an office block and converted to flats which meant that there was virtually none of the sound insulation floor to floor that you would normally get in a block of flats so there were all sorts of strange rules: we weren’t allowed to flush the loo after 10 o’clock, that sort of thing ... We had a party there, had a lot of journalists round, including some British ones, and as soon as I mentioned this of course there was a procession of journalists at about half past ten! But then I was promoted and we moved, partly because we found it quite difficult operating in this flat, but it also happened that my promotion – which was purely a kind of automatic thing – was used to justify larger accommodation. So we moved into a villa, which was absolutely gorgeous. Soon after we moved two things came up. One was an ENA course in Paris. Heath and Pompidou had arranged for British and French civil servants to get to know each other and their systems a bit better. So British

civil servants went to Paris for three months and French civil servants came to Britain. For the second course they were short of people so they did a trawl amongst British Embassies in EU states. So a chap from Paris and I went on this course; wonderful. We spent a month actually at the college mainly doing French language and government systems and then toured round the country. While I was doing that, Elizabeth got ill, with what appeared to be food poisoning, for which doctors gave her antibiotics, but it kept recurring. Each time she came towards the end of a course of antibiotics it started again, so when we got back to Denmark, she went to the doctor and was in hospital within hours ... It looked to a lot of people, especially me, that actually she had cancer. What they did in hospital was to starve her, so she lost a lot of weight and she became skeletal. I thought she was dying and it was an appalling time frankly, I appealed to the hospital to allow me to take her home for Christmas and they made me agree that I would administer her medication religiously and follow their instructions. I took her home and put her into a bed downstairs in front of the fire and we had roast chicken for Christmas dinner I remember ... She never went back to hospital, it turned out that she had suffered internal burns from an allergy to a particular antibiotic and each time she'd been to the doctor she'd been given more antibiotics but of the same type. An anaesthetist in the hospital happened to be the husband of one of the Danish staff in the embassy and he was able to go and have words with the medical staff, quite separately from what they were telling us.

MG: Is their standard of health service very high?

RD: In effect they have a national health service. It's done on an insurance basis and you sign up to (I've forgotten what they're called) but sort of 'a' or 'b' grade, the basic 'a' grade is paid for out of the normal national insurance in practice, then you can pay a supplement for the 'b' grade. That enables you to have a wider choice in going to hospital, you don't necessarily go to your local hospital; you can be sent to the knee specialist in Arhus as opposed to the one in Copenhagen. So in effect it's a two-tier service but it doesn't seem to involve queue jumping in quite the same way as in UK. A lot is devolved to local authorities and that applies across the board so health and social care are of course integrated and provided in effect by local authorities even if a lot of the money might come from national budgets.

MG: So they're ahead of us in that?

RD: Oh, way ahead, yes. We are copying now, have been since the coalition, well no, Tony Blair started it but we've been copying a bit what the Scandinavians have done in order to try to resolve the issues of how you maintain a welfare state with a population that doesn't want to pay taxes. The first crisis country in Scandinavia was Sweden; it virtually went bankrupt and that's why Sweden is the one that's being copied most and it goes across the board. Our academies – free schools – are copied from Scandinavia; devolution to the local authorities. It is all about bringing the money and the decision-making much closer to local people, where they have different requirements and different demographics. What we haven't yet done – and which our governments are going to find terribly difficult – is devolved tax-raising powers, which is what they do in Scandinavia. Sometimes the local taxes are higher than national taxes.

MG: But you see it coming?

RD: I personally don't think that our government will ever go that far. When I did this course in Paris, we had to do a kind of thesis and mine was about the fact that EU membership – or EEC membership – was going to mean that some decision-making would go from parliament to Brussels and parliament would probably therefore take more decision-making to itself from down below. Some form of counter action would be necessary in order for people to feel that they had some influence over the decisions, which affected them. That meant devolution. My thought to be honest with you was to county councils. Tony Blair was very much in line with this thesis when he started off trying to devolve to regions. You may remember that he said at the time that he wanted to go down as constitutional reformer and he had all sorts of elements for this, not just the House of Lords, devolution to Scotland and Wales (which happened) and to English regions. Sadly, that failed at the first hurdle with the Northeast region, but I personally still think that that is the way that we should be going.

MG: And that's how it's done in Denmark?

RD: Except that it is of course a small country with a small population and local authorities often have responsibilities over only a few thousand inhabitants. They are trying to amalgamate their communes, they're trying to go in the opposite direction because it has got

administratively very expensive, but there's no move at the moment that I can detect to centralize the decision-making where it is of crucial importance to local people.

Industry, Science and Energy Department, later Energy Department, Desk Officer (oil and fossil fuels) 1973-74

MG: So tell me how you came back in May 1973, was that the right time – three years?

RD: Yes it was three years. In those days you were in training until you were 30. So I'd done my training and I came home to a desk job, in, I think, the Industry, Science and Energy Department, (it was later divided up) where I became the desk officer for oil essentially, I also had coal and natural gas, but oil was the great thing.

MG: Is this when Sheikh Yamani reared his head?

RD: Sheikh Yamani was very important, but the important part about it in those days was that companies in oil producing countries owned the oil fields a lot of the time, they paid royalties to the host country, but they were only in rare cases nationalized. Now this was all before the Arab-Israel war of 1973. It was a time also when North Sea Oil was in prospect – the first wells had been discovered in '69 and this was '73. So there were huge issues for the government. The conditions imposed by the British Government under which the companies should be allowed to extract North Sea oil would have knock-on effects around the world for example on BP in North Africa or wherever it was ... The issues of taxation were also very important because of the knock-on effects elsewhere and the FCO got involved in all the issue of taxation in the North Sea, simply because of the implications that our regime would have for our interests in other parts of the world, including of course in other parts of the North Sea, but all that really got thrown up in the air by the war in October '73 and the nonsense that it produced. I should mention that before that war I took part in a committee, which was called the VSOP Committee.

MG: What did that stand for? Very Special Old Pale?

RD: Yes, it was a typical Whitehall joke. Led by a senior Treasury man the Committee was to consider the Very Large Surpluses of the Oil Producers! The concern at the time in 1973

was that some of these oil producers, Saudi Arabia for example, had built up very large surpluses of money which were in Britain, America, or wherever they were in these reserve currency countries. A decision to move all these funds from one currency to another could be devastating, so the Treasury was engaged in planning to cope with the moving of these very large surpluses. I was there representing the FCO because of the foreign implications from the oil sector of building up these surpluses. So I would go and talk to the Middle East Department about their views on the prospects of political change and I would put all this together and attend the meetings. The Committee produced a report in something like July '73 that forecast that oil would rise to \$10 a barrel by 1980, by the end of the decade, when the oil price at the time in 1973 was around \$2.50, but all this was to do with rising demand and all the rest of it. The key point was that I put in a caveat that this assumed that there should not be a Middle East war or political shock in the region, which of course two months later happened! And it caused an immense oil price rise. What I really remember about that was that the government found it difficult to grasp that the damage would arise not from an Arab embargo on oil supplies to countries which supported Israel, but from the huge rise in oil prices. Oil was produced by companies, and it was an international commodity – a tradable commodity. Arab governments could reduce their exports, for example by the amount the Netherlands would normally import, but they could not control the actual supply, because that was by the international oil companies. The British Government, and many others, began to react to cope with an oil shortage, when in practice the total supply around the world was reduced by a relatively small amount. It was understandable that they should – as it were – not publicly admit that the embargo was ineffective because obviously they had to keep the Arabs sweet to some extent, but it led to all sorts of fake over-reactions, including preparing to introduce petrol rationing in this country, which was never going to be necessary. That proposal came from another committee that I attended run by Jim Prior who was Lord Privy Seal at the time. The committee was looking at how Britain was going to cope with an acute oil shortage, which was of course never going to happen!

MG: I find it almost impossible to believe. I remember the three-day week and brushing your teeth in candlelight.

RD: No, that was to do with the miners' strike.

MG: Oh, I thought it was to do with the oil, wasn't there rationing? None of it happened?

RD: No. We never introduced it. We might have actually issued the coupons, because I remember we were having them prepared. In Paris, you drove on alternate days, on odd number plates on one day and even number plates on the other in an effort to reduce consumption.

MG: So all governments were convinced it was going to happen?

RD: Yes, many Western countries.

MG: Even though people like you were telling them that it couldn't happen?

RD: Yes or at least saying that price rises were the bigger challenge.

MG: How does that come about?

RD: I don't know. I tried to explain it, I remember, to a minister who was about to take questions in the House and I tried to show him by drawing circles on a piece of paper, representing ponds of oil. I said that oil from countries X, Y and Z goes into that pond and that's BP's pond, that's Esso's pond. The companies would then sell it to someone but they don't necessarily refuse to sell it to countries to be boycotted. Anyway, I did all these ponds and arrows going in and out and some years later I met him again and I said we'd met before and I'd briefed you and he said "oh yes, you're the lad who drew lots of circles ...". But anyway what forced the price up was not the marginal shortage of supply as a result of the war, though that had a political effect on the market there was no doubt, but the fact that the Iranians saw the opportunity to buck the price up. The Iranians of course weren't involved in the war but the Shah believed oil was such a precious commodity, it shouldn't simply be burnt in power stations, it should be used to produce plastics and so on which were much more valuable. So his idea was to cut production to bump up the price of oil, from which he would benefit enormously, and he took the opportunity. To combat this – the price rises – we had to reduce demand. So you're right, we did encourage people to economize, and we tried very hard to get the Americans to do the same and they absolutely refused.

FCO Secretary's Private Office – Assistant Private Secretary/Rest of World, 1974-77

MG: Tell me how you came to move after eight months from this desk to the Private Office (PO).

RD: I don't really know the full story, I mean, these things happen. What happens with the PO is that you get an invitation to go for an interview.

MG: Could you explain what it is?

RD: Yes, all ministers have Private Secretaries and they have a team of officials, to work directly for them. The PO is the Foreign Secretary's – or the Secretary of State's – office and in the FCO case at the time there was the Private Secretary, he would be of a quite senior rank, and there were two Assistant Private Secretaries of which I was to become one, who were First Secretary rank, and then there was a diary secretary, another rank down, and then there were clerks and secretaries. You would be asked, perhaps originally by the Personnel Department, if you'd mind your name going onto a list of potential candidates for a job in the PO, that was right because it was a very demanding job in terms of hours. I was invited to go for an interview – it was very clear that I wasn't the only person being interviewed. You have a preliminary interview with the Private Secretary who in this case was Antony Acland in the 'Broom Cupboard'. Next to the Foreign Secretary's big room, there is a small anteroom, not much bigger than a broom cupboard, and that is where these interviews would take place. After that whittling down you had a brief interview with the S of S who decided whether or not he was going to like you. In my case, that was Douglas-Home who was very nice and I joined. So I started in mid-January and within two weeks was on my way to Africa with Alec Douglas-Home because he was trying to resolve the Rhodesia crisis, which was part of my portfolio. (I had what was called 'the rest of the world' so I didn't deal with NATO and the EU and Europe, I dealt with the rest of the world, including US internal, Asia and Africa.) He was going off on a programme already established when I joined up. In those days when we went on a foreign trip involving perhaps ten days away, we flew in an RAF aircraft, with a full staff so the PS, myself and a team of secretaries, and a political advisor. Alec Douglas-Home in those days had a political advisor on Rhodesia specifically. The objective on this occasion was to try and get some negotiations going.

MG: Had you had the Tiger Talks by then?

RD: Yes, they'd taken place; they were very much earlier in the '60s. That was Wilson's initiative.

MG: And they didn't come to anything?

RD: They didn't come to anything, no. When we went, Rhodesia had already kicked out the Governor-General. It was not just a rebel government, it was a rebel colony, so we had no contacts with them except through indirect methods. Alec Douglas-Home went to Nigeria first and we then went to Zambia and Malawi where Hastings Banda was still around and where the ladies had to wear long skirts, (strict dress requirements). We went from there to Tanzania and Julius Nyerere and from there up to Nairobi for Jomo Kenyatta. What ADH was doing in most of these countries was saying, "don't underestimate the Bishop (Muzorewa)", who was being brought in as a kind of compromise-candidate, not connected with the liberation movements. Kenneth Kaunda didn't have much time for the Bishop but these were very jovial meetings. ADH got on quite well with them. In the case of Banda, he was more sympathetic to the British side and it was in Malawi that we were able to have what you might call indirect meetings with Rhodesians. There were groups of Rhodesians who obviously couldn't be Ian Smith but who, shall we say, had the ear of the government – they were very closely connected – and they could come to Malawi and back without any problem. So we had meetings with them there. When I went back eventually as High Commissioner long after independence, I met some of these people again ...

MG: I'm a bit hazy on the time, but where was Mugabe at that stage?

RD: Mugabe at that time was in prison, I think. But anyway, ADH got to Nairobi and we had our meetings. I can remember the moment I was actually dictating a record of the meeting with the FM by the swimming pool of the residence at Nairobi, when we got a message that Heath had called a general election, or was about to call one, so instead of having a weekend off which we were going to do while ADH went to see his cousin who lived in Kenya, we flew home early and went straight into the office. So I felt a bit cheated! The election campaign had already started. ADH's constituency was Kinross and East Perthshire but he was still Foreign Secretary with things going on around the world – this is February by this

time – and he had to take decisions. To help him do that he had a PS up in Scotland with him all the time, but of course as an official the PS can't take any part in the campaigning. When my turn came actually in election week I found it absolutely fascinating. I of course had to accompany him but not be visible, so I went with the security officers and the policemen round with him to where he would address little knots of people on a junction of two roads or in a village hall and so on. He had his political advisor with him, who actually was a speechwriter, the Earl Lucas, and I'd often attend his political meetings. We'd stand at the back of the hall out of sight. Then in the evening, when we were back, if there was something I needed to talk about - I'd get a message or a box would be sent up from London with papers for him to sign – we'd have a session perhaps an hour or half an hour in between political meetings. I was very conscious of being a civil servant and not, you know, a party official and so for example at dinner, the Homes were, Elizabeth particularly, very parental. They wanted to look after everybody and they didn't like the idea of my having my dinner on my own so they insisted that I came and sat with them. I was a bit nervous about all this, as you can imagine because they were campaigning ...but anyway I did. They were a wonderful couple. When it came to the end, the results were declared in Perth town hall at lunchtime on the Friday. By this time, we already knew from our sources that it looked as though Heath had not got the majority he was looking for - Heath went to the country really for a vote of confidence in his handling of the miners. Anyway, ADH was getting reports in all the time from the party in London where Heath was talking about trying to stay in office and have a coalition with Jeremy Thorpe. Now ADH believed that that was quite wrong: it was completely unethical and ADH was a very ethical man. He said Heath went to the country for a vote of confidence, he hasn't got it, and we have to go. And so he said I've got to get back quickly to London. Well he was on party business, so no RAF plane, but the head of an electronics company had a private plane and sent it to Perth and I flew back with the Homes and a political advisor in this private plane. ADH was absolutely fuming about what Heath was up to and arrangements were being made to get him directly from Northolt to Number 10 to talk to Heath. ADH had been PM and though now FS he was still very, very influential I think. Anyway, we landed, and off he went to Heath and I actually didn't see him again until he came round to say goodbye to us all and to give us farewell presents. I've still got the alarm clock he gave me even though I'd only been with him a few weeks. This was democracy in action in my view and I don't mind telling this story because I think it illustrates that we do have a political system which, when it's allowed to, works properly, and we have had very honourable politicians. James Callaghan came in next.

MG: So he was the Foreign Secretary that came in. It was Wilson still, for a little while.

RD: Yes, so James Callaghan comes in and Antony Acland (Private Secretary) – old Etonian, distinguished establishment family, brother a major general – offers his resignation. That's tradition anyway but Callaghan says 'absolutely not'; he wouldn't accept it because for Callaghan, the Civil Service was impartial - it didn't matter where the officials came from. Interestingly, the Labour party had published a series of pamphlets about the way that the Civil Service was biased against Labour, that it was unrepresentative and in particular the FCO was unrepresentative of the country etc. etc. So we were rather expecting a clean sweep and thought we'd all be out of a job, but, no, Callaghan was absolutely insistent and regarded the Civil Service (and of course he had been Home Secretary and Chancellor and so on) as what I believe it is and what it should be, which is a body of people who try to give the most impartial advice to promote Britain's interests in line with the government's policy at the time. Anyway, Callaghan came in and he insisted that we all stayed. He was a very, very different man from ADH, also very nice and Margaret – his wife – was then Chairman of Great Ormond Street and quite an important figure, very much a career woman, unlike Elizabeth Home who was everybody's favourite aunt really.

MG: He has a reputation for being a kindly and straight-dealing chap.

RD: Yes, I think he was, well he definitely was. He could be a bully and I had one of those experiences, which is particularly disturbing to a civil servant. He was dealing with some papers, which actually I knew very little about but which were from another PS' portfolio. We were over in the House of Commons; we did a lot of duty in the FS's room when the house was sitting. I should explain that the government had come in without a majority, so whenever there was a vote, the FS had to be in his office in the Commons. This was about 7:30 at night, we were all pretty tired, there was a very difficult debate going on and we were dealing with an important issue to do with disarmament and the Soviets. There was something that was wrong in the papers, and it was wrong, no doubt about it, but I didn't know how to correct it. Callaghan really gave me a drubbing, I mean he didn't physically assault me but a superior has never spoken me to in such a vicious way.

MG: Did it remind you of the Emperor Bokassa and the Minister of Education?

RD: In a way, yes. But from his point of view, yes, we were falling down on the job and anyway I said ‘look I’m very sorry but I’ll try to get the answer but I can’t give it to you now’ and I left the office, went outside, and despite the fact that I was mid-30s, I was pretty close to tears. I could see my whole career ending there and then. Anyway, outside the door was Ruth Sharpe his constituency secretary who had been with him for twenty or thirty years, a long, long time, a lovely lady who was very sharp indeed and also very close to him. She was waiting outside and she’d obviously heard this rant going on and she said ‘Richard, welcome to the club’! I was completely taken aback and I asked what she meant and she said ‘well, you have just been treated to what we all get when we get inside the inner circle, that was an expression of confidence in you.’ Perverse. And indeed there was never any comeback, he didn’t mention it again, I never got another drubbing like it either, although I did see him angry, but I saw him do it to others and it’s a curious thing. You know how I described how he regarded the civil servants as a breed apart, well he would occasionally go for people who gained his confidence, got inside, under his skin. He did it to Ruth Sharpe. It was a mark of, well, confidence really. He was a man who as I say he could be very imperious, bullying, but he was also very jovial, he was very good with people. He did some curious things. Every day when he could, he would have a little ziz at about 2 o’clock and, on one occasion when I said to him ‘shall I leave with you the briefs for the next meeting?’ he said, ‘no, Richard, as John Silkin (Attorney General) said, better refreshed than briefed.’

MG: So how did he get on with Idi Amin, he was a terrible bully, how did they get on?

RD: Well Callaghan made sure that he got on well with him but that is a story which is difficult to believe. Before I get onto that, I just want to say more about Callaghan and the way the PO operated, two points really. If the minister doesn’t deal with his boxes, with his decisions, then they pile up. We would try to get his decision orally. For example, we would say: “this decision on apples ... the issue is really quite simple: whether they should be green or red, what do you think? Can we go for red?” “Fine.” Decision taken. But sometimes there were papers which he had to look at and on one occasion I remember he came in, threw a box on the table and said: “I’ve got no time to deal with this, you do it.” So we collectively in the PO then took the decisions for him, knowing what we knew about him and what he knew. It was a very rare event but it happened. Our job you see was to first of all to make sure that he got the best advice from the Office and not from us. That is why some PSs don’t like the

job because they're not themselves making policy. Shouldn't be anyway. So you got this advice, made sure that it was available to the FS and that he understood it. Equally, when he's taken a decision we had to make sure that the Office implemented it and didn't Sir Humphrey, if you see what I mean. So you face two ways. In the case of Callaghan when he refused to take his decisions we didn't necessarily accept the recommendation of the Office but if we didn't we did so because we knew he wasn't going to accept the advice either. The important thing was to get it right because he would face the consequences. This happened more often than perhaps any of us would like to admit, for Callaghan was a great action man and much more decisive than Tony Crosland. My other point about the Callaghan years was actually about Antony Acland. At the time, we were doing a lot of dealings with the Americans. Henry Kissinger was the Secretary of State, and everything that Callaghan wasn't, the great intellectual, academic, with degrees spouting out of his head. Callaghan very conscious of the fact that he was not a graduate, it was one of the things about him, but he was very, very worldly-wise, actually a very clever man and a consummate politician. And these two actually got on. As a crisis developed whatever it would be, Antony Acland was brilliant at anticipating the moment when Callaghan would want to intervene 'well I think this is where we have a message coming on' he would say. So he would actually draft a message from Callaghan to Kissinger, whatever it would be, and keep it in his drawer and Callaghan would come into the PO from his big room. "I've just been thinking about Henry and what we should do about Cyprus (or somewhere) and I think I'll just send him a message" and AA would pull the message out from his drawer. He was brilliant! I was just in awe of this man because he could write it beautifully but it was also with the right content. Callaghan and Idi Amin: Idi Amin had been expelling the Ugandan Asians and indeed lots of others as well. The British community had been advised to leave and amongst them was a gentleman called Dennis Hills, who was an academic, who was a lecturer in English at Makerere University, a writer himself, who was very interested in anthropology and he wrote a lot about for example Ugandan women or tribal customs and things like that, quite a lot from personal experience. Anyway, Dennis Hills had been a great admirer of Idi Amin at the beginning, as indeed had collectively the British government, he seemed to be a huge improvement on his predecessor in actually doing things and getting things done. However by 1974 he'd gone pretty much mad. Dennis Hills was evacuated with a lot of other people, but he had met Amin and thought he got on with him and he decided to go back. In a moment of alcoholic madness, he told one of his fellow British drinkers in the club that he was writing a book in which Amin was going to be mentioned. So when this friend was

picked up for whatever reason, you were very lucky not to be arrested if you were a foreigner, this chap probably under torture revealed that Hills was writing this book. Hills was arrested and condemned to death for treason for insulting Amin. And his famed friendship got him nowhere, of course. Anyway, after he'd been condemned to death, there were all sorts of campaigns for his release it became a big issue. A message was sent by the Queen, delivered by Amin's former Commanding Officer in the King's African Rifles I think it was. The UN Secretary General and even heads-of-state all round Africa sent messages appealing for clemency. Amin, who actually was quite a cunning man, decided that he could perhaps exploit this. We got no result from the appeals for clemency, but we got a message from President Mobutu from the Congo, called Zaire then, and this was to the effect that his good friend Amin would release Dennis Hills personally to Callaghan if Callaghan came in person to Kampala to collect him because he'd like to have a good chat with Callaghan. Now, the advice from officials was that this was a trap in that Amin would exploit a visit in every possible way and Callaghan should not deal with a murderous criminal. Callaghan believed that if Dennis Hills was then executed, he would have it on his conscience and indeed he would get the blame. He understood the national risks and personal risks he'd be facing and of course it could turn very sour for him because he could lose both ways, but he felt that he had to do something and as he said, the offer could be genuine. So the Africa Under-Secretary, who was called Alan Campbell, was dispatched in advance to make an assessment of Mobutu, because we were getting the offer from Mobutu not Amin. He reported back that so far as he could see it looked genuine and Mobutu trusted Amin. So we flew out, in an RAF plane, double crewed so that it could move at any time without crew hours being affected, instructions to keep fuel tanks topped up so that we could exit in an emergency ... We flew first to Kinshasa where we overnighted, as guests of President Mobutu in the so-called OAU village. Anyway, we had dinner, not hosted by Mobutu if I remember rightly but hosted by their equivalent of the Foreign Secretary. And then the next morning we had a meeting with Mobutu. Now when I say we, we had with us Tom McNally, who as International Secretary at Transport House had written these pamphlets against the FCO (no changes were made incidentally in the FCO as a result of them, Tom McNally and I got on very well: we shared a desk! And if you want to know how political advisors operated then I can do another session on that.) The party also included the press secretary who was a civil servant but had worked for Callaghan since he was in the Home Office. (That ruffled a few feathers in the Foreign Office when he was brought in!), Tom McCaffrey his name was, and of course we had journalists with us, which was a kind of an effort to protect ourselves,

and a senior official from the FCO. When we went to see Mobutu, Callaghan asked him 'How can I be sure that Amin will live up to your expectations, you obviously trust him but how can I be sure that you're right?' So Mobutu said 'Well what I'll do is let you take my foreign minister with you as a hostage', so this chap flew with us to Entebbe. We British were instructed that when we came off the aircraft we were not to smile. That was hard because all the Ugandan officials meeting us were so pleased, but we had to be rather glum, as we didn't want photographs in the press showing us smiling with Amin's henchmen. The Acting High Commissioner there met us of course (I'm not sure whether he was described as deputy or acting HC) – James Hennessy – a very old Africa hand - had I think had two others on his staff, but everybody else had been evacuated. We all went to his house where we were going to stay apart from the journalists who were in a hotel somewhere, and we were told we had to go to dinner with Amin's equivalent of a foreign minister - I'm pretty sure it was an army man. Before the dinner, we had to go to a meeting first of all for discussions – which we had in one of the offices with some Foreign Ministry officials who were absolutely terrified and then we had to go to dinner in I think it was called the Hotel International or something which we knew had cellars where his security people had his torture chambers and where people who were executed were thrown in the river just outside ... pretty ghastly to be honest. During the night, a piece of intelligence came in to the effect that we were walking into a trap. (I should have said that at the end of this dinner we were told that the President would receive us at the Command Post, at 9 o'clock the next morning.) When this piece came in in the middle of the night, we had to decide whether or not to take it seriously and wake Callaghan. We decided we needn't, because we noticed that the source of this intelligence was in Kenya ... and we didn't trust the Kenyans as reliable sources in this case. We convinced Callaghan the next morning that we should ignore the report. (Incidentally Callaghan took the opportunity while he was there on the day we arrived, to address a reception for the remaining British community who were mainly missionaries who weren't going to go under any circumstances.) He urged them to leave and he brought the house down with a slip of the tongue by saying that it was quite a long time since he'd been in Ghana!) The Ugandans told us that there would be a meeting with Amin at the Command Post and he would then release Dennis Hills. So the next morning we decided our tactics (and I was a sort-of hanger-on in all this). The Foreign Secretary would go with acting High Commissioner Hennessy, and McNally to the command post. McCaffrey would go I think but stay outside, if I remember rightly. The Zaire Foreign Minister was also there. I was to stay behind at the High Commission and when Hills was released, he would come back to the

High Commission as soon as possible; I would then take him to the airport and would put him on the aircraft where in a practice he would be under guard. (We had RAF security you see, defending the plane.) My part in all this was very minor. So I waited there, nail biting, because the one thing as a Private Secretary you don't like to do is be separated from your principal. So they all went off, I sat with the High Commission staff who were left, wondering what the hell was going on, and all of a sudden, they all came back! With Hills but no Callaghan! And where is the Foreign Secretary? Oh, he's gone off with Amin ... I said, 'what do you mean, he's gone off with Amin?' He had gone off alone with Amin and the rest of us were to join them for lunch at the Presidential Palace in Entebbe. I followed my instructions and took Hills to the airport, leaving the others to follow on. We got him to the airport through emigration and onto the aircraft and under guard, yes. I then went with all the others, we all met up, at the Palace at Entebbe. Entebbe is half an hour's drive from Kampala and we were told that Callaghan and Amin would be coming direct to this palace where we were all to have lunch. Well this must have been about 11 o'clock, something like that. Come 12 o'clock there is absolutely no sign of Amin so I'm getting very worried and I go round to find the security detail there, who point their guns at me as I go in. They didn't like my intrusion. I said: 'Look, I'm from the personal staff of the British Foreign Secretary, can you tell me where he and the President are?' "No." And actually to be honest I don't think they knew either. We got to a certain moment when we were told we were to go in to lunch and through another door to the place where lunch was all set out, come Callaghan and Amin. Now Callaghan was quite a big man, but Amin was even bigger. Arms round each other, they come into the room. Thankfully there's no press here. You can imagine how that would have gone down. They come into the room and are getting on extremely well, lots of guffawing. Amin had charisma, an extraordinary magnetic personality and we could all feel it in this room; it was quite extraordinary. We understood therefore how it was that he had been so successful at the beginning. We had a very jovial lunch, we could have been in the heart of the Commonwealth with fellow Commonwealth leaders and it was as if we were part of the family, it was just extraordinary. Anyway, we got away as soon as we could, got in our plane, took off and had very large gins and tonics.

MG: And you'd got the Foreign Minister, had you?

RD: No, the Foreign Minister stayed behind. He got back separately, don't worry. He was accused of some kind of disloyalty later by Mobutu. Anyway, I wrote an account of Hills'

rescue mission because in those days people were asked to write a personal account of unusual events. I have tried to find it recently with the help of Patrick Salmon but I can find no trace of it and have absolutely no idea what happened to it. And there are very few other references in the papers to it, to the actual events, there are references to the build-up and there's indeed a minute from me afterwards when the Office which of course had had to pay for the RAF aircraft was asking me whether we should charge Dennis Hills his return fare, to which I said 'no'. I didn't even bother to consult Callaghan; it was just such bad PR! But the extraordinary thing is that Callaghan does not mention the Hills rescue mission anywhere in his memoirs and there are very few public references to it. However, the chap who wrote a book called *The Last King of Scotland*, made into a film, knows about it. If you, in light of what I've told you, were to go and read the book again, you'd see a lot of parallels. It's about a doctor who goes out and thinks Amin is the bee's knees, sees the charisma and so on, befriends him or is brought in to befriend him and has an affair with one of Amin's wives which is how he gets into trouble. I know that this author went to see Callaghan and had a meeting with him because he knew about this trip. Jon Snow mentions it in his book briefly but I could find hardly any other reference, which was very puzzling. And I think that Callaghan almost blotted it from his mind because while it was very brave of him to do it, it was also extremely risky. You see what happened was that Amin took him off, driving the Land Rover, just the two of them in this Land Rover. They went actually to the royal palace in Kampala where all these kings of Buganda had lived. He and Callaghan went into the great thatched hut where you have to stoop to go into the entrance; these were big men who were virtually on their knees, where there were some of the royal family because Amin didn't want to antagonize the Buganda... This was a pretty hair-raising experience. But I think the reason he didn't record it was because he had allowed himself to be exploited by Amin. Afterwards, after all the chumminess, Amin threatened to come to the Commonwealth Conference, which was taking place later that year in Scotland. Anyway, that was one great episode.

The Gulf Tour was another. It was also with Callaghan, and lasted ten days. We went to Kuwait, Qatar and so on and virtually all the states in the region. The Under-Secretary at the time was called Michael Weir, who had been a political agent in one or other of these places if not more than one. Until the 1970s, or until the late 1960s, these Gulf States had British political agents to help run the place. Michael Weir had been one of them. Whenever we got off the plane in these countries, Callaghan would come off first and be introduced and then

there would be this crowd around Michael Weir, embracing him, because he was so popular. It shows you how well integrated these political agents got. Anyway, in those days in Saudi Arabia the government sat in Riyadh but no foreign diplomats were allowed to live there, all the embassies were in Jeddah. Foreign guests flew into Riyadh and were accommodated in guest palaces, neighbouring the royal residences. Callaghan was in a very luxurious palace with a plunge bath set in the floor, gold taps. I had a room in a guest palace with an enormous round bed, I had gold taps too I think, it was just mind-boggling. Now that it's so long ago I can tell this story. Callaghan had full Arab dress left for him in his room, or in his suite, and we persuaded - Tom McNally and I really – persuaded him to put it on! And so there is a picture of Callaghan in Riyadh in unmistakably Arab surroundings wearing full Arab robes, which we jokingly threatened to send to the Labour Friends of Israel, who actually in my time in the FCO were very important, and had considerable influence. Part of the arrangement was that we would go and see Prince Sultan who was the defence minister (Mrs. Thatcher is not the only person who's discussed arms sales to Saudi Arabia). We were taken to his desert encampment where he received us in his black tent. There was a house behind it but there was this encampment, and it was fantastic. It was the first time I'd ever been in an Arab country. We were offered a luxurious feast – men only of course – seated around on a carpet. There was this groaning table in front of you and you reached forward and ate. Michael Weir decided he was going to make fun of me so he insisted that I be given the sheep's eye. Laurence Durrell wrote about a similar joke. We were meeting inside the majlis tent, where the council meets. Callaghan said to Prince Sultan, 'If only John Weston (the EU private secretary) could see us now!' The Prince said, 'would you like to speak to him?' and from a cushion came an old-fashioned style telephone, but a satellite phone, and we called home from this tent! And you know Callaghan loved this sort of thing. He did not think much of Wilson as I recall. He regarded Wilson as having betrayed the party to a great extent by failing to deal with what in those days was entryism by Trotskyists, what we now call militants. Callaghan was vigorously anti-Trot and I remember being in his constituency at a public meeting where someone from the Trots – they used to barrack in local constituencies – tried to disrupt the meeting. Callaghan gave him one of his tirades from the platform. He was determined to stand up to them but he thought Wilson had allowed himself to be directed by them, or not having done enough to weed them out of the party. He also criticized Wilson for accepting advice from the wrong kind of people. That included his chauffeur, believe it or not, and that was one of the difficult issues for us as officials.

MG: But is that because Wilson was at that time degenerating a bit – he knew his mind was going, didn't he?

RD: Yes he did I think. I don't know because I didn't see enough of Wilson. I did see quite a lot of him when we went to CHOGM (Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting) in Jamaica and where we had difficulties because his chauffeur would sometimes say poisonous things about FCO officials to Wilson and it meant that it was sometimes difficult for them to get their point across. Wilson's premiership was a difficult time and I think it wasn't a surprise to Callaghan when Wilson resigned. He made out that it was but I had no doubt that he was going to stand as a candidate to succeed him which he did, but of course it was too late. He told me that he was being given a poisoned chalice succeeding Wilson. I saw him a few times afterwards – Callaghan was tremendously loyal; he expected loyalty, got it and he gave it back.

MG: What I don't quite follow is that he did succeed Wilson, didn't he? And he got down the Gang of Four, I mean if he was so much against the militants, why did the Gang of Four have to come about?

RD: Well that was Shirley Williams, Bill Rogers, David Owen and Roy Jenkins. Callaghan opposed the Gang of Four; or rather he thought that they represented the better, moderate, wing of the party on which its future depended. Part of his thought as I understood it was that Wilson, by allowing too much influence from the Trots, was eventually going to drive the moderates out and split the party. He thought that a split in the party would be disastrous so he did not want the Gang of Four doing it. I'm sure there were attempts by them to recruit Callaghan but he wasn't going to play. The whole thing would have been regarded as disloyalty, loyalty was terribly important. He was a man who was very conscious of his origins and very proud of his origins, and he shared the values of what you might call the old soldiers and sailors, where loyalty to country and colleagues was very important. For the second election in 1974 when he was already Foreign Secretary, Callaghan had to go to his constituency in South Wales – Cardiff South – and I was there on duty also for election week. It was in complete contrast to my time with Douglas-Home; Instead of knots of people, these were big rallies in working class ... industrial areas. I was with him, for example, one day when he was handing out election manifestos or leaflets to the workers changing shift at the

big steel plant. The reason I was with him was that we were going straight from there to the airport where his plane was going to take him to New York where as Foreign Secretary he would attend the various meetings which took place at the time of the opening of the UN General Assembly in September. It's all still the same but now PMs tend to go more than they did then. These meetings were always preceded by a meeting of a different Gang of Four, I've forgotten what they were called, but America, Britain, France and Germany meet very discreetly, very quietly because these were the most powerful countries in the West at the time. I think it was on that occasion that we travelled back with Hans-Dietrich Genscher – the German Foreign Minister. After he'd done all this, - distributed his pamphlets in Cardiff early in the morning, flown to New York and gone through a whole day of meetings, stayed overnight, given his General Assembly speech, then back on the aircraft to Britain, - he went straight back to the constituency, canvassing again. What we require of our politicians is not required by almost any other country. He was Foreign Secretary and a candidate! Callaghan was very dedicated to his constituency. I remember that there was a Labour minister who lost his seat and then stood again and failed to get in. Callaghan had no sympathy for him because he hadn't attended to his constituency. Callaghan was assiduous, every Friday night he would go down unless he was in Saudi Arabia or somewhere, to Cardiff where he had a flat and he would have his constituency meetings, he would do surgeries on Saturday and he would then come back usually on Saturday night or Sunday to his farm in Ringmer, Sussex, where he loved sitting on the tractor, just playing the farmer.

MG: Did Crosland replace him, then?

RD: Yes, Crosland. When he went to Number 10, he made Crosland Foreign Secretary, who came from a totally different environment. He was the theologian for the Labour Party, the guru. Callaghan was a man, who could connect with people, a man of the people and an action man. Crosland, was middle-class if not upper middle-class, fellow of All Souls, very intellectual, much preferred thought to action, a huge contrast. His political advisor David Lipsey, now Lord Lipsey, had no special knowledge of foreign affairs, unlike Tom McNally (also Lord McNally) who had been international secretary of the Labour Party. So Crosland was appointed and his style posed a problem for the FCO, which often needs decisions in four hours or 24 hours, very rarely in several days. For someone who had come from the Environment Department where you can take a year to take a decision, it was horrific. The UN Security Council might be meeting late at night; we had to get instructions to the

ambassador about a resolution against Israel or whatever and Crosland wanted to think about it in the morning. A nightmare, and he could be very difficult.

MG: Did he die?

RD: Yes, he did. I have given a negative side of Crosland, but there was a very good side. This was that he had a strategic vision; foreign policy for him was something that was going to be lasting and strategic with tactical moves within the policy. Difficult, but that is what he was trying to do. So advice would come and he would say 'No, let's think again and see if we can do it this way'. In the case of Rhodesia, he wanted a complete rethink and submissions came up, went back, with policy thoughts on how we might approach the whole issue differently. The then Head of Rhodesia Department, Robin Byatt, had a lot of work to do! And we kept on at this, and eventually a submission came up which had a completely different approach. I remember going through this paper (and in our day we used to write little manuscript notes which I don't suppose go anywhere near archives but which would be our attempt to focus the S of S's mind on the main issue. Sometimes we would say 'this is nonsense, you should ask for ...'). I can remember rushing to get this paper, this revised paper, into the box for the weekend. Crosland was nearly always down in Oxford, he had a nice place in the north of Oxford, and I'll come to talk about Crosland and his constituency in a moment, but he was not there all that often. But while he was at home near Oxford and I think it was a Sunday afternoon or evening, we got a message to say that he had been taken ill and had been taken to hospital in Oxford. The box eventually came back I assume on Monday or something like that and by this time we knew that it was very serious, that he was probably not going to recover but the press line was that he had been taken ill and that he was stable in hospital and would return to duties as soon as he could. Meanwhile the senior minister of state was going to handle affairs and that was David Owen. Anyway, the box came back; the submission came back to me to see what had happened. He had started to write his comments (and he had a very smart spidery hand) but they tailed off with the pen sliding down the page. So he'd been working on the submission when he had his stroke. He never recovered consciousness. Sadly he drank a lot and he often drank too much when he shouldn't have done. Private secretaries have to do strange things such as waking their people up and sometimes it was quite difficult to get him into the House. During this fortnight or so a lot went on and I of course dealt with David Owen. He became "my man" and took all the decisions on Rhodesia.

MG: He's reputed to be difficult too.

RD: I enjoyed him, he was only a couple of years older than me and I liked the way that he told the FCO knights where to go! He insisted on having – so did Crosland actually – advice from all levels, not just the most senior, so at Owen's briefing sessions, he'd give the floor to the desk officer first and encourage the juniors. When he was appointed Foreign Secretary he got loads of congratulations from people all over the world who'd benefitted from treatment for Parkinson's that he had devised as a neurological research medic. And he answered them all in manuscript personally, hundreds of letters. This was in addition to dealing with his boxes - phenomenal energy. In the morning he would take his son to hospital, on the way from where they lived in Wapping. I only had about two months with him. Despite the fact that I was only about two months with him he and his wife – Debbie – gave a little farewell party. Elizabeth and I were invited to dinner there with a couple of other friends of his and it was pleasant and extraordinarily kind. It was very homely - we didn't help with washing up but we offered to!

MG: Tell me about the Cod War.

RD: Crosland represented Grimsby, he didn't go there very often, but of course Grimsby was one of the main trawler ports when the Cod War, I've forgotten which one, was raging. It was clear that we couldn't win - we weren't going to shoot the Icelandic coast guards out of the water and internationally the law of the sea was going against us. We didn't have much sympathy from other countries, although we did for a while from Norway of course which was facing similar problems. Anyway Crosland after a while said we've got to resolve this, stop it and make a deal. Huge opposition from the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and there was a big Whitehall battle which Crosland won, but all the time he was actually conscious of the fact that this was a national interest which conflicted with his constituency interest. He tried to persuade the trawler men by saying 'well if you can't go to Iceland which is quite a long way from Grimsby, you can go South' – for they had these big industrial trawlers and go South meant to the South Atlantic where of course, we had the Falkland Islands and rich fishing grounds, but they wouldn't go. I can remember he had a meeting with the trawler men in the office, not just the Grimsby men, but others who were

lobbying. It took great courage in my view, political courage but was absolutely right. I've been to the record office and taken out the papers with Patrick's (Salmon's) help, had a look at the papers on all this and one of the things that I'd forgotten about was that he instituted an enquiry into how we'd got ourselves in the position of fighting a war we couldn't win on a very shaky international basis and there is a report about all this. Essentially we'd got into it because we – the FCO and others – hadn't really been insistent enough that in our overall national interest we needed to accept that the Icelanders were going to get their fish.

Well I think we ought to leave it there.

Language Training (Bulgarian) May-November 1977; First Secretary, Head of Chancery, Bulgaria, 1977-81

MG: It's the 5th of December 2016 and Moira Goldstaub is continuing talking with Sir Richard Dales. I think, Sir Richard that we've got to May 1977 now, when you go for language training.

RD: Yes, I think that's right. I'd been in the Private Office for three and a half years and they decided that that was enough! I'd in fact been due to go to Portugal but somebody died there so they decided that they needed a Portuguese speaker quickly and I didn't have Portuguese. That job went to Roger Westbrook who had succeeded me in Cameroon, which was ironic. Anyway, they then offered me the No 2 job in Sofia in Bulgaria, which I thought was a real let down! But senior members of the office formed up, saying that they'd been there and it was a wonderful posting and very interesting, which indeed it was. But I first had to go and learn Bulgarian. I was taught by a Bulgarian exile who taught RE (religious studies) in a London school. He was actually a Bulgarian Orthodox Church member, married to a British lady who I think taught English. Anyway, I would go to their house and he'd teach me Bulgarian. I had five months of one-to-one tuition with a lot of homework, which was a bit of a shock. Nonetheless, I was able to arrive in Bulgaria, with enough of the language to ask people in the street how to get to the next place and so on. Bulgaria – Sofia – was in the middle of the Cold War, '77. It had borders with two NATO countries - Greece and Turkey, and also with Yugoslavia, which though communist was non-aligned. Tito was getting old and one of the scenarios for the outbreak of WWIII was that Yugoslavia would break up after his death and the Red Army would rush across through Hungary to protect the

Serbs. Bulgaria would have a vital strategic role then. So we were on alert for Tito's death and its possible consequences.

Conditions for NATO diplomats in Sofia were quite tough. As it was assumed that our homes were bugged, we had to be very careful what we said aloud even at home, even in the bedroom. Our movements were monitored. There was a State Security post opposite the Embassy, whose staff we came to recognize and greet in the street - which they hated of course! Because of the pressures, looking after our staff and maintaining morale was very important. In fact, John Cloake, the Ambassador, was a wonderful character. His wife was American. I think that they'd met in Vietnam where she had been with the CIA. She was very petite, and I believe had had ballet training. They were great opera buffs and through that gained significant entree to Bulgarian cultural circles. John was also very good with his staff. He told me on arrival that my first duty at the embassy was preparing the Christmas revue. This was very common in embassies. There would be a party given by the ambassador for Christmas, a big Christmas party, to which all the family would come – all the staff and all their families – and we were I think 20 or so people from the UK, plus our families in Sofia. This revue had to be light-hearted and poke fun at the ambassador. I called for volunteers and it was amazing what talent was revealed: we had former policemen (who were our security officers) performing the Top Hat dance. It was very crude, with the bellybutton acting as the whistling mouth, a nose painted above it with breasts forming the eyes with cardboard top hats coming down over the shoulders. It was excruciatingly funny and a good way of letting our hair down.

MG: I take it Bulgarians weren't invited?

RD: Bulgarians were not invited, no; no local staff. In Norway when I was ambassador and got my deputy to run these revues, we did in fact have local staff as well. From the political point of view, it was an extraordinary situation because Bulgaria was one of the closest disciples of Russia, the Soviet Union and a staunch member of the Warsaw Pact.

MG: Who was the Head of State?

RD: It was a chap called Todor Zhivkov, a real Party man. But he was also Bulgarian and that meant that he had quite a sense of humour although he ruled with an iron fist. The

Communist Party ran Bulgaria and anyone in the Party had enormous privileges. Control was absolute; they still had internal exile as a punishment and most good jobs were confined to people who toed the communist line. For example, we were assigned a lady to help in the house, to help look after the children, a Bulgarian lady. Elizabeth caught her going through our desk, and we said ‘you know what, can we help you? What is it you’re looking for, we might be able to find it for you ...’ It turned out that she’d been in the Institute of Chemistry as I think a technician and so was quite well educated. She had two children, the oldest of which as a teenager had misbehaved at school in a way that was considered anti-communist. So he had been punished at school, but she too was punished, removed from her job at the Institute of Chemistry and told she had to go and work as a domestic for diplomatic families, working for the state security – the Darzhavna Sigurnost to whom she had to make a weekly report on us and on who came to the house. We got to know her quite well in fact and even went to her flat with the family because she felt that she could risk that as it were since she was working with us. It was very interesting because her home was in an ordinary Bulgarian quarter, which was very difficult for diplomats to get into otherwise.

Bulgarians were very nationalist and the communist party encouraged this ‘brave history of Bulgaria’ standing up to foreign oppressors. Part of this history was of course that Russia had liberated them from Turkey, which the Party could use to underpin relations with the Soviet Union. But it was double-edged.

MG: When did Russia liberate them from Turkey?

RD: 1878. I was there for the Centenary. Turkey by this time of course was within NATO, an ally of the West. So Bulgaria was sandwiched, with Greece to the south and Turkey to the east, both NATO members. Of course then you’ve got Italy. So this nationalist, very national doctrine would help first of all show that the Turks were really the enemy - the ex-colonialists - and give Russia/Soviet Union a particular role. Of course, there was another side to this; 1878 was a date from the Tsarist times. There was a big monument to Tsar Alexander II of Russia, who had liberated Bulgaria. He stood on his horse in the main square of Sofia, and visiting communists couldn’t understand why the Tsar was still there on his horse, overlooking the “parliament” and the cathedral in the political centre of the town and the country. But of course it was because he was seen as the liberator. There was another Albert Memorial type structure to the first Bulgarian tsar. On the top of it was a crown.

While we were there, '78, '79, can't remember which, they removed the crown and of course we all noticed this, and wondered if the Communist Party was getting at the royals, but amazingly a few months later, it was put back. This was somewhat typical. It was important to maintain the national myth.

MG: So that was their nationalism overcoming their communism.

RD: Yes, it was indeed. And in about 1979, either in our FCO planning staff or in one of the embassies abroad (it certainly wasn't in ours), someone had written a paper suggesting that the greatest threat to communism was nationalism and the greatest threat to the SU was the nationalism of the countries they had taken over, including Bulgaria. In Sofia, we could see the truth of that and of course it came to pass. Nationalism, exploited by the Communists, became one of the principal reasons for the break-up of the Soviet Union.

MG: Were the Russians aware of this? Did they come and make frequent visits to keep everybody happy?

RD: Yes, there were lots of Russian visitors. And they would have conferences in Sofia, with all the Warsaw Pact or Comintern people, the various communist parties. On the route from the airport, through which dignitaries would go to get to the Party Headquarters in the town centre where Tsar Alexander was on his horse, they repainted all the facades of the buildings; the back would still be pretty grim! The force of nationalism was very strong and when this came out in cultural life, it was often encouraged, so artists of all kinds seemed to get more freedom than others because they were serving this cause. Then it would go too far and there would be a clampdown. We saw this cycle more than once in my time and it was quite difficult for us to judge the point it had reached. We'd be invited, for example, to attend a film showing of an art film. We'd get an invitation from someone we knew – this would not come in writing – and would have to judge whether it was a trap, you know, so that we could be accused of political interference. In fact in my experience (and in the rest of my colleagues') it was always genuine. The opera was very strong, as it was in most Eastern European countries, and they had some wonderful singers. Bulgarian basses were known all over the world. Opera was a great privilege for us; they would put on 20 or 30 different operas at the State Opera throughout the year, it was an amazing variety, often rather ropey - the sets would be quite cheap - but nonetheless it was very good. And I mentioned that John

Cloake and Molli – the ambassador and his wife – were very keen on opera and indeed they knew some opera singers, and that gave us all an entrée into the musical life, the musicians, if they were international artists, felt safe enough to entertain us, to meet us freely which they did. But others found it difficult. For example, Elizabeth my wife is a violinist, the Austrian counsellor – my opposite number – was a cellist and he formed a quartet with a Spanish diplomat as pianist and the Bulgarian legal advisor to the Austrian embassy as viola player. They rehearsed at the Austrian's flat in the Diplomatic Quarter. One day, Elizabeth invited them to come and rehearse and play at our house. We were unusual in that we were the only non-ambassador to live in a villa, rather than in a block of flats, which were usually specially built and specially equipped as it were with listening devices. And indeed this had been a house which had been in British hands since we were part of the Control Commission there at the end of the war, or 1944 when Allied troops, in this case Russians as well, liberated Bulgaria from the Germans. There were some British heroes incidentally involved in that who were really worshipped by the Bulgarian regime, not least because one of them had been a British communist, Major Thompson, brother of EP Thompson who was a famous anti-nuclear pacifist until the end of the 20th century. Now, the point about that villa was that of course it was off the beaten track. The quartet came but when my wife invited them back a few months later and the Austrian told us that the legal advisor couldn't come. It so happened that we met the Bulgarian in the street, so away from prying ears, and he said that he had been warned off, that he was not to play anymore in Western houses. I think this may have been partly because I was the number two in the embassy so the Bulgarians assumed that I, particularly as I was living in this independent way, was an intelligence Officer.

We had quite a big defence section, military section, with a military intelligence officer. I'll come onto that in a moment. Anyway I think that was the reason why. Anyway, the Austrian counsellor was posted home and he had a farewell party. He thought it would be nice to invite the Bulgarian Legal Advisor and get the quartet to play in the party, which they did. We then subsequently heard that this legal advisor had been sent into internal exile, because he'd played again in a western home ... Though we got on very well with a lot of Bulgarians, there was this really ghastly side. The psychological pressures on staff were pretty ghastly.

MG: You mention the cultural history, could I just ask after it had been part of the Turkish Empire, had that watered it down or did they have their own distinct Slav culture?

RD: Oh yes they're very Slav, they're very proud of the fact that the Slavonic language, the writing which of course is based on Greek was actually developed by two Bulgarians called Kiril and Methodi (Cyril and Methodius). These two monks were probably from what is now Greek-Macedonia, Thessalonica, and were certainly Greek-speaking as well as Slav speaking. They were Bulgarians. When the Byzantine (Orthodox) Church undertook missionary activities to the Slavs, in the 8th-9th centuries in order to spread the gospel they needed to develop a way of writing Slav language down. So Cyril and Methodius used Greek characters to write Bulgarian Slavonic, and invented a few where Greek failed to have characters to represent some Slavonic sounds. Bulgarian is a rather basic Slav language, it isn't as sophisticated as Russian, it has fewer declensions and so on, but it's very similar to Church Slavonic, that is, the Russian Orthodox Church's version of Slavonic which is apparently closer to Bulgarian than modern Russian.

MG: And do they use the Cyrillic alphabet?

RD: They use the Cyrillic alphabet, after Saint Kiril. So Bulgarians are very proud of this. It also happened that at that time Bulgaria was ruled by boyars, there was a big flourishing of art particularly ecclesiastical art, so the icons of the 9th, 10th, 11th centuries, which the Bulgarians regard as their Golden age, are very good and are highly valued. This was exploited by the communist regime that therefore made sure that some of the churches that contained mosaics and icons from this period were well preserved.

MG: Much different from Russia, isn't it?

RD: Well, yes, it is. The other factor was of course that it was the Orthodox Church which kept Bulgarian nationalism going during the Turkish occupation. Mosques came in with Islam, although I think there were very few converts among Bulgarians, for the Orthodox Church continued throughout the Turkish rule in the Balkans. The Orthodox Church is autocephalous; each country runs its own church. So it becomes very closely associated with the national spirit and therefore the myth. The relationship with the Orthodox Church under the Communists was also quite interesting; it was a question of live and let live but make sure that they stayed cooperative and served the nationalist cause. When Russia was under its communist government, the church was suppressed and many churches were used as

factories and storehouses and so on, or fell into disrepair. Now Putin is an orthodox worshipper, and uses the church in his nationalist cause.

MG: What happened in Bulgaria then? They kept their icons and they kept churches as museums but not as places of worship?

RD: Well there were some places of worship still and we attended Orthodox services on occasions. The cathedral still functioned. The church “cooperated” with the state, if you follow me. But that brings me to a joke, that Zhivkov told to the Diplomatic Corps: every year he gave a New Year party for the Diplomatic Corps at his palace. While we were there, he opened a new palace and palace is the word for it! It was brash, very gaudy, full of gold and chandeliers and so on, but reflecting the power and authority of the “First Secretary of the Bulgarian Communist Party (FSCP) and President of the Socialist Republic of Bulgaria”, as he was. Anyway, he made a speech to the Diplomatic Corps about the country. On this occasion there’d been one or two shortages of food partly because a lot of the food produced was exported. They had wonderful lamb in Bulgaria but almost all of it was sent to Iran on contract. Anyway, the story was that the Patriarch, the head of the Orthodox Church (OC), had asked to see the FSCP. Zhivkov asked: “What brings you the Patriarch to come and see me, the FSCP?” The Patriarch replied, “I come to congratulate you on behalf of all my faithful in the church.” “What on earth have I done to deserve congratulation from the OC?” “Well, Mr. FS, we have tried for centuries to stop the faithful eating meat during Lent, you have achieved it within weeks!” Now the point I’m making is that Todor Zhivkov told this story against himself. The Bulgarian leadership were confident enough to express their humour. Another senior communist told me another joke, which is also against themselves. We were talking about elections, for of course they nominally had elections and there was in fact a so-called opposition party – the Agrarian Party - which of course never got anywhere and was a front; it never provided any opposition... I was sort of trying to put the needle in a bit and this chap stopped me and said, “Mr. Dales, there is one thing you do not understand: before socialism came into Bulgaria, about two hundred families controlled everything in the country. They owned all the means of production and they ran the government. We have now had forty years of the CP, the dictatorship of the people in Bulgaria and things are quite different. We now have about 200 families who control everything! But they are different families!” I think that shows, shall we say, a surprising extent of cynicism.

MG: Were they taking personal advantage while they could, do you think?

RD: Well some did. Their state security system was obviously very closely modelled on the KGB and the GRU and usually took top graduates. And Bulgaria, like many other countries at the time, had medium schools, language medium schools so that for example the English medium schools taught every subject – Chemistry, Physics, whatever, History – in English. The pupils at that school studied in a Bulgarian school but in English the whole way through and came out with very good English. Many of the teachers were Brits, who formed part of the British colony in Bulgaria. Not all of the teachers were sympathetic to communism, but some were. One teacher married a Bulgarian who came to work for us at the embassy. He was a kind of fixer at the embassy, who could arrange anything from theatre tickets to car repairs. We obviously had to regard all our Bulgarian staff as either voluntarily working for the Bulgarian State or involuntarily, it didn't matter which really, so we had to make that assumption: it was the only safe way to proceed. In another case, the British lady on the staff was super-intelligent and her husband was a film director. From them we learned of some intriguing features about Bulgaria at the time. Every year this couple went to Spain on holiday. Now that is a rather curious in itself, for both of them to be allowed to go on holiday in Spain at the same time. It suggests great privilege usually confined to senior members of the Party. But we also learned from some chance remarks that when they went they always went to see ex-King Simeon, who lived in exile in Spain. He was the son of the king who had been ousted in 1944. In other words, the Bulgarian communist rulers were actually keeping in touch with Bulgaria's old monarchy. And do you remember he came back? I haven't been to Bulgaria since those days but I know that he tried to run as a social democrat. Anyway, we were fascinated. At about the same time we were invited to a fancy dress party and asked our fixer where could we get fancy dress. He got in touch with the film director husband of our staff member and we were invited to the film studios where of course they had costumes for all occasions. But we couldn't find anything suitable. They then took us into a separate room and in this room were all the original court uniforms, which had obviously been put there when the communists took over in 1944. So I went in the clothes of a footman from the Bulgarian Tsarist times. The buttons on the uniform bore the crest of Saxe-Coburg Gotha, the family that had provided monarchs for Greece and Bulgaria and which was closely related to most of Europe's monarchies including our own. It was interesting that all these court dresses and uniforms were so carefully preserved ...

MG: Were they hedging their bets?

RD: Well I don't think hedging their bets is right, I think really taking pride in their history and we all know that the monarch in Bulgaria, the Tsar, in the 1930s was much more inclined to support Hitler than resist him. It was interesting.

MG: You mention the death of Tito, how did that affect things? Was that the early start of the communist system going?

RD: Well no I don't think so. You probably remember that one of the kind of 'standard' scenarios for the future at that time was that the third world war would occur because Yugoslavia would break up after the death of Tito, and the Russians or SU would invade in order to "stabilize" the country given their strong historical links with the Serbs. They would come right across the Hungarian plain into Yugoslavia and NATO would feel obliged to respond even though Yugoslavia was not a member etc. etc. And so that would be a time of great tension. When Tito died in 1980 or '81, I've forgotten, we were virtually on red alert to keep a close eye on what was going on. At the time, the Bulgarian regime began one of their moves to loosen up a bit; more was available in the shops, films which otherwise wouldn't be shown would be shown, there was a loosening of control. And so we wondered whether this was connected with events. Anyway, Tito was replaced by the revolving presidency and Yugoslavia remained stable until after the SU had broken up. When it did start to go pear-shaped in the Balkans, lo and behold part of the problem was Russian attempts to support the Serbs, including in their ethnic cleansing. So I think the scenario of the late 1970s was very apposite; it wasn't a complete invention. Actually, one of the British generals wrote a book about it. It made for an interesting time in Bulgaria. We were obviously very keen to see what the Russians were doing in the way of equipment. There were no Russian troops – nominally, at any rate – stationed in Bulgaria, this was not like Czechoslovakia. They observed a bit of a strategic balance, you see, with Turkey and with Greece and so on. But the Bulgarians did have missiles and the Russians were beginning to deploy some new missile systems at the end of the '70s. Our military people were out constantly seeing what they could spot. Ironically, it was our opera-loving ambassador John Cloake, who had the crucial sighting. He and Molli were going down to the second city in Bulgaria called Plovdiv, because there was a particular opera production and a friend of theirs was performing in it, (a friend who remained a friend until Molli died). They had appointments in

Sofia the next day, so they decided they couldn't stay the night. Around midnight on the main road back to Sofia in the official car, Bulgarian driver, flag flying, ambassadorial number plate, they came to a junction. There was a military policeman standing in the junction with his lollipop "STOP". Bulgarian driver explains, 'this is the British Ambassador, you know, let us through.' 'No, no, you've got to stay here.' So the ambassador and his wife sat there in the car for I don't know ten minutes, a significant time anyway, and then in front of them along the road that they wanted to turn into came a convoy and what do you think were on the convoy – missiles. So John was able to see these missiles. He had a very good look at them because he was stationary with the missiles passing in front of him lit up by the car's headlights! This was sheer stupidity really on the part of the Bulgarian military. I believe the sighting was quite significant. The security people who kept an eye on us must have been livid.

MG: Were you followed about?

RD: Our military were but they learned how to lose the tail and very rarely we were. However, our house was by a crossroads. (It's now a restaurant.) As on most crossroads there was a policeman sitting high up in a box. Every time we came home we'd see him lift up the telephone and every time we left we'd see him lift up the telephone. He always was telephoning somebody when we came or left. And our authorities told us that our house had been obviously well bugged and they once gave it a sweep looking for them. We had to presume that it was always bugged simply because the bugs were so easy to plant. Our people might sweep the house and say to the owner 'right we've got them all' but they might be replaced in a day or two and meanwhile the occupants relaxed. This was part of the strain; we could never talk about for example finances ...

MG: How did you maintain some privacy then?

RD: Well, we just simply ... if we had anything very personal to discuss, we went into the local park or somewhere outside. We also used to go out into the country which was lovely because you could talk quite freely there, including to Bulgarians. It was one of the benefits of having the language: we could meet ordinary people and get a feel for how they were doing. As they could get into trouble simply for talking to us, we always said who we were. It was important for ordinary Bulgarians in town to have family in the country to supply them

with vegetables because food was often scarce or very monotonous and shopping was difficult. (They introduced supermarkets in about 1980 while we were there, which improved things.) In the country, the state farms provided a plot of about half an acre for every person who worked on them, so they produced vegetables and all the kind of things that were lacking otherwise and I believe that something like 50% of the basic foods sold in the country were actually produced on these private plots. And of course people were allowed to keep the money so it became quite important for them to maintain allotments and keep things going.

MG: Did they have dachas like they have in Russia?

RD: Yes, they did but only the party people. They also had special shops for party members, to which in some cases the diplomats had access. These were shops which just had net curtains in front of them and no sign of life: we used to buy all of our very nice Bulgarian wine there for example, and our whisky and our gin.

MG: You weren't supplied from the UK then?

RD: We had a commissariat in the embassy and were able to buy through the NAAFI and every so often we'd get a container but obviously of non-perishables, sent from the NAAFI. Otherwise, we sent an embassy truck once a month to Greece and staff took it in turns to go down to what amounted to a weekend of freedom in Greece. Greece is where we went to breathe, to have some relaxation from the tension; if you're watched or listened to all the time, including in your bedroom, it's a strain on you. So this trip to Greece was very important and the truck would take orders for fresh vegetables, things that would keep a while, go down to the market usually in Kavala and bring back wonderful things that we couldn't get locally. We could also shop just across the border in Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia was much better off, and you'd get some meat there for example. We were later helped by the BA manager to import meat from home. BA flew into Sofia twice a week and we were able to arrange with a butcher in Staines to get us some fresh meat, which he would freeze very quickly. It would then go onto a plane at Heathrow, down to Sofia, be offloaded and we'd have it still frozen. If the plane was delayed, the meat could begin to thaw and on one occasion Elizabeth and I spent the night cooking the thawed meat because you can't re-freeze it, and we were then able to keep it.

MG: So you didn't suffer the shortages in quite the same way?

RD: No, not in quite the same way as the Bulgarians. Before some of these arrangements came in Elizabeth had a terrible time, trying to go shopping and trying to get meat. In the state shops it was always full of bone and badly cut; really you could only stew it. You would have to pay for it in advance, so you'd queue to pay for your kilo of meat and then get in another queue to get it. If the cut was below weight, they'd simply add a bone, if it was above a kilo you'd have to go back to the pay queue and pay the difference – it was a huge effort. The only thing was that the Bulgarians worship children and so, since our two were small, they would often push Elizabeth with the children to the front. The Bulgarians have an evil reputation in Europe going back to the middle ages for sexual reasons: you know, buggers, derives from Bulgar, which probably was no more justified for them than for anybody else. In contrast with their reputation as being rather grim, cruel people, we found the ordinary Bulgarians that we could meet were very considerate, polite, friendly people, still very close to peasantry and generous.

MG: You mention Giles Bullard and you haven't told me about him so far.

RD: I was three and a half years in Sofia and he came in for my last nine months to a year. So obviously I remember less of my much shorter time with him. It reminds me of a point which I think might be worth mentioning. I could only take home leave after about 20 months in Sofia - it was quite a long time - and Elizabeth, who had borne the brunt of trying to cope with our very young children and diplomatic life (we weren't allowed a nanny for security reasons), said 'look I don't think I can come back here, you'll have to come back on your own.' I said, 'well, I'm not allowed to.' The Office wouldn't allow married people to be posted on their own for security reasons, so I told the Office that my wife was saying she couldn't go back to Sofia and it was very difficult. The wise reply was: "how much leave have you got? Just let it ride for the moment ... get in touch with me in six weeks' time if you need to." And of course in six weeks' time, we'd completely relaxed and were happy about going back. We'd also decided that we weren't going to, as it were, fight the regime in quite the same way, trying to deal with people who do not want to deal with us because we'd be banging our head against a wall a lot of the time. We had to find other ways, perhaps more devious ways, of dealing. So our second tour was a lot happier and, although I never

saw him again, I remember being with Giles Bullard in a very happy context. We stayed in touch with John and Molli Cloake until they died. One of the things about being in a small post “behind the stockade in Injun territory” is that the staff have to get on with each other and you get very close; you’re in each other’s company a lot. We made friends in Bulgaria in the embassy with three couples; one husband was a soldier, one was an accountant in our service terms, he’d actually been a military policeman, and the other was the commercial secretary. I suppose I was technically their superior but we just all got on extremely well and kept in touch. We started meeting every year in the mid-90s, so 15 years after we’d left, and we met every year after that including when I was in Oslo. Sadly age is taking its toll now ...

FCO, Assistant South Asia Department, 1981-82

MG: So, from what you’ve told me, your move back must have been quite welcome. That was in ’81.

RD: I came back to the South Asia department.

MG: That was new for you? No, you’d been there in ’68.

RD: No that was South East Asian. This was the old Indian empire. I was the Assistant, the number two, so I got my own office which had oil paintings of rajahs and so on and a complete set of East India Company furniture, a lovely table – 18th century with claw feet, it was a mahogany table for office meetings – and beautiful chairs all with the lion in the top. That furniture later went to the India Office Council Chamber, looking over the Durbar court. Unlike these days, we had the priceless antiques in our offices. John Coles was the Head of Department. He went on to great things as you know; he was PM Mrs. Thatcher’s Foreign Affairs Advisor and later became PUS and I could see when I worked for him that he was exceptional, a brilliant man. He somehow could manage to get through his work very very quickly and leave the office at a civilized time. I tried to learn from him but I never succeeded.

MG: You mention, I presume, Lord Carrington and Afghanistan, I don’t associate ... one always think of Lord Carrington as someone resigning over the Falklands. What was he doing here?

RD: Well, the Afghanistan initiative was prepared by John Coles – because Afghanistan was part of our area. It was an attempt to try and bring about withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan; we're talking about 1981, and to stop the fighting there. To tell you the truth, I remember nothing about it because I wasn't in the creative process at all. I had, on behalf of JC who was away, to present it in some way to Peter Carrington. This was the first time that I'd met PC and I found it a strange experience. He's an extremely nice man whom I came to admire immensely later for all sorts of reasons, but on this particular occasion after I had said my spiel C said 'oh, fine,' and then turned to the then private secretary and talked about something completely different. I sat there like a lemon and wondered what on earth I'd done wrong! And so when we came out I said to the PS, 'look, I'm not quite sure what that meant, are we taking this forward or not?' He said, 'oh yes, C said fine, nothing more to be said, he thought it was very good, you did very well.' Anyway, I met C much later on when he was visiting Denmark before he became NATO secretary general and I spent a day with him then which was very productive. He was a great statesman, a great loss at the time of the Falklands War. The Falklands War had an intriguing facet for me. This was because of the Ghurkhas. Nepal was part of our department's empire as it were and the Ghurkhas formed a vital part of the British infantry. I have a feeling that at that time it was something like 15% of our army was formed of Ghurkha regiments, much reduced since. As they were mercenaries, they weren't deployed in the first wave of troops going down to the Falklands and but it came around that they were going to be needed. At the time, we were facing quite a lot of problems in the UN, being criticized for what we were doing: the Argentinians had a lot of support, they'd even got the Americans to say they were neutral. So there was some rather tense discussion going on as we struggled to keep international support, not least from those countries producing weaponry for the Argentinians. The MOD put up a paper saying it wanted to deploy Ghurkhas in the second wave. We pointed out that it would undermine support in the UN where some countries were very critical of our having mercenaries who, they said, would cut a man's head off with one stroke of their kukri and all this sort of thing.

MG: That's not true, is it? Or is it?

RD: The Ghurkhas do have a big weapon called a kukri and indeed as part of their initiations at one time they used to, not cut a man's head off, but they would use it to slaughter a beast. They are in fact very good soldiers. Anyway, when we suggested to the MOD that we

needed to present the Ghurkhas as essential parts of the British army who were not liable to commit war crimes least of all with their kukris the MOD said ‘well, we understand the point you’re making but please don’t make it too loudly because one of the best propaganda weapons we have against the Argentinians is their soldiers’ fear of the Ghurkhas’. I could see the point but it’s not one that we’d immediately thought of. Anyway, the Ghurkhas were deployed.

MG: Did you get sent to Moscow about this Afghanistan thing?

RD: No. Carrington went and got nowhere.

MG: You’ve got this enigmatic mention of ‘Mujahedin and Simpsons’. Is that Simpsons in the Strand, the carvery?

RD: Simpsons in the Strand. I’m sorry this is another anecdote, is that all right? The Brits were supporting certain groups of Mujahedin that we regarded as moderate. Sometimes these Mujahedin would come to London on a visit and on a particular occasion I was asked if I would host a lunch for these visitors. I had nothing to do with the arrangements apart from that I had to turn up at Simpsons in the Strand. When I got there, I suddenly thought, this is a jacket and tie place, what happens when these fellows arrive in their robes and their funny hats? So I went to the maître d’ and said I’d got these foreign guests arriving shortly ... ‘Oh no, not a problem sir, national dress is acceptable.’ Anyway, these guys, there were three of them, duly arrived with their COI Visits Section escort and we went into the dining room. Everybody looked up of course.

MG: What were they wearing?

RD: Well they were wearing the funny hats, whose name I can’t remember, and their trousers a bit like pyjamas and then a smock over the top. Anyway, we sat down and I turned to the fellow who was the senior one next to me and I said “I understand you speak some English and I’m very sorry that I don’t speak Pashto” and he said ‘that’s all right, old chap, I’ll manage’ in perfect BBC English. He’d been partly educated in UK, he’d got an agricultural diploma at Wye College and his English was better than mine! You know, it is so easy to be prejudiced, so easy to make assumptions about people as I had on this occasion. But it’s also

an illustration of just how the Afghan people have such a difficult time. He was a well-educated, Western-educated person, and obviously he was going to be severely under threat in Soviet-occupied Afghanistan. I of course have no idea what happened to him.

MG: Going back to your lunch at Simpsons, was there any dietary problem? You must have done lots of research, just thinking about the difficulty of setting something like that up.

RD: It was all taken care of. It was assumed that they were Muslims and we had an acceptable meal from that point of view. The arrangements were made by our Visits people, who specialized in this sort of thing, so I had nothing to do with that. I did have something to do of that kind, while I was in the PO. The Syrian Foreign Minister, a Muslim, came for talks with James Callaghan. It was going to have to be a breakfast meeting in the Old Admiralty, which was used for government functions. So we set up this breakfast meeting and of course I had to choose a menu and so on. We could not have full English breakfast so how to cope? What we did was arrange to have kedgerree which we thought would be appropriate for this Muslim and his officials and we had loads of orange juice and so on. When the breakfast came round, what was left? The kedgerree! What went down the Syrian throats with great pleasure? The full English breakfast! Another example, from my time in Bulgaria. The Bishop of St Albans – Robert Runcie – was chairman at that time of what were called the Anglican-Orthodox Conversations, trying to build links between the Anglican and Orthodox churches. He came to Sofia and the ambassador gave a dinner in his honour. I had to try to negotiate a menu and other arrangements with what was called the Holy Synod, the HQ of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. The problem was that Runcie was visiting in the week after our Easter, but still in the orthodox Lent because of the fact that orthodox Easter comes later than ours. So we had to arrange a special Lenten diet with fish and no alcohol, at least for the guests. When the Orthodox bishop arrived, Runcie's opposite number in the conversations, he went straight to the butler who was standing there with a tray of drinks and takes a whisky! And when somebody, Robert Runcie probably, expressed surprise he said 'yes, but I have been given dispensation on this occasion to celebrate the Risen Christ with you in your way even though we will be celebrating it in a few days' time.' It was a lovely way of getting round the problem but if only they'd said that to us at the beginning, we could have had a more interesting meal!

Counsellor/Head of Chancery, Copenhagen, 1982-86

That was a bit of a deviation from Afghanistan, which I was dealing with in South Asian Department. But anyway I was only a short time in South Asian department and I was sent back to Copenhagen after 18 months. The reason for that was two-fold; firstly, they needed someone quickly who knew the country and knew the language because the number two there was required elsewhere and secondly the ambassador – Dame Anne Warburton – had been there for many years and was likely to move very soon so they needed someone who didn't need time to get their feet under the table. I was very pleased to go back and I think I mentioned before that the backbenchers that we'd got to know in the Danish parliament were now ministers and so I had a very good entrée on arrival. I have to declare an interest in that Elizabeth and I became good friends with Anne Warburton and I spoke at her memorial service only a year ago. She lived in Suffolk on retirement and I saw a lot of her, but she had a reputation in the Office for being not just a hard taskmaster, which is quite reasonable, but as someone who intimidated staff and was not very good at delegating. When I arrived in Copenhagen, I found that one particular member of staff, there were others, had pretty low morale because he thought he could do nothing right for the ambassador and you know how debilitating that is. To be honest, I was warned that there were management problems and as the Head of Chancery it was my job to sort them out, as I'd been doing it in Sofia earlier ... So one of the first things I did was to try to get alongside Anne whom I'd only met very briefly once before and to try to run the embassy differently. I had a bit of a row with her, as you can imagine, a very mild one, but I was helped by the fact that her Social Secretary and housekeeper at the Residence had been the housekeeper of the MacLehoses and the Starks, so knew me from my previous time in Copenhagen. Penel Boscowen had begun as governess to the children of Sir John and Lady Henniker Major and had gone with them to Copenhagen when he was appointed Ambassador in the 1960s. Of course the children had grown up, so she helped run the Residence and she'd stayed on in Denmark when the Hennikers left. She was an extremely good social secretary and ran the residence for successive ambassadors. Anne, and Penel became very close friends, so when Anne left for Geneva, Penel went with her. They retired in the same village, helped by Sir John Henniker. We had known Penel for years and had kept up with her and I suspect she had sung our praises to Anne, with the result that we actually got on very well from the start. Anne had been in the post for nearly seven years, which was far too long for her objectivity but enabled me to claim that I worked for five consecutive ambassadors in Copenhagen, which is amazing really. Anyway after Anne,

James Mellon arrived. Jimmy had been Agricultural Attaché in Copenhagen in the 1960s. Ag Attachés were always on secondment from MAFF and Jimmy had been in the MAFF part of the Scottish office. He had come to Copenhagen having earlier been a student for a year at Aarhus University so he had long-standing friends and knew Denmark well. He spoke fluent Danish and so our work was transformed. Jimmy was wonderful at PR; he had even a TV programme in which he was interviewed about various things, not just foreign affairs. After he left he wrote a book about the Danes, which upset them no end because he compared their tribalism to that of Ghana where he'd earlier been High Commissioner. All I can say is that he and I thought on the same lines about Denmark and so I can't sing his praises enough!

MG: You mentioned before about being a NATO footnote country – you explained about that. When you were there before, they'd been thinking of joining the EEC as the UK was. . You mention here coordination with the EC, how had things gone since, by this time, we'd all been members for about ten years plus?

RD: We of course still had some conflicting interests in the economic and commercial side. The system for parliamentary oversight in Denmark was that all proposals from the Commission had to be run by the government through an EU committee of parliament. This special committee also had to review all EU draft legislation. Before ministers in the Danish government could take part in a Council of Ministers, they had to clear their negotiating position with their parliamentary committee. And so if we wanted to make sure that the government didn't compromise British commercial interests – economic interests – in the EU by opposing something we wanted or vice versa, then we had to lobby both the government and parliament and in particular this committee. We were not always dealing with great matters of state. One issue I recall was about the permitted noise levels of lawn mowers and crane-cabs for the drivers. (There was a third, which I've forgotten about, I don't think it was tractors but it was something similar.) And the Danes wanted to reduce these decibel levels to really very very low levels that would have made it very difficult for our manufacturers of lawnmowers, cranes and equipment like JCBs to adapt quickly. So they were going to be shut out of some of the market because of a non-tariff barrier to trade. So, I found myself going to the Folketing in Christiansborg Palace (parliament), taking the MPs who were members of these committees out to lunch, entertaining them at home or whatever, to lobby them about these and similar issues. I don't think when I joined the diplomatic service that I

ever thought that I'd try to negotiate permitted noise levels for lawnmower operators! It was however an important issue for British industry.

MG: Did you have to empirically listen to an English lawnmower and a Danish one?

RD: No. These were proposals by the Commission for 'common standards'. If you were going to sell lawnmowers everywhere in the EU they'd got to comply with the local requirements in every EU country unless there was an agreed standard throughout the EU, which is a benefit of the single market. We had to make sure that these rules didn't discriminate against us.

MG: But actually you can see the benefit of it in a way that you don't end up with a great deal of really noisy merchandise.

RD: Oh yes. But we could argue that the benefit could be achieved by reducing the level to a more reasonable level.

MG: Yes, I quite see that. But the other thing that is new to me is this idea of having a group like, I presume, one of our select committees scrutinizing EU proposals. Do we do that in the UK?

RD: Well, we did have a committee, yes. It's not well known but we did have a parliamentary committee who scrutinized all this sort of thing. They didn't have as much power as the Danish one, to for example control the negotiating position, because the government in Britain always had a majority, they could get through anything they wanted. With proportional representation and coalition government, it was more important in Denmark.

MG: It occurs to me that if we'd had a powerful group like that, actually advising whether to go for it or not in any particular thing, it would have taken the sting out of all this 'oh we're being told what to do by Europe'...

RD: Well, we did have such a committee. And they did have to scrutinize all EU legislation because it all has to be applied in Britain and although the EU Act of course gave blanket

cover. All the EU legislation was scrutinized in parliament, not just the new treaties as they came. But it was a fact of political life that the government basically didn't have to take too much account of it. I would say this if I'm not breaching rules: it seems to me that any Dane would look at what's going on in the Supreme Court about triggering Article 50 and say 'well of course parliament has got to decide ...' because it would be so automatic to them, and it's perhaps an example of how powerful our executive has become.

MG: Exactly. I can imagine Charles I's head turning round and round and round, wherever it is. What about the fisheries because again I'm not terribly well up on these things? I know about the Cod Wars in Iceland, what was the fishery problem?

RD: There were a number of quite minor issues but they did bring differences between us. You remember the business about Captain Kirk and the Danish trawlers arrested within the 12-mile limit while trying to challenge the UK fishery policy? (They won.) The big differences between us were firstly on TACs (Total Allowable Catches), now these were supposed to be produced by impartial scientists, saying what should be done. In practice a political deal always had to be done and we were nearly always on opposite sides of the table. The Danes were a big fishing nation; fishery was much more important to them than it is to us – the Scots might disagree with that! – so negotiations were pretty fraught. They Danes also used to scoop up masses of stuff in trawlers, which just went to fishmeal for pig feed. If you've tasted Danish bacon sometimes it tastes of fishmeal and that's because they haven't fed their pigs enough grain because the fishmeal is much cheaper. So the Danes were – if I remember rightly, it's very detailed – I think they were fishing vast quantities of sand eel for this pig feed but the sand eel is a vital food for some other fish that we were catching and of course they were too. Herring and cod stocks were always under threat, which it meant that fisheries were always a subject that we had to talk about politically. The most important single issue between us was INF deployment (Intermediate Range Nuclear Missiles) by NATO. Danish opposition to this led to its becoming known as the footnote country. It is important to remember that Denmark joined NATO after WWII with some reluctance; many people would have preferred to have reverted to their traditional neutrality, along with Norway and Sweden. When they joined, like Norway, they hedged their membership with the condition that nuclear weapons could never be stationed on Danish soil. When in the late 70s/early 80s the Soviet Union began to deploy new INF forces in Eastern Europe, NATO felt that it had to respond. Although there was no thought of deploying

NATO INF missiles on Danish territory, Denmark opposed the NATO plans, as compromising disarmament negotiations, which of course is exactly what the Russians were saying. This was before the famous "walk in the woods". Anyway, we eventually got the Danes to accept the NATO plan on condition that they would have a footnote in the NATO communiqués that Denmark did not support it. It allowed them to have their say but not to stop the decision; in other words, NATO was taking decisions, which weren't unanimous. Anyway, we got through that. We did a lot of lobbying on this especially with MPs. I also worked with the then head of their EU department because the Danes, like us, saw the EU or whatever it was then called as a very politically important institution. Yes there were commercial benefits for them and some drawbacks for us but the whole motive that we saw for membership in the '70s and continued to see in the '80s was to build and influence political unity in Europe, promoting political cooperation on all sorts of wider issues which meant that a) we had more stability in Europe against the SU and b) we had more influence in the world. So the EU head was important in this context, if indirectly. I also knew that he had very strong views on defence. The other person I lobbied was a fellow who had been the PM's foreign affairs adviser and had at this time become head of a government think tank. I'd got to know him in the '70s when he was PM's foreign affairs adviser and I knew that he still had the ear of the then current PM, Poul Schluter. Anyway, I lobbied him. Since he died a few years ago, some articles have appeared in the Danish press alleging that I in effect blackmailed him on INF. A huge exaggeration of course and I would have pointed out that opposing INF or stopping NATO deployment would actually weaken not just NATO's military position but would have political consequences. Britain was assigned to provide the first reinforcements to Denmark in the event of any attack or time of tension. We practiced that every year, committing our blood. Denmark was making it more likely that that blood will be shed. Pretty strong stuff I admit. But then I think that diplomats have to have pretty strong words occasionally. He apparently minuted this and it went to the PM. I don't know whether it had any effect whatsoever, because you know diplomats mustn't get the idea that they somehow always succeed in influencing decisions but I've seen some publicity about it since!

Deputy High Commissioner, Zimbabwe, 1986-89

MG: How did you go from Copenhagen to Harare, without passing go and going back to the FCO?

RD: Well, I knew that my four years were coming to an end and I rang up Personnel Department, which still existed in those days, and I said ‘look, I’ve been 18 years in Europe - from 1968 to 1986 – and so I know you’re going to send me somewhere rough again. Please don’t make it Latin America or somewhere, I’d quite like to go back to Africa.’ Well, they said ‘it’s funny you called just at this moment because we’ve just heard that the DHC (Deputy High Commissioner) in Harare wants to resign and leave the service, so we need someone pretty quickly. Can you get there by the end of September?’ And so I went direct with only about three weeks’ leave.

MG: How did you find that?

RD: Well, it was wonderful. The High Commissioner, Ramsay Melhuish, was a very good boss and there were some tricky issues to deal with. So it was very interesting. It was totally different of course, with Zimbabwe being a developing Commonwealth country when Denmark has been a close neighbour, and fellow member of NATO and the EU. Suddenly aid replaced defence as the big issue and at the time when I went there in ’86, it was only six years after independence, and Zimbabwe was still subject to Smith’s emergency legislation giving the government total control - it suited Mugabe no end for he was no democrat. There were import controls and export controls so everybody had to get a licence to import or export and you can imagine what that did - civil servants were being offered bribes. It wasn’t yet a corrupt country in the 1980s, you didn’t arrive as you did in Nigeria with dollars in your passport to get through immigration and you didn’t expect to bribe a policeman who stopped you - *then*.

MG: Do you now?

RD: Some businessmen wanting an export or import licence expected to pay a bribe for it which was standard in many other countries. They would ask the cost of an import licence cost and pay extra so that the official who issued it had his cut; many civil servants would live by that. By 1986 this was gaining ground. Additionally, aid donors – the World Bank and IMF – wanted to liberalize Zimbabwe's economy, it was the time of liberalizing economies so they would flourish and actually economic growth is much better than aid. Trade is also better than aid and we were busy also working on the EU, which had very restrictive policies for imports and primary products, iniquitous. So major efforts were being

made to persuade Mugabe to liberalize which weren't getting very far to be honest; it was very slow work. Politically, it was a time of some tension, for a number of reasons. One was that there'd been this appalling issue in Matabeleland where Mugabe had set up a special brigade trained by North Koreans to suppress the Ndebele opposition and they did it in an appalling way. Not all of which came out until some time later.

MG: Why did he do that?

RD: Because they are different tribal people and because his rival Joshua Nkomo, leader of ZAPU was an Ndebele. Mugabe's party was called ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union) and his background was basically Chinese-orientated. Nkomo represented the Moscow-backed ZAPU (Zimbabwe African People's Union) and when it came to the election at the time of independence, the Brits actually believed that ZAPU with Nkomo was going to win because ZAPU was supported in Zambia and a lot of other African countries more than ZANU. What all that ignored, and I don't understand why, was the extremely strong tribal element involved – ZAPU was basically Ndebele from Matabeleland and ZANU was basically Shona from Mashonaland with a much bigger population and so they won massively and Mugabe became President.

MG: What happened to Nkomo?

RD: Some insurgency began in Matabeleland, which Mugabe and his mates blamed on ZAPU, probably wrongly actually. So they decided to subdue the Ndebele. That was in about 1983/4. Hundreds were slaughtered by the infamous 5th Brigade. Nkomo had to go into exile first in Botswana and later in London actually, we made sure he was all right. When he came back into the country I went to meet him. (I was lower-profile than the High Commissioner.) It was an extraordinary event in a bus station. Nkomo had his party base in the Blue Lagoon café at the Bulawayo bus station, Bulawayo being the capital of Matabeleland. My mission was to welcome him back, establish contact with him and to help the process of reconciliation. We needed to know in what way we could help, not to undermine Mugabe but to reconcile them ... Anyway, Mugabe knew what we did. When I went to see him we sat in enormous great wooden thrones placed side by side in this café and were served tea and biscuits by young women on their knees, bare-breasted carrying trays, you couldn't be more feudal.

MG: It sounds like the worst excesses of the Roman Empire!

RD: It was like going back 100 years, absolutely amazing. Anyway, Nkomo came back to politics, there was reconciliation, the ZANU and ZAPU parties were unified and Nkomo became Vice President. He didn't have much power but there were now Ndebele ministers in the government. Mugabe made sure that he had control, so the security minister, the defence minister and so on would all be from his Shona people. I should have pointed out that since 1980 we'd had a military training team in Zimbabwe, trying to retrain the Rhodesian army and turn it into a Zimbabwean army, with black officers and so on and they were training up at a place called Nyanga. They now had to retrain this North Korean-trained fifth brigade, which had committed so many atrocities. I went to Nyanga quite a lot to see how things were going. The CO of the fifth brigade actually became head of the army at one point and was actually very good, but he had a few secrets in his wardrobe I suspect. When I was High Commissioner much later on the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace came up with a report on what had happened in Matabeleland. This is where it came out that the fifth brigade had got rid of a lot of people by throwing them down mineshafts ... Anyway retraining the fifth brigade was a major operation. The land issue was very important and it still is of course.

MG: Is this taking it back from white settlers?

RD: Yes. It is a profoundly difficult issue. When the settlers arrived, of course they wanted land. The good land was occupied by Africans, by locals, and in the early days of Rhodesia the Shona people, whose land it was, refused to work for the new white landowners who introduced a Hut Tax to try to force them to do so. There was actually an uprising at the time which was pretty vigorously put down by Rhodes' disciples as you would expect in 1890 or whenever it was. The result of that unwillingness of the Shona to work meant that they had to find the labour from elsewhere, so a lot of the labour was brought in from either Mozambique or, more particularly, Malawi. They of course were often from a different tribe from the locals, so when they came to work on the farms the farmers looked after them. So what you've got is a people that feel that they've lost their ancestral lands. In much African culture, not only in Zimbabwe, the people believe that the land actually belongs to the clan as a whole, dead as well as alive, and that the spirits of the ancestors live on in this land. The

cultural, religious importance of the land is often underestimated. In this case they'd not only lost their land, they'd also been replaced by other clans. When, later, Mugabe unleashed the so called war veterans, who were probably not veterans at all - these people who went attacking, you remember burning down the huts of the African workers - nobody could understand it here but of course these workers are the descendants of these foreign people and are regarded as usurpers as much as the whites. We also have to remember that some of this land was seized, occupied, turned into commercial farms in modern times so there are people alive, or were then, who remembered, who could tell stories of being moved off their land and the traumas that that produced. Like ethnic cleansing today, it was a very, very deep uprooting. So we needed to help people feel that they were recovering their land and of course help keep the land productive. Mugabe well understood this, he was very concerned that the people should benefit obviously and so a land reform process began whereby some of the large areas of unoccupied farmland (because a lot of the white settlers had left) would be taken over and turned into various forms of farm. Now, Mugabe wanted to have some of these as state farms, others wanted them as purely as private plots. Now the moment you go to small plots, you're getting away from commercial farming and going back to subsistence agriculture. Compromises were agreed with the World Bank and the FAO and other aid donors, so there were cooperatives set up to grow, for example tobacco, a major crop for Zimbabwe. Others were grain farms or even dairy farms. The idea was that the people would move their families back and they would have a small private plot rather like the Bulgarian State Farms but they would also work the farm. So the numbers of people that worked on any particular land had to be carefully calculated so that the farms could sustain themselves commercially. There were plenty of people who were trained; the agricultural colleges were still turning out trained people. Nearly all black incidentally. Well what we found was happening in the late 1980s was that the officials allocating the land had become corrupted or were being nepotistic which was much more common and were allowing too many people on to the land. Sometimes after a family had been given the right to a farm, they would bring on all their relatives. These reformed farms were simply not working. In some cases the machinery wasn't being properly maintained because the farmers did not consider it to be theirs, and would only look after what their family owned. There were all sorts of problems. So we got the agreement of Mugabe, the government, in 1988 to suspend the land reform process. He was reluctant but even he could see that it wasn't actually benefitting what you might call his people any more than it was benefitting the country as a whole. And one of the things about Mugabe was of course that he always understood that his

core support was in the people in the country, on the land and not the urbanites and indeed the proportion of people in the country is higher, much higher, than it is in the urban areas, so wherever you get a presidential election or referendum you're as likely to get a majority even if he doesn't fix it provided he's got his support in the countryside. That support in the countryside requires more than just security forces, they've got to be looked after and that brings us back to the land issue. When I went back as High Commissioner after an absence of four years or so, we still hadn't restored the land reform programme and we were still arguing about resettlement for which we were storing up aid funds.

MG: I think what I'd like to do, because we're straying on to when you were High Commissioner, I'd like to go into that in a bit more detail. But going back, what was the Maputo railway like? Where was that going?

RD: The Maputo railway was actually built to join up with the railway line which went from Cape Town to Victoria Falls and the Zambian Copper Belt. It therefore provided a shorter route to get Zambian copper out to the sea through Mozambique. Some of the line in Mozambique had been broken up during the Rhodesian war so Zambian copper couldn't get out that way as it used to. The Maputo railway line runs from southern Zimbabwe through the southern part of Mozambique basically alongside part of the Kruger game park. Now, there was in the 1980s war in Mozambique between the government and RENAMO. RENAMO was an insurgency group of Mozambicans set up by Ian Smith to destabilize the newly independent (from Portugal) Mozambique. After Smith had gone, the South Africans took it over because they wanted to keep instability on their borders for obvious reasons. This had got to the point in Mozambique where, in the late 1980s we were helping train Mozambican troops in Nyanga to fight RENAMO but there was still a lot of fighting internally and there were a lot of Mozambican refugees in Zimbabwe. The war spilled over the border so we had to withdraw aid workers and VSOs from the border areas. Some farmers and a lot of Zimbabwean villagers were killed or abducted or killed or maimed by anti-personal mines scattered by RENAMO on tracks near the border. I actually went to visit a refugee camp by a mission station in the eastern part of Zimbabwe just to check up on rumours that Mozambican men were being recruited, forcibly recruited into the army. I don't think it was actually true but the Zimbabweans did not really want us in the area so I went to this mission station disguised as a doctor, a visiting British doctor, to see what was going on.

MG: And what did you find?

RD: Well, I found what a wonderful job these Catholic missionaries were doing in terrible circumstances, they were getting food from the food programmes for these refugees who were being well looked after. It was very difficult to detect the kind of political manipulation that had been alleged. Anyway, it was a nasty time. I went down the Maputo railway line because we – the British – were wondering if we could get it reopened and whether there would be enough Mozambican troops to defend it and whether it would be worth spending our money. It would make a great difference to Zambia and also Zimbabwe and of course Mozambique! We decided that we'd do a reconnaissance down there and I decided that I would go too. Obviously we had an engineer and indeed we had a former British soldier who was now living in Zimbabwe for the military side of it and a Zimbabwean engineer as well. We also had a company of about 100 men of Zimbabwean troops to look after us. And we went down the track, which hadn't been maintained for decades, and we could see all these buckled rails. We were travelling in a converted Ford van with railway wheels on it, and a diesel engine. Anyway, we set off and when we got to the Mozambican border, we overnighted there. We were taking a railway carriage with us, which had been one of the old Rhodesian Railways rolling stock with silver and brass lamps and plush seats - utter luxury, we even had a bath in it somewhere! The Mozambican station on the border was beautifully maintained even if it hadn't seen a train for twenty years or so and there was still a station restaurant owned by a white-Portuguese Mozambican. And how does that figure? Part of the answer is that we weren't far from the South African border and the South Africans were supporting RENAMO and so there were people coming in from South Africa and perhaps a bit of money as well. Next morning we went on down this railway line with an anti-mine detachment at the front. We were supposed to travel in what they call "crocodiles"- steel sided wagons in a lozenge shape, the idea being that any bullets fired against them would be deflected up or down but not penetrate inside. Unfortunately, they also put some soldiers in with us who were fingering their triggers all the time ... if any of those guns had gone off the bullets would have ricocheted round. It was very frightening and I asked if we could travel in the rail car, the risk from RENAMO being lower than that from ricocheting bullets. The rail car was also well to the rear. We got down the railway line for quite a way to an area where the Mozambican army hadn't been able to cover and came to a town where we found a Mozambican army unit, beleaguered, and the town's people, starving as they hadn't had any food supplies for weeks and weeks; they were eating leaves - it was an awful sight. We were

taken in to the town by the Mozambican soldiers who met us and of course we were pretty nervous about whether we were running into a trap or not. At the military HQ they just said 'help,' that was virtually it and is what we arranged to do. Our engineers from the Zimbabwe railways arranged to send another truck down the line with food on it.

MG: That sounds as if the railway line was reasonably okay?

RD: Well the railway line was better than expected. A lot of the sleepers were rotten, sometimes you could just simply pull the bolts out by hand but the actual metal and the line itself was often alright at least for light slow-moving wagons. Anyway, it was decided that we could a) do the protection side using the so-called Nyanga battalion which was the Mozambican army force trained at Nyanga which would protect the engineers working up the line from Maputo (the Zimbabwe soldiers, also British trained would do the same down the line from the Zimbabwe border) and b) help fund the engineering work by Zimbabwe railways. On our way back, we had a report that there was a RENAMO group which was going to be crossing the line back to their safe havens in the Kruger national park and the British former officer that I mentioned was very keen to take the Zimbabwean troops out to go and have a go. And this was where the Zimbabwean engineer and the Mozambican official with us got very fidgety and we discovered that in practice, there was already a bit of an arrangement to live and let live, so the Mozambican army security people protecting the railway weren't going to attack RENAMO provided RENAMO didn't attack the railway. Without such an arrangement, RENAMO couldn't get back to their safe haven across the South African border so they'd reached this local agreement in the field. Happily, we managed to stop the action against RENAMO. The work went ahead and the line reopened. I don't know whether it's now used; it's one of these awful things about being a diplomat, you get involved in something in a country and then you leave.

MG: I was just going to ask what your conditions, your house and so on were like when you were Deputy High Commissioner?

RD: We had a nice little bungalow with a lovely garden, which, because it was on the side of a hill was stepped, with some wonderful tropical or sub-tropical plants in it, wonderful stuff. We had a small swimming pool. They were the best living conditions that I'd ever experienced of course.

MG: What sort of staff did you have?

RD: We had a cook, Petros, who lived on the premises with his wife, who helped clean in the house. We had a gardener who also lived on the premises. And we had a security detail which I suppose pretty well all the white or senior black people had from a security firm, SECURITAS. They wore uniform. Our staff were extremely good and they didn't cheat us in any way, but Petros, sadly, cheated on his dear wife and children.

MG: Did you have any more incidents with leopards and so on?

RD: No. Settler Africa is so different from West Africa and particularly in a place like the former Rhodesia where there had been so many whites. No, it was much more urbanized, much more sophisticated. And you had this quite significant overlay of first world on the third world; you could go to Harare as a businessman and you could imagine you were in a nice part of Southern Europe. It was lovely and the climate was superb. During the winter, which was the dry season, the temperatures would rise to 20 or mid-20s but you could have frost in the morning, because Harare is 4000 feet up. As there was no rain you could actually arrange tennis two months in advance and know you would have a sunny afternoon to play. Or golf - there were 14 golf courses around Harare; the conditions were excellent. Petros had been trained by a White Rhodesian farmer and basically produced British nursery food. We looked after our staff. I remember one hair-raising incident. We were on a steep hill as I mentioned and so the drive was quite steep. Our gardener had got on his bike to go somewhere, his brakes had failed and he'd gone shooting across the road and hit a lamppost. He was bleeding profusely and came up to seek help from us. I decided that we'd better drive him immediately to the hospital, bleeding everywhere. This was just after the AIDS business had started so I was quite nervous but felt that there was no choice, the last thing I was going to do was say 'oh I'm terribly sorry, I don't want you getting everything bloody.' I got bloody and I've been tested and all is well! There was a very paternalistic side even then to all this; we did look after the staff and they were tremendously loyal. We entertained a lot. We always tried to bring together whites, especially farmers with sophisticated blacks because they would then discover that the blacks were better educated than they were. It was a necessary lesson because otherwise the only blacks they saw much of were their farm-workers or their domestic staff and many had a view which was not only racist – which it

undoubtedly was – but also socially inaccurate. There were plenty of very sophisticated, highly educated black Zimbabweans, most of whom I suspect have now left.

MG: Well, I think we'll leave it there, because we've nearly finished now, haven't we?

FCO, Head Southern Africa Department, 1989-91

MG: it's now 5th April 2017 and Sir Richard Dales and Moira Goldstaub are meeting for the fourth set of interviews and finishing up on his recollections of his career, Sir Richard, we've got to April 1989 when you were at the FCO and you were heading up the South Africa Department.

RD: Yes, that's correct. Just before I took up my new job (then), I went to SA for two weeks, if not three, briefing. Robin Renwick was the ambassador there and he was insistent that I should get a real feel for South Africa (SA) before I took up the job in London. He was right. The extraordinary situation then was that President Botha, he was called the Crocodile, had had a stroke but was still alive and nominally president but it was quite clear that there was going to be a succession and that here was really an opportunity for change. Namibia was already in transition under arrangements supervised by the UN, so Robin Renwick sent me to Namibia for a few days. (I can come back to that in a moment). In SA, he wanted to make sure that I met some of the, what he called the "strugglers", the mainly black South African movements struggling for the end of Apartheid and for democracy. So I was taken to some out-of-the-way places by the chap from the Embassy whose particular responsibility it was to keep in touch with the strugglers. The apartheid regime did not approve of this and he had actually been beaten up by the SA police who had raided one of these meetings with black SAs, seized him and claimed that they didn't know who he was etc. There were two extraordinary experiences awaiting me. One of them was in a very small, very conservative farmers' town just off the Karoo. We were to meet a certain group of strugglers and we were given instructions to wait at our hotel to be picked up and taken to the meeting, which would be in the black township. Eventually a car turned up driven by somebody that my colleague didn't recognize and we had this awful moment when we wondered whether we might be walking into a trap set by the SA police. Anyway, we took the risk and we were driven out to the township, to one of the square houses with corrugated iron roofs, a bit like prefabs in this country, the standard township house. And as we sat there with the fellow that had brought

us there, people came in through the window, from the garden, from all sorts of entries other than the front door, it was a most peculiar...! Anyway we had a very interesting discussion, you have to remember that at this time Mrs. Thatcher was PM, she had condemned the ANC as a terrorist organisation and we weren't supposed to have anything to do with terrorists. However we regarded these people not so much as terrorists but as struggling opponents of apartheid. Robin Renwick essentially got away with this until he later convinced Mrs. Thatcher that this was the right thing to do. It was very interesting just to see just how much these black South Africans were expecting of Britain as the key player in persuading the SA regime at the time to renounce apartheid.

The other extraordinary experience was with the Pan Africanist Congress. Its leader (whose name I cannot remember) lived in a township in Cape Town and he was very ill. I went to talk to him. In the house (another classic square township house) I had to wait with the family until he was ready which was very nice. They had a piano and I discovered that the piano was not working properly and since I used to look after my own piano a bit, I had a go at it and I got the piano to work for them albeit out of tune and I heard years later that the family hadn't forgotten this. When I was then taken in to see this party leader he was actually lying flat in bed, barely alive, so I had my talk with him lying on the other side of the double bed so our heads were close enough for him to hear me, which was a first for my diplomatic experience! His main concern was to ask us to continue the educational scholarships we arranged for black South Africans. He died a couple of months later.

MG: It was nothing catching, I'm happy to witness!

RD: No, nothing catching, I think he was dying of cancer. I'm ashamed to say that, had I had a diary, I would have recorded names and it's sad that I don't remember them. Of course we also met loads of other opposition figures of all races and also people in government, in the party and indeed the Dutch Reform Church, which was of course highly influential. Its leader was immensely important; he'd already changed the doctrine of the Dutch Reformed Church and removed its justification for racial discrimination and was helping to steer South Africa towards reform. Some while later, he was assassinated by some right-wingers who shot him through his sitting-room window.

I was also taken to Namibia, which as I say was about to begin the process of transition to independence as a democracy under UN supervision, and as part of that process SA forces there were gradually being withdrawn. There were UN forces of different kinds there. On our way down to Cape Town, Elizabeth and I had been on an ordinary train from Johannesburg and we'd had dinner the night before at a particular table. When we came to our table for breakfast the next morning we found two other gentlemen sitting at the table, now laid for four. They were white SAs, they evidently wanted to know what we were up to and ...

MG: Were they secret service or policemen?

RD: No, I'll explain, they assumed we were tourists and I did nothing to disillusion them because at that point we were on leave visiting SA as tourists before I began my briefing with the Embassy. So I said how much we were enjoying our trip - the scenery was spectacular. I then asked them the same question. They said that they'd just come from South West Africa (Namibia). (The branch line from "South West" had joined the main line during the night.) They were retired officers, what we'd call Territorial Army officers or reservists, and their job was to escort troops to South West Africa. At the time, the SAs were supposed to be withdrawing troops. They were allowed some rotation but these chaps had taken a whole new unit of reservists to "South West", and this was of course completely contrary to the transition agreement. So when we got to Cape Town, I duly reported this to Robin Renwick. There was another incident like that where SAs were cheating which was rumbled by RR and a brilliant fellow called Peter Wallis, who had been seconded from our embassy in SA to head up the British mission to Namibia during this transition period. Peter had extremely good relations with SWAPO, the independence organisation trying to move in there whose forces were based in Angola. Anyway, I was taken to see some of the SWAPO leaders as part of my briefing. Some time later, after I had got back to London, I got a call from Robin Renwick who said that he'd been summoned by Pik Botha, the SA Foreign Minister, who had complained that the UN troops in Namibia were supporting SWAPO and allowing their forces to take over the country in breach of the transition agreement. Botha had handed over some UN signals, which had intercepted by the SAs to prove his point. RR suspected that Botha was being led into this by the people to his right, because there was a lot of resistance within the old guard in SA to what was going on. Whether or not this was true, the allegations had to be dealt with quickly if the whole process in Namibia was not to unravel. I

got in touch with Wallis in Windhoek who happened to know that the UN communications operation was in the hands of the Royal Signals, one of the British elements of the UN force. Any signals of the kind Botha showed to Renwick would have had to go through them. Wallis showed them the signals and they were evidently complete fakes. Wallis also used his contacts with SWAPO as well as with the UN and was able to extract genuine signals from the same time as the fakes. We got these to Renwick who proved to Pik Botha that he had been led up the garden path. Pik Botha was absolutely mad with Boss, the SA intelligence people, who had planted the fakes. The incident never came out publicly and the transition process was not disrupted. It probably helped that the SA intelligence people had been discredited. It showed the kind of resistance we were up against in the whole business of transition to democracy in South Africa. Later on in Namibia there were many other difficult issues. For example, we helped them with negotiations with the EU over fisheries. There are very good fishing grounds off Namibia/ South West Africa, and of course the Spanish were very keen to fish there. EU fisheries negotiators spotted a weak partner in the new Namibian administration and would have taken them to the cleaners had we not given the Namibians some discreet help.

MG: So were you able to step in?

RD: Yes, not that I claim any personal credit! This was the kind of issue that was crossing my desk; it wasn't only high-flown politics! I have another anecdote from the end of the transition period; there was an election in South West Africa, to elect a new independent government of Namibia. Of course SWAPO was the only big party other than the white parties and some minority groups. There were a lot of settlers of German origin, farmers who had lived in Namibia since it was a German colony and whole areas were basically German speaking, probably still are. These were very conservative of course, as you can imagine. I decided to go to Namibia for the independence election. I joined Peter Wallis in visiting some of the key areas immediately after polling day. We happened to be sitting with some of the SWAPO leadership in one of the SWAPO offices in the north of the country when some of the first results were declared. Well of course, as in this country, the first results come from the smallest constituencies, which were in the white farming areas, so the first results coming in were a huge majority for the whites and so the SWAPO leaders began to say "it's been fixed, we have been had" and they started to prepare instructions to prepare for a return to armed conflict. The atmosphere got very tense. Wallis was able to explain to them what

I've just mentioned about constituencies and the order of results and say, 'you wait until we get to the real constituencies where you have a lot of support,' which of course turned out to be the case. But I can think of no better illustration of the benefits of having diplomats on the spot, people who know their contacts very widely and who don't just concentrate on the government, and that requires a lot of effort, it also requires proper staffing and resources to do that sort of thing, but I think that there were – I quoted two occasions – where I think that the whole issue in Namibia would have gone into reverse or would certainly have been very seriously disrupted if it hadn't been for somebody with those kind of classic diplomatic skills. Anyway, that was Namibia. They were very exciting times in Southern Africa as far as I was concerned.

I mentioned earlier that Mozambique, although it was independent, was similarly fighting off an insurgency that was sponsored by the Apartheid in SA. We were also working to prepare for a transition from apartheid in SA. One of the things that RR did was to pick the three candidates that he thought were most likely to succeed P.W. Botha. He then got Mrs. Thatcher to invite them over to London one by one for a chat. The idea was that she would make clear to them that Britain under her premiership would not support any kind of pro-Apartheid government: "when you take over there's got to be a transition". She didn't put it quite in those terms but was making it clear. It was also apparent that the three candidates were much more liberal. Of the three, de Klerk was the one that became president and de Klerk came I think at least twice more, because we were able to provide a forum in Britain, a discreet forum where he could meet with ANC leaders and other opposition in confidence. Actually, this sort of thing had been going on for some years, some organized privately by a member of the House of Lords and some organized very discreetly by the British government. I believe these were of enormous benefit because people like Thabo Mbeki for example were living in Europe; they were exiled, as were many of the ANC. Oliver Tambo lived in Britain with his wife. He was the president of the ANC, so senior to Mandela at the time. When Mandela was released which was early in 1990 we arranged for him to come on a secret visit to Britain to meet the ANC in exile, particularly Oliver Tambo and people like Thabo Mbeki, because it was absolutely vital to keep the internal ANC which Nelson Mandela was undisputed leader of together with the external ANC who of course were supported by all sorts of governments round Europe. We brought them all together for a weekend in a safe house, you know, a secret location where they would be completely undisturbed and without us, we weren't present. But Mrs. Thatcher had a good talk with

Mandela by phone over the weekend. I think it's worth remembering that because of Mrs. Thatcher's reputation of being pro-Apartheid. Mandela of course came again later on for a visit where he saw the Commonwealth Secretary General and it was full of publicity and he saw people and this was before he became president. And then when he became president after the elections, he made a state visit, and also attended the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Scotland in 1997. So he visited three times but you will only find reports of his visit in 1990 when the 30-year rule is up. Anyway I mention this because again this was a supreme initiative by Robin Renwick who I think deserves enormous credit for the way the transition in SA was smooth and basically produced the right results, at any rate initially, for both SAs and British interests.

MG: Can I just ask you – as you spoke, it seemed to me quite reminiscent of what I've read about the negotiations with the IRA and Northern Ireland, and were these going on in tandem or could they have taken lessons from your dealings in SA with a similar kind of thing?

RD: There were indeed similarities and we arranged for South Africans involved, to speak to people involved in the Good Friday Agreement process, so you're right on that, yes.

MG: So Robin Renwick's legacy goes further even ...

RD: Yes, I think that's fair. Our involvement in South Africa covered a broad range of issues. For example, the SA police could be pro-apartheid thugs. But you can't do without a police force and you can't just sack the existing policemen as they tried in Iraq; you've got to retrain them. So one of the issues we were talking about behind the scenes during the transition was how to reform. We offered help with retraining the police, working with them in other words. Now it is politically sensitive, giving aid to SA police, but it was absolutely vital to help in the transition with retraining, with changing attitudes. One of these meetings I've told you about was a conference in Cambridge in one of the colleges. Thabo Mbeki was the senior ANC man there. I was able to have quite productive discussions with him in the margins about how, when the time came, we would be able to help with police training and with other institutions of that kind. There was a certain amount to be done with the military, which was also politically sensitive of course. The judiciary was still fairly independent. In that region, Namibia and SA plus to some extent Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Swaziland and Botswana had an integrated judiciary administering Roman Dutch Law with English court

procedures. So there was less of a problem with the judiciary than you might have found in some countries.

During that time I also took on responsibility for Central Africa so we became Central and Southern Africa Department. That meant that I had some fairly interesting times in Zambia, Congo as well as in Angola etc. (Baroness) Lynda Chalker was the Minister responsible. I usually accompanied her on her many visits to the area.

MG: She was very highly regarded as I remember, was that your impression of her?

RD: Oh yes; she was known as Mama Africa because she knew everybody in Africa who needed knowing. She knew every president, she was very popular with them and she could persuade them to do things, which many others wouldn't have been able to. She simply got on well with them, she had the right touch. You have to be very open, you also have to be of course aware that in most African cultures, they always try to tell their guests what they want to hear, rather than what they really think! So you have to take account of the culture. And Lynda Chalker was very good at that. I worked a lot with her then, and then later on briefly when I became AUS, or Director. In 1990 or 1991 we flew to Angola and had a visit there. Angola was a one party state under President Dos Santos and the opposition to him was armed and led by Jonas Savimbi. He and his forces were based in the Congo, so near the Copper Belt. We were making one of many attempts to get an inclusive political system going with an end to violence and elections to be held. We actually flew into the bush in Congo to see Savimbi in a Ukrainian ex-military helicopter, it was hardly luxurious but they were pretty reliable, I think! Of course, you never know quite what's going to happen when you land, but Lynda Chalker didn't turn a hair at that sort of thing. On another occasion we visited one of the provincial towns in Angola, called Huambo. It was a railway town, the headquarters of a railway that had been built to carry copper out from the Congolese/Zambian Copper Belt. It had not run for years, yet it was still British-owned and they had a railway works in this town. Believe it or not they were still maintaining some of the rolling stock, which was very old - antique. But Huambo was in the war zone and was ringed by mines. Indiscriminate use of mines was an appalling problem in Angola, as we know later on from the Princess of Wales, but this was a bit earlier than her visit, and we had quite a lot of let's call it hairy experiences over that. We were helping to fund a rehabilitation centre where they made artificial limbs locally and fitted them, it was remarkable. As part of our "peace

making" effort, we went to call on the provincial governor of Huambo. The tarmac road ended at his house on the outskirts of town but the road continued as a track, which was by definition unsafe, so we were careful not to leave the tarmac. About two months later the driver of the governor's car when turning it round went on to the dirt track and exploded a landmine and was killed. You would have thought that by that time the track so close to the house would have been properly cleared. Later, Princess Diana visited the same place and got a lot of publicity for the Halo Trust's work clearing mines. Even more of a problem than mines was getting President Dos Santos to agree to proper elections. Although we and other members of the international community did get him to a point where there were going to be elections, there was a complete betrayal of them. Some of Savimbi's outfit who had come in from the bush to take part in the elections were killed and it all went wrong again. One of the other things we tried to do actually was stop the corruption which lay behind a lot of the violence. There's oil, lots of it in Angola, but the proceeds from the oil mostly went into the pockets of the rulers rather than the state budget for the people. It worked like this; an oil company like Shell for example, buying the oil would pay their money to the Angolan State Oil Company account in New York. All above board, but the Angolan Company's accounts were opaque so what happened when that money was repatriated was very questionable. Much of it went straight to Dos Santos and his cronies.

MG: Not into the infrastructure then?

RD: Very little. It was very corrupt. To counter it, we tried, this was a bit later I suppose, to persuade the oil companies to declare the payments they had made to the Angolan State oil Co - declare it in their accounts or somewhere where it would be natural to do so-, so that it would be apparent just how money was being diverted. I have to say that BP agreed but they were operating in partnership with the Norwegian State Oil Company who refused to play ball. When I eventually went to Norway one of my first tasks was to try to persuade Statoil to sign up to the process. I failed. I thought it was outrageous that the Norwegians, who felt as strongly as we did about corruption and the damage it causes, weren't prepared to lean on their state oil company to comply. Anyway the consequence of that was, BP suffered and lost exploration opportunities while Statoil did not.

MG: You've mentioned Geoffrey Howe. Was he Foreign Secretary at that stage? Because he did become Chancellor, didn't he?

RD: He was Foreign Secretary (FS) in April '89 when I went to the Southern Africa Department and I had a kind of baptism of fire. I'd been in the job three weeks or so, very soon anyway, when it emerged that some white South Africans were engaged in a smuggling operation of some missiles - serious weapons - to the Unionists. This was the time when South Africa was in transition, so there were conflicting interests in play. I honestly don't remember what I suggested we did about it, but I know that it was not a very clever idea because I was too blinkered and focused on the South African angle and didn't take enough account of the wider picture. Anyway, when this proposal got to Geoffrey Howe, he hit the roof. He strongly disagreed! And he had an office meeting at which he tore me to shreds. With a QC's precision he pointed out the inadequacies of what I was proposing. He was absolutely right and I felt really bad that I had made such a mess of things when so new in the job, very keen to get it right, and to make a good impression, but he never seemed to hold it against me. John Major, whom I thought was a very good FS, succeeded him. It was absolutely horrific what the press, you know, Spitting Image did to him. He was certainly not a grey man, he was wise and full of common sense and actually very charming. I did not work under him long, for in '91; I was seconded to the Civil Service Commission.

MG: So you obviously finished your Southern African Department duties earlier than it indicates here.

Seconded as FCO Chairman, Civil Service Selection Board, 1991-92

RD: I left the SA Department in, I think it was, September '91 and did a year as so-called FCO Chairman of the Civil Service Selection Boards, along with a Home Civil Service Chairman. We wrote the tests if you see what I mean and every week we chaired a board. It was a wonderful sabbatical; it took me right out of things meeting these wonderfully bright people who were trying to get into the civil service. We did selection boards for all kinds of public servants including the Inland Revenue, the Intelligence Services and EU Commission. It was very stimulating indeed. Then in September 1992, I went off to Harare.

MG: That's only six years since you'd been there as Deputy High Commissioner.

High Commissioner, Harare, Zimbabwe, 1992-95

RD: Actually it was only three! I did wonder how I'd be received because as the Number Two previously I had been the usual conveyer of bad news. But my predecessor Kieran Prendergast said they were all looking forward to my coming back and I expect that was because I was the devil they knew. I left UK in September '92 and travelled to Zambia first of all because Lynda Chalker was hosting a Heads of Mission conference there in one of the game parks in an isolated lodge which we took over. It was fantastic actually. And it was a privately owned lodge and we were given this facility free I think which also helped! While we were there, the UK was ejected from the European Exchange Mechanism and I can remember this whole conference was dominated by the crisis at home, which Lynda Chalker followed on a satellite phone. Anyway, I had a very warm welcome when I went back to Harare.

MG: Had anything changed? What had changed?

RD: What had changed? Well, when I was first there we (the British, other major donors, the IMF etc.) were trying to persuade Mugabe to liberalize the economy, to get some of Smith's emergency legislation withdrawn, so that for example you would no longer need import or export licences. By 1992 all that had happened and in, I think 1991; Zimbabwe adopted an IMF programme, which was in effect liberalization. By liberalizing they met conditions for IMF loans and World Bank finance and so on; it was a very significant move. And so yes there was a bit of a different atmosphere and one of my black Zimbabwean friends who was a banker said 'we're really going places now'. There were still big problems. For example we still had to have BMAT (British Military Training Team) for a number of reasons and the Mozambique issue was still running. Mugabe was in mourning and there was some paralysis in government. (Sally, his wife, had died in late '91, I think.)

MG: He sounds a bit like Queen Victoria, that is it's quite a long time!

RD: Yes, there's a long period for African mourning, and various traditions. I have no doubt whatsoever that he was very closely attached to Sally and Sally had been I think quite a brake on him from going too far down the let's call it the road of Southern African culture, nepotism and so on. That's not to say that some of the Ghanaian family had not made some

inroads into Zimbabwe. There was I think a nephew of Sally's who had set up a business using pretty nefarious methods. After a year they have a ceremony at the home of the deceased. It's like a big family party really and to do with laying to rest the soul of the departed. It is the culmination of the period of mourning. I was invited to this, the only diplomat to be invited, not because I was Richard Dales but because I was the British High Commissioner. I mention that because even then we were highly regarded and Mugabe had this paradoxical relationship with us: on the one hand he regarded us as responsible for the world's colonialism and on the other hand he regarded us as being responsible for helping save his country! And of course we had looked after Sally for years and years. When she was still alive and I was Deputy High Commissioner, she went to Britain for kidney dialysis and so on. She usually stayed with Lord and Lady Walston who had looked after her when Mugabe was imprisoned by Ian Smith. For this wake, I had to get briefing on its traditions, how I was to behave and what I was to do. To my surprise I was made to feel, there's no doubt about it, that I was part of the extended family. The ministers were all there of course and Mugabe's relatives and Sally's relatives.

At the time, having got economic liberalization and the IMF programme, we were trying to help strengthen the institutions of government and the state, the rule of law, freedom of the press, judiciary as well as helping with health and education. This was the British approach at the time - holistic development. This faced us with some tricky issues. For instance, we had helped with the police in 1980 and '81 trying to reform the British South African Police, as the Rhodesian police was called. It was apparent that this had failed and we had to decide whether we were going to risk pouring money down the drain again. So we got a senior British policeman out, a Chief Constable, to come and have a look. He thought there was good material and worth another attempt so we helped set up a police training college. The idea was to retrain the existing officers, train new ones, and get a continuous training system going. This had to be a Zimbabwean initiative with which we were helping. A new Chief of Police had to be found and appointed by Mugabe. A candidate was found, partly by our policeman. As soon as he was appointed some people started to try to undermine him with allegations of corruption, which actually were fairly evidently fabricated. This was a standard tactic of corrupt officials; if you've got somebody who's going to threaten your position you attack them ... So anyway he was suspended for about a year, which was quite a difficult time for us, but we went ahead when he was cleared. We helped set up the police college and supported the new Chief of Police. Sadly, he became one of Mugabe's henchmen

and is one of the reasons why I feel so disappointed and deceived about Zimbabwe, but we'll perhaps come to that later. At the same time, we were helping with the judiciary and the state prosecution service. The person that we were working with is now Chief Justice ... another example of how power corrupts. And we were helping to support an independent press and of course Mugabe didn't like that, there was no doubt about that. There was opposition at the time so we were trying to do it indirectly. And we were trying to help with politics, you know in whatever way we could. We tried to copy what Britain set up in Eastern Europe when the Berlin Wall came down. This was an NGO which was run ostensibly by Parliament to help countries which had been dictatorships to develop parliamentary democracy with political parties, different political parties. We wanted to try and do something like that in African countries. We didn't succeed in Zimbabwe.

So in '92/'93 we were spending a great deal of money, especially on primary health care and education. We were also coming close to agreement on the land issue. Now I know I mentioned this briefly before and I won't go over what I've said about the origins of the land issue but Mugabe set up a land commission which reported in '92 or '93 taking models from South America where there have been similar problems, models which allowed land to become an asset to the people who occupied it, to have value in itself, which was difficult given the cultural background of land being possessed by tribal ancestors. But there was apparently a way of doing it and this commission came up with it. So part of the idea was that land, particularly resettled land, would have commercial value and enable people to borrow money against it and so on. On this basis we would be able to release the funds which we had been accumulating, since the land reform programme had been suspended, to help meet the costs of transition and to compensate commercial farmers who had to surrender land for resettlement. We had to get over all sorts of obstacles in this. The first was to decide which land should be made available to be resettled. Theoretically, there was so much land unoccupied or occupied by the state and unused that that wasn't going to be an issue for quite a while. To designate land for resettlement, joint commissions were set up in each province with representatives of the government and the Commercial Farmers' Union. The Commercial Farmers' Union HQ saw the sense in all this, and that if it could be done properly it would benefit them as well as the country as a whole. Unfortunately not all the white farmers could see that and the result was that in half or in four out of the nine provinces the CFU locals refused to take part, leaving it entirely to the government officials. Now, this was quite a long process and we weren't involved in the selection of land at all. Behind the

scenes we were trying to encourage the white farmers to help the process as some were already doing. Here's one example. There were two agricultural colleges in Zimbabwe, deriving from Rhodesian times, they were still churning out trained farmers, I think the figure was about 300 a year, and most of these by now were black Zimbabweans but they of course didn't have any farms to go to, or very few. Some white farmers employed them as farm managers and that system was working quite well. Others of course would only treat them as labourers, so many of these people became teachers or something. You can imagine that's another source of discontent; some actually emigrated because of it! Anyway, we were supposed to have an agreement with the Zimbabwean government on this whole process: when it would be launched and so on, and when our money would start to flow, (and other countries had money as well) to help with set up costs of new farms and with compensation where necessary. The first crisis happened, maybe in '94, when the newspaper unexpectedly published the first land designations. It was horrific. In some cases the home farm of white farmers was designated while none of the state land was designated, the list had very little in common with what we had been led to expect from the minister of agriculture.

MG: How had it come about?

RD: We noticed when this had come out that the Minister of Agriculture had been away. So I went to him and I had a meeting with him alone to start with. I said 'I know you couldn't possibly be responsible for this list, I wonder if you even know what has happened to it, because you were away at the time.' Now whether he knew or not, I don't know to this day but I took the attitude that he couldn't possibly have known and basically put it to him that his face was involved if he didn't do something about this list. Anyway, he called in his officials, was duly angry, the list was withdrawn and everybody breathed a sigh of relief. Anyway, the next thing that happened was that some months later the next list came out and on that occasion I couldn't do a repeat, for there was no doubt that the Minister had seen it. But I went in to him and I pointed out that there were a few anomalies, where the designation was clearly unjust. In these cases the home farm had been designated which would make it impossible to farm the rest of the land which had not been designated. These designations were withdrawn. They were all in area where the white farmers had refused to work with the provincial commission so there was an issue of simple revenge.

On the issue of land reform, we continued to have discussions about the conditions under which our aid would come through and I think, for most of this time, I was pretty confident that Mugabe was backing it and indeed I think that was the case when I left in '95. But we still didn't have full agreement -and this was a major aid agreement. When I went back to London, and of course was still dealing with Africa, the negotiations continued but I played no part as the lead department in London was of course the Department for International Development. Eventually, a group of Zimbabwean ministers came to London to finalise the agreement that involved several different departments apart from agriculture, local government for example. And these ministers reached agreement, but when they got back to Harare they were overruled by Mugabe. By this time, '97 or '98, (it had gone on all this time) it was a big sign that things were going to go very badly wrong. You know we did make some progress on the land issue but by 1997/98 perhaps it was too much for Mugabe; my own feeling is that by then he was too much under the malign influence of his new wife, Grace, and her family and of the corrupt Zanu heavyweights around him.

I used to see Mugabe from time to time, not as often as I would have liked because his keepers didn't want me to go to State House very often. However diplomats would be invited to some meeting somewhere out in the countryside where he would be distributing largesse. I went quite often because, as no other diplomats usually bothered to go I had the chance to sit next to Mugabe on the VIP stand where I could have a chat to him. I believe that until he opened up his relationship with Grace, now his wife, he had remained very much the father of his people, not a democrat, far from it, for leaders of liberation movements brooked no opposition but nonetheless a leader quite concerned to do the best by his people. He did not want those who benefitted the economy to leave, so he didn't want to get rid of the whites. On the other hand he did not like the middle class so he didn't like black businessmen very much, because he regarded them as a potential threat and also as parasites. That of course put him at odds with some of the people around him, the big cheeses who were making money from their positions of power and the people around him are still the same people as they were then, 25 years ago, almost anyway. They stand or fall together with Mugabe. At the beginning he was almost ascetic. He lived modestly. He did not build houses for himself, he built a house in his village which was a modest, European-type house to live in, but otherwise he lived in State House like Ian Smith. But in 1994 he bought land in a posh area of Harare on which to build a palace, that was the first sign of his behaving like many other dictators. There was another sign, well several signs, of this kind

of major corruption. For example, there was a project to modernise the airport and to extend it. Harare was getting a lot of traffic and it needed extension. The Minister of Transport at the time was a white minister, Dennis Norman, a farmer who at the time of independence had been president of the Commercial Farmers Union, and had been made Minister of Agriculture by Mugabe in his first government. He'd been brought back into government in ninety-something. (The health minister was also a white man at this time.) There were various plans for the airport. We had aid-funded the study to identify the requirements. Commercial companies then put in bids. There was a French project, there was a Japanese project and there was a third project, which was by a Middle Eastern person (which was the only one to include a British firm). Finance was not a problem; the Japanese were offering an interest-free loan. When it came to the selection of the contract, it went to the un-financed one, it went to a company, which had a poor reputation for corruption in other parts of Africa. The design was supposedly African but not very suitable for an airport - the control tower was going to be like one of the towers of Great Zimbabwe. Basically this project stank and Dennis Norman (I don't know this actually but I suspect it) was trying to stop it. Either way Dennis Norman was Chairman of a committee to examine the projects. You can imagine what happened. Immediately, allegations of corruption against him came out, same as had happened to the police. It was absolutely appalling and sometime after this Dennis Norman left Zimbabwe and he now lives in Britain. That affair was a sign that things were going bad. Mugabe's nephew, Leo, was behind a lot of this, together with a Yugoslav or Serbian company which for some time had been getting civil engineering contracts by underhand means.

MG: How much is Grace behind it, because she's still striking a strange figure 25 years on, saying that he's a God and she'll be voted in?

RD: First of all I think that the real influence behind this whole issue of Mugabe's corruption is the African tradition of looking after your family, extended family and tribe first. If you are in a position of power, influence or wealth, your family will expect you to share the proceeds and to feather their nests as well. I think that is what Grace began to do, beginning with herself of course! And I think Mugabe is either gaga or completely under her spell or both. The way he behaves these days is out of character. He was always two-faced; he would always say things to his rural audience, which is his core support, which he wouldn't say to us. But we took steps to counter that; I had someone on the staff, a British diplomat

who spoke Shona so that we would know first-hand what he was saying. Politically, we were never going to see eye to eye but on the issue of material as opposed to political corruption I think there's been a complete change. He's got great palaces now and makes expensive trips. I can only speculate for I haven't seen him for twenty-something years; I only see him on television. He was a good orator with his crowds but he never liked speaking in groups where he might be outnumbered. He always preferred very small groups or better one to one. I had a meeting with him entirely alone on one occasion because his officials had told me the wrong time and I turned up an hour early so the officials only joined us after an hour. He thought it was rather good to have this meeting and we discussed difficulties like how we were going to get out of supplying the officers with BMAT, (our military training team) and how he was going to get the right tribal balance, because in places like the police, the forces the civil service and of course the cabinet you've got to balance your tribal interests.

Sorry, there was a third element of corruption I wanted to mention, and that was the party. ZANU had set up a company and this was run by two British Indians called the Joshi brothers and one was the finance officer and the other was the chief executive. The company acquired shares in companies, took over companies and set up others. It was an extremely good, clever operation, the proceeds of which went to the party. Entirely legitimate. The chairman of that ZANU party supervisory board at the time I was there was a fellow called Emerson Mnangagwa. He'd also been Security Minister which meant running the Zimbabwean equivalents of MI5 and MI6 combined. So he had a pretty good hold on what's going on, and on his political rivals. He was a very powerful man and he was the fellow I designated as the likely successor to Mugabe. When I left Zimbabwe I actually thought that Mugabe was getting ready to stand down while his stock was high and that the next President, leader, would be from the Karanga, a midlands tribe, Shona but a sub-group, which was the biggest sub-group, and much bigger than Mugabe's Sezuru. Its most distinguished man in ZANU was Mnangagwa. There was quite a lot of public discussion of the succession actually. I thought that there would be opposition to that but I gave it an over 50% chance that this transition would actually stay peaceful, well the transition's never happened! And it doesn't look as if it's going to be peaceful so I got that wrong as well. And I took no account of how Grace would push Mugabe to stay on so that he could keep his (or her) nose in the trough. As Chairman of the Zanu company Mnangagwa would be in prime position to benefit also and want to stay in office because frankly the leadership in ZANU were undoubtedly taking some of the money and you know often, despite their high level of Western education, they didn't see it as wrong. It is almost understandable: - Tiny Rowland

of Lonrho had provided some of them with allowances, money to help them do their jobs. We would call it bribes. He had the Mercedes agency and gave all the government ministers their own Mercedes to drive around in so feathering your own nest was something which came automatically to many of them. Another thing that happened after I'd gone, but while I was still in London, was that there was trouble in the Congo. An African force went in and the Zimbabweans were the largest element in it. The generals found that the norm in the Congo was that you helped yourself to all the marvellous resources whether it's diamonds or other precious metals. Which they did and this was followed by the extraordinary situation where the top military have taken over a diamond mine in Zimbabwe for their own purposes.

MG: They picked this up did they, when they were part of the African force? Picked up corruption?

RD: I won't say they began there, but it was an opportunity for them, which they took when that sort of thing would have been more difficult at home. This actually brings me on to something that I'd like to mention and that is that, you remember '94 was the time of the Rwandan massacres by the Hutu of the Tutsi. Of course it was a traumatic time. We, the British, were trying to get an African force to deploy to stop it. The Belgians and the French were basically discredited and the Americans had had a disastrous deployment in Somalia. So we were trying desperately to get the Africans in. Zimbabwe had battalions trained by BMAT ready to go, they would have done a good job I'm sure, but we couldn't persuade the Zimbabweans to contribute them. There were all sorts of excuses – "we have no lift"- (we don't have the aircraft transport). The Zimbabweans were adamant that they wouldn't go. One senior Zimbabwean who I used to talk to quite a lot said 'well you've got to remember that we are Bantu people, flat noses likes the Hutu and we're not going to go in, in support of the Tutsi against the Bantu.'

MG: I'm having trouble following this because there's also the Shona. Where do they fit in?

RD: Yes, sorry, the Shona are a Bantu tribe. The Bantu people is a huge umbrella term which covers most of the people of black Africa, so most of the West African coastal peoples and all the way south of the Sahara are Bantu until you come to peoples who have clicks in their language, who are aboriginals like the San people in Botswana. I believe that the anthropologists say that the Bantu originated probably in the equatorial region and spread

from there and they originally spread further northwards but then other peoples who are called “Soudanais” (in French, because I first learned all this in French speaking Cameroon) inhabit the area on the fringes of the Sahara from West Africa across to Somalia via Sudan.

MG: And what about the Berber?

RD: The Berbers are basically desert people from North Africa.

MG: So the Shona is one tribe under the Bantu head? Are the Tutsis a kind of umbrella similar to Bantu or are they a tribe like the Shona, if so who is their umbrella?

RD: The Tutsi are regarded by the, let’s call it the Shona for the moment, by a lot of the Southern Africans as being non-Bantu; they are Ethiopians, they’d say. And if you look at them, they’re tall, they have slim faces and they don’t have the flat nose. Sorry all this may sound racist but this is why they’re seen as different. Many people say that the Tutsi are in fact a mixture of Bantu and Soudanais so that it gets extremely complicated and it’s not as simple as the Zimbabweans saw it but nonetheless that was the reason that I was given privately by this Zimbabwean as to why they would never go. When they went to the Congo of course, they were supporting Bantu against Tutsis who were regarded as stirring up trouble, but let’s not go into that can of worms! Anyway, we failed on Rwanda, but one of the consequences of it of course was that it was the liberation force that went in, the Ugandans, who had given a home to the Tutsis and refuge. So the new regime came in and its new president, Kagame, had actually been the Ugandan president’s security chief. The French regarded that whole operation in Rwanda as a British takeover, an Anglophone takeover, I’ll come to that later on if you like.

MG: Yes, back to reminiscences of Zimbabwe. Princess Diana came out, this was to do with land mine clearance, presumably?

RD: It was nothing to do with land mine clearance, no. She went to Angola for that rather later. Diana had separated from Prince Charles and had begun to do her own thing. This was a visit which was initiated by the British Red Cross, for whom she was a patron together with the Leprosy Mission and whatever charity was concerned with AIDS at the time, but essentially it was the Red Cross piloting it because they realized that Diana attracted press

and public attention wherever she went and they could use this to get their message across around the world. I first got notification of the visit through the Red Cross. Now, that's very unusual. It should have been Kensington Palace or at least the FO. Anyway, having got notification that Princess Diana was to visit and so on, I immediately sent messages to London to ask how I was to proceed: do I treat her still as the Princess of Wales and make this is a royal visit in support of our objectives in Zimbabwe or do I treat her as a private citizen, a visitor from the Red Cross, who happened to be very distinguished? To what extent do I spend money and resources on this? Of course it was complicated by the fact that the situation, the separation from Prince Charles, was undetermined. Anyway, I got no reply, or no substantial reply. I tried to chase it up but got nowhere. I said to myself: 'Right, you're leaving me to carry the can so I will make maximum use of it, treat it as a royal visit and help with all the arrangements as best I can.' And then I got in touch with Diana's private secretary. Now of course I didn't know what particular side he was on but he assured me that the visit had government and royal approval, it wasn't just something entirely private. Anyway, we began to set the whole thing up and I was quite relaxed about it, except that it was costing money from my budget and we were going to have to use a lot of personnel: it was a four day visit, she was going to stay with us, big security problems, and so on. Just before the visit, about a week before, when we'd made all the arrangements, and had had a recce visit by Diana's private secretary, by the Queen's press secretary (whom she'd lent for the visit which was a great comfort to me) and by a security policeman. During their visit we set everything up, how to manage the press, how to keep Diana private (she was coming with her sister as lady-in-waiting), how to manage security. Mugabe was going to lend his presidential jet (of which we disapproved!) to go down to the provinces to visit one of the big refugee camps, accompanied by his health minister. About two weeks before this visit, all arrangements in place, I get a phone call from London from a private secretary I think, somebody very senior, to say 'Richard, we know you've got this visit coming up; we're a bit concerned – the Secretary of State is a bit concerned – that this too is a big thing to handle on your own. You need reinforcement.' Well, as you can imagine, I hit the roof and I said 'thank you very much, but we've got it all set up and anybody coming in now is going to be an extra imposition on us, because they've got to be briefed; if you'd given me some help earlier I'd have been extremely grateful but you can still give me some money!' Anyway, the upshot was that I had to agree to somebody coming up from South Africa (whom I knew and had confidence in) and he helped out and knew exactly what to do. I later discovered that my initial telegrams about the visit had been put away unactioned because of clerical error. So

there was I thinking that I'd been hung out to dry in this potentially difficult situation and in fact it was purely bureaucratic nonsense. I was probably too conscious of the delicacy of the situation of the separation and failed to do what I should have done which was to have phoned as many people in the FCO and Buckingham Palace to ask 'what the hell's going on?' Anyway, the visit itself was tremendously successful. It was organised as a fundraiser for these charities and it raised huge sums of money and she did some very good demonstrations of sympathy with some of the poorest people in the world, television cameras going, with images going around the world of her hugging AIDS victims, going into the hut of an AIDS victim and sitting with her, embracing people with leprosy to show that it is not immediately infectious and that lepers should not be shunned. Incidentally I witnessed one awful incident. We had the press pretty well under control so that we could ensure that they photographed and filmed when we wanted them to for publicity purposes rather than what the tabloids wanted. So we arranged for the press to be in pens, and sometimes to move from one to the other and so on. I should mention we had over a hundred photographers and I think six TV units. It was a lot and so we provided transport so we could make sure that they could get to the place where we (and they) wanted them to be. On one occasion we were moving from one place to another where there were lepers. It was a huge refugee camp in the Midlands and a very dusty area, thousands of people living in temporary accommodation some of whom were lepers. The Princess, had been talking to some of them, and when she moved off to the next place leaving the lepers still sitting in the dust, some of the press corps tried a short cut to follow her and accidentally knocked over a woman with a bleeding stump who was then trampled in the dust. I've never forgotten the sight; they just did not care, they were so focused on getting to the vantage point. I suppose their livelihood depends on it but it was dreadful. It was the lady-in-waiting, Diana's sister, who also saw it and came back to comfort the woman and help her up.

MG: Was she ok?

RD: She was ok, yes. She'd got dirt in her wound but there were people who could help her. You know I've seen a lot of leprosy in my time in Africa, but it's very very rare to see people out in the open with bleeding stumps.

MG: Did you entertain Princess Diana in the evening for dinner?

RD: Yes, we had various events. The President gave a dinner for her and so did we. She had breakfast in her room every morning and we were out to lunch most days. There were formal dinners or receptions on three of the nights and on the fourth we arranged a family dinner for the end of the visit which she said she would attend. When it came to it, she didn't and I think a lot of people were very disappointed by that. She could be mercurial, on the one hand insisting on royal formalities and on the other acting wildly to spite them. We had made, at her request, special arrangements for her to use the swimming pool in the Residence in complete seclusion. There was a constant threat from paparazzi - on the eve of her visit a paparazzo had been found by the police hiding in the hedge in a position from where he could focus on the window of the bedroom she was going to be using. One evening she said she would like to go and have a swim before wherever we were going, so everything was in lock down to give her complete privacy. In fact what she did was to take the car and drive into the centre of town to the hotel where the press were staying. This was built in a U-shape with an outside swimming pool in the middle of the ground floor so if you were sat at the dining table you could look out onto the pool. That is where she went for her swim. She wasn't seen, nobody recognised her, and so she got away with it but can you imagine the kerfuffle and can you imagine how much trouble I would have been in if they had! This was the same person who insisted that when she went up to her room at the end of the day, that we should all parade at the foot of the stairs to say good night ma'am, as if she were the Queen. Same when she came down in the morning. We had had other members of the royal family staying with us and never, ever, had anything like that.

MG: It's so much at variance with the image!

RD: Yes. Well the image is created by other people; I don't think she created the image herself. She knew how to exploit it and did so to great benefit to some of the most vulnerable in society, as we saw during the official part of her visit to Zimbabwe.

MG: You've noted down DFID regional offices – what was that?

RD: DFID was under Mrs. Chalker, Baroness Chalker, and then called the Department of International Development. It was spending a lot of money in various places and it became apparent that it would be easier if they administered some of it on the spot through regional

offices, rather than from London. The staff concerned with Southern Africa would move to Harare. I thought this was quite a good idea actually but it provoked quite a battle. They had to be in a separate office. The head of the regional office thought he was independent of the High Commission, rather than a part of it, even though he had diplomatic status. I had to insist that I as High Commissioner was the Senior British Representative, with overall responsibility for implementing British policy in Zimbabwe. This was important because proper coordination was vital, especially with our holistic approach to development. Nevertheless, these regional offices were I think a good idea, especially if they saved money, e.g. on travel.

MG: The problem with aid I suppose is that you have to ensure it goes to the appropriate people for the appropriate things and I can see that regional offices might make that more likely, but you would also need to know what was needed where, wouldn't you?

RD: I think that's a fair point, they've got to run those programmes and it's easier to have people who are nearby rather than coming out from London all the time and indeed now they use contractors a lot to run the programmes. There's always been a little bit of a conflict of interest because the FO is for foreign policy and the DIFD is for development and they don't like this "contamination" of development with foreign policy. It was a huge step for DIFD in the nineties to accept the concept that they might actually train police forces. Previously that had been done by the FO, because they regarded it as slightly questionable, as it was not directly helping the poor. But development policies have been through many theoretical changes. For example, one of the best ways of helping people is to increase trade which can have a more direct beneficial effect on the poor than direct budgetary aid, but that was politically sensitive.

MG: So you left Harare in '95? How did you part from Robert Mugabe, did you have to kiss hands?

RD: No, he would usually invite you for tea or coffee and he was very affable. I didn't have any nasty messages to convey on this occasion so I remember it as a friendly meeting with a lot of laughter. And this formal farewell meeting was one that his minders could not stop. I mentioned earlier that in my last year I had arrived early for a meeting. We had a good hour

alone together which was very interesting indeed, and he implicitly complained about the fact that his minders kept people away from him. But he had begun to ring me up for help. For example, there was a coup in Lesotho which worried him and a lot of others very much and he was not quite sure how to handle it as leader of the Southern African Development Community. So he rang me up about that and we discussed what might happen. It was a purely private conversation and he followed basically what I suggested, but he probably would have done that anyway. He could argue if necessary that he had acted in consultation with the Brits and I had the opportunity to persuade him to act as we would have wished. That is diplomacy!

FCO Director Africa and Commonwealth, 1995-98

MG: It's the 25th April 2017 and Sir Richard Dales and Moira Goldstaub are discussing his final memories of his diplomatic career. Sir Richard, we are now in November 1995 and you're back in the UK at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Tell me your title and what the job involved please.

RD: When I first began the job, I think the full title was Assistant Under-Secretary of State for Africa and the Commonwealth. In other words it was AUS Africa in the jargon but I also had responsibility for the Commonwealth as an organization, largely because it had to go somewhere and since many of the Commonwealth countries were in Africa it was decided it sat with me because I also had charge of the bilateral relations with those countries in Africa. After about six months, I'm not quite sure of the time but after a little while, there was one of these management reforms in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the AUSs became directors of something called a Command, I don't think it cut out any layers of management, even if it was supposed to but what it did was to give the director, the AUS, specific responsibility over an area of the world or a group of subjects and it also, after a short while, gave the command its own budget so there was a good deal of devolution, financial control or rather decision making. We managed our budget but it was still determined effectively by the administration. It did enable them to reduce the administration though we had to take on extra staff to actually run things like the finances and so whereas in the old days the AUS would have had a secretary and that was it, by the time I left I had an accountant to do the accounts, the budget preparation and to keep an eye on what was going on and also a first secretary assistant who helped me with the co-ordination of policy and administration.

MG: Can I interrupt you to try and explain one thing? At present now, in 2017, there is a lot of talk about the budget for overseas aid and how it is supposed to be 0.7% of GDP. Is that over and above what we do for the Commonwealth or would that have been part of our overseas aid budget in those days?

RD: The definition of aid is something which I think the OECD has laid down and it was an OECD commitment 0.7% which only a couple of countries observe perhaps, two or three; but the definition is that it is development aid which goes directly to developing countries so that would include anything in the Commonwealth, India for example, but it would also include non-Commonwealth countries where we do give some aid.

MG: At the time we are looking at was it 0.7% or approaching it or was it more?

RD: No, no. When Labour came in, there was, I'm not sure how long it took but it was during the time after '97 that we actually committed to achieving it and I don't know how many years we've been doing now, but a long time, certainly during the Coalition days and most of the Labour government I think, probably fairly quickly from '98-99 I would think.

MG: So you had access to a very large budget?

RD: No I didn't, because the aid budget was controlled by what became the Department of International Development, DFID, under Labour and it had been called the Overseas Development Administration before that. This reflected a political difference between the Conservatives and Labour. The Conservatives always regarded aid as being an element of foreign affairs and so the Foreign Secretary was always effectively in charge of aid. There was an aid minister but reporting to the Foreign Secretary. Under Labour, the Secretary of State for Overseas Development was a separate cabinet rank minister with his or her own massive budget. It became one of the really sore points because they had so much money that they could afford luxuries of administration and representation that we couldn't.

MG: Can you account for that difference, I mean why, it seems common sense to have it under the Foreign Secretary.

RD: Because the Labour Party believed that development aid should be uncontaminated by political considerations, and indeed commercial considerations. Some countries are very open in expecting, in return for granting development aid, contracts and business. For example the Japanese and even the Chinese were focused in that respect. I think under both major parties regarded the best aid that we could possibly give would be trade related, helping recipients to increase exports and trade generally and which was one reason why we carried out a big campaign within the EU to reduce what amounted to protectionism by the EU against imports from developing countries.

MG: You have told me about Lynda Chalker, who used to be known as Mother Africa, who was in charge of the overseas aid budget. Who were you dealing with at this time; with this disparity in outlook did you deal with the Labour administration?

RD: Oh I did, yes.

MG: So who did you deal with and what was the difference between the two?

RD: Well the big differences were, first of all, Lynda Chalker in this period from '95-'97, 18 months, was Minister for Africa so Minister of State for Africa in the Foreign Office but she was also Minister for Overseas Development with separate offices. So there was no doubt of the overall subordination of development policies to foreign policy but in practice you can't separate them anyway. There was never any tension. What happened when the Blair administration came in in 1997 was that Claire Short was appointed Development Secretary and Robin Cook was Foreign Secretary, although they were both to the left of the party, they didn't really get on very well but they co-operated. Robin Cook not only saw that Claire Short had more money and direct responsibility for aid, which was the major element of our relations with many developing countries, particularly in Africa, but he also had what he regarded as much bigger issues to deal with in Europe, in the Balkans and so on. I understood that.

So really he left Africa to Claire Short and so I spent a lot of my time, crossing the park as we call it to go and talk to Claire Short about African policy. This became almost set in stone, I can't remember whether there was an actual minute, but I remember being instructed that the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook did not want to have anything to do with Africa, he would

occasionally make pronouncements about it but he wanted to leave the running of Africa to the Minister of State in the Foreign Office who was called Tony Lloyd and to Claire Short. And although Tony Lloyd retained responsibility for foreign policy at that time, I think a bit later on the whole lot went over to Claire Short. There were consequences of that which we might come to talk about in a moment but it meant that my world was very different from '97 onwards. I suppose that I had about a year of the Labour administration and 18 months of the Conservatives in this particular job so there was quite a lot of action in that time with Lynda Chalker and the Foreign Office being very much in charge. I'm trying to think now of the issues, I think Rwanda was one, Rwanda if you remember they'd had that massacre in 1994 and we were, by the time I took over in '95, busy trying to help clear up the mess and at the same time, we had in Uganda what was a relatively new President. We were giving him a lot of aid and we regarded him as generally doing very well but one of the problems that arose with both of them was that we had got in Rwanda a President Kagame, representing the Tutsi, who had taken over; who was very much in command but certainly no democrat and in fact using methods that we would certainly not approve of. He'd actually been the head of security in Uganda for President Museveni and he was actually quite a nasty piece of work. However he was President and he was a very charming man and certainly Lynda Chalker thought the world of him and so frankly did most other ministers around Europe, and so our efforts to keep a distance or to warn our ministers to keep a bit of distance weren't successful. In fact they continued, with Claire Short and I know that the same issue really still arises. The two presidents are both still in power! In the case of the Uganda, we were trying to persuade the Museveni first of all to operate properly, to have free elections and not to try and stay in power. There was a provision for two terms and he was trying to change that and eventually succeeded, but we were trying with our aid weapon to persuade him not to change his constitution. It was very difficult to use the aid weapon, but, and this is perhaps what I'd really like to mention about this time because it continued to be something we were doing with both governments, the policy didn't really change, we were using our policy towards these countries in Africa and many others to encourage not only the full application of the Human Rights Convention, proper observance of human rights, but also democracy, the rule of law and free politics. In addition the benefits of a liberal economy, a liberal approach to economy. So we were trying to influence these countries' practices across the board and we were using the aid we gave for that purpose. I think I mentioned in a previous interview that aid was going to helping the judiciary, helping the police, training the police, the police service and for providing rural clinics or vaccinations for the

children. So it was a very complex issue. We were always aware that, particularly where we were major aid donors that we should exercise the kind of influence this gave us, the control this gave us to try and make sure that the undertakings given by these governments were observed. When things went wrong, there was a very difficult decision as to whether to "use the aid weapon" which was actually to apply sanctions, or cut aid or a part of it. In the case of Zimbabwe, this judgment was incredibly difficult because we had a big programme right across the board and of course, once you've used it you can't use it again. It doesn't work to cut one programme unless it is very closely focused on the objective you want to achieve and connected with it. I can give a specific example. In Ethiopia, I can't remember the year this happened, we had begun to give the relatively new reformist government there a whole range of aid but including aid to retrain the police and indeed equipping them. One of the constant complaints from the police is that they've got no transport to go and visit a crime scene, for example. So we were helping with providing land rovers in Ethiopia as well as training and certain other equipment, nothing lethal, but equipment. There was an occasion when one member of the opposition was going to be picked up, this is not supposed to happen, but anyway, they went to pick up a leading opposition figure. The police went to arrest him on some spurious charge and he tried to run away and was shot. The land rover the police had driven up in was clearly marked as "provided by British aid" and so there was an outcry. We didn't play this all that well; what should have happened was that the President should have held an automatic inquiry just as we have in Britain if there is any firearm or death or anything like that, to establish the facts. Unfortunately the way that it was put over made it seem to be the British checking up on the Ethiopians so their 'face' became involved and they refused to do it. In such a situation you have no option, you have to stop police aid, which is of course cutting off your nose to spite your face. And so, Prime Minister Zenawi, (he'd got all his ministers to read for an economics degree at LSE in their spare time) said if you are going to behave like this with your aid, I don't want it. Therefore the whole aid programme was suspended to Ethiopia, a major country with immense problems. And later on we made an attempt to restore it, and to find a way, to restore 'face'.

So the aid weapon is a very delicate one, very difficult to use and in the case of Ethiopia we wielded it in the wrong manner. As I think we also did in Zimbabwe but I can't remember the timing of that.

MG: What's the Mobutu removal thing you refer to in your notes?

RD: Mobutu was a thug, there was a lot of internal Congolese (Zairois) opposition and he was causing great problems externally having got mixed up with the Rwandan issue. A lot of the Hutu had fled Rwanda after the '94 genocide including some particularly violent people and were causing trouble in Zaire as well as using it as a base for raids back into Rwanda. Uganda was also affected. There had been some action by African states, who even sent troops to try to stabilise the country but frankly Zaire had been in a mess for a long time, a very violent mess, and Mobutu was gaga really and totally corrupt. So there were efforts to get rid of Mobutu. There was a kind of opposition led by a fellow called Kabila who was actually living in Tanzania. (This is an example of how diplomacy can work serendipitously. Our ambassador in Rwanda, Kaye Oliver, had been previously in Tanzania where amongst the people that she had known there was this chap Laurent Kabila, one of the Congolese opposition leaders living in exile. So even after he had replaced Mobutu, we had a direct line to Kabila, who would always pick up the phone to Kaye.) Anyway, it was the South Africans who were in the lead in the international efforts to stabilise Zaire/Congo. The idea was that Mobutu would be persuaded to go and that would release the pressure from the kettle which most people thought would be beneficial. And indeed Kabila seemed from that point of view likely to be an improvement. The removal of course proved to be quite complicated but Mobutu did eventually go and he was given a place of exile in France. It was important that he be given an escape route and a life of luxury in exile if he was to leave. Well now, lurking in the background to this operation, which only involved some of us in Europe, was the complication that French policy on Africa was divided. The Quai d'Orsay operated policies that were very similar to the British but the Elysée Palace was dominated by a clique who were still playing out the ancient anti-British policy sparked by the Fashoda incident in 19th century Sudan. These French policy makers always seemed to think we had stolen Sudan and other places from them. They believed that we were trying to undermine their influence in Africa, which wasn't true incidentally, and their paranoia was increased by the fact that the Tutsi takeover in Rwanda after the genocide in 1994 was led by exiles who had been in Uganda (refugees from an earlier attack on Tutsi by the Hutu majority) and who had become English speaking. So suddenly you had an English speaking government in what had been a French speaking country and it looked as though the same might happen in Burundi. It also looked to these Frenchmen as if the same was happening in Zaire because Kabila was English speaking after exile in Tanzania. To be honest you can understand why the French perceived this as an attempt by Britain to extend influence in

Africa. The Rwandans wanted to join the East African Federation for commercial reasons as did Kabila. Rwanda even wanted to join the Commonwealth (and is now a member of the Commonwealth) even though it had absolutely no connection with Britain beforehand

MG: I don't really understand, I'm sorry to interrupt you, I always thought the Congo belonged to Belgium?

RD: It did, yes but it was French speaking

MG: I see, so anything that speaks French the French take a paternal interest in.

RD: Yes, not only that, a commercial interest as well. The Elysée crowd saw Francophone Africa as part of their sphere of influence. Of course Belgium essentially withdrew from colonial policies after it had come out of the Congo. Anyway, the French policy divisions had an impact on several issues. Not so much on Rwanda, though elements came to the fore when there was talk of sending a UN force into Rwanda and into Eastern Congo to deal with Hutu insurgency. That force was never deployed but we were going to contribute to it, and it was going to be led by the (fellow Commonwealth) Canadians so the issue was whether the French were going to be in on it. You can see that this would arouse tension in certain minds. It was different in the case of Quai d'Orsay...

MG: Is that the equivalent of our Foreign Office?

RD: Yes. It is worth mentioning that in the mid-nineties the Conservatives launched an initiative to coordinate policies with the French on Africa. The 1997 Labour government continued this - they even had a joint visit to Africa by the British and French Africa Ministers. I therefore worked closely with my opposite number in the Quai. With the Americans we formed a kind of triumvirate at one point, trying to develop a joint approach to issues. For example we were all training African forces in the hope that they would become UN peacekeepers preferably in Africa but in other parts too and that had some success. We did a lot of this on the telephone, actually, the three of us (Susan Rice was the American partner) got on very well. The Elysée Palace, I can't actually remember the name of the advisor there but he was one of the old French school who harked back to Fashoda and saw the map of Africa with the two colours on it, red and blue. He was very much more reserved

about co-operation and didn't really trust us. When it came to Mobutu's removal, the South Africans were preparing a conference on how to achieve a smooth transition and how to get proper elections etc. when the French suddenly upstaged them and called a conference in Dahomey, one of the French West African countries which was basically in a dictatorship. I found that we the Brits weren't invited so I turned up on the doorstep. It was hilarious actually. Thanks to some nimble footwork by our Embassy, we charmed our way in. We managed to present the conference as part of the process rather than a rival initiative and to keep the South Africans and the OAU involved. Anyway, that was a bit of an aside, but Mobutu was removed, Kabila came in after elections and we started all the process of rehabilitation with aid etc. to the Congo but all sadly in vain; our optimism was soon undermined.

I should mention as a further aside that I had gone to Kinshasa on a visit, I can't remember the date and the year but it was still in Mobutu's time. This was all part of this process of trying to get a political transition to stop the violence. I had appointments with the Foreign Minister and with a number of key figures and these were all arranged for a particular day. I arrived the afternoon before and had meetings with all sorts of people including of course the French and American Ambassadors. The morning after my arrival I was informed that I was not going to be able to see the ministers at all. I would be received by the desk officer for Britain or similar.

MG: It was a snub

RD: A very clear snub! That same morning we had a meeting set up with EU Heads of mission at which I discovered, or at least the embassy discovered, that the reason why this had happened was that the French had shown the Congolese, shown Mobutu I suppose, a telegram from the French Ambassador in Kampala, Uganda, recording a conversation in which it was alleged that the British High Commissioner had outlined to EU Ambassadors there how we were building up a new commonwealth based area which was to include Rwanda and Congo and all the rest in it. I can't remember exactly how it went on but it was pure invention. Nonetheless it did the trick with the Congolese. I did go and see the official, I wasn't going to show any loss of face, as it were and I went into the Foreign Ministry, I said my piece and simply suggested that they shouldn't allow themselves to be misled.

MG: Why did the French do that, because they wanted to get rid of Mobutu as well, didn't they?

RD: Well I think there were two elements. One is that not everybody wanted to get rid of Mobutu for fear of what (corruption) he might expose and the other was a more widespread concern as to who should take over from him. They regarded Kabila as anglophone and not what was required. In fact we didn't choose Kabila - it was nothing to do with us - he was simply the one who emerged as the Opposition leader. He seemed to be worth supporting at the time but of course he disappointed like everyone else in Zaire. He was assassinated in 2001 and his son is now trying to stay in power against all the odds and behaving in the same way as the man his father replaced.

MG: So Laurent Kabila is his son or is he the one that died?

RD: Laurent was assassinated after a few years in office and was succeeded by his son, Joseph.

MG: Their names change so frequently!

RD: I'm giving that background because Anglo-French co-operation on Africa was a major initiative and we tried very hard and we gave it a lot of attention. To give you an example of the kind of thing we did, we introduced into one of the Africa departments in the FCO a secondee from the Quai d'Orsay. We had an exchange system then going whereby a British diplomat would be sent to the Quai d'Orsay to work as a French official, and a French official would come to us. In our case, we put that person in the Africa command, we were open like this - come and see inside - and indeed we made the person responsible for francophone Africa. We hoped that it would refute the Fashoda paranoia! The official was a lady who couldn't believe that we had given her such a job. I've forgotten what our equivalent was doing at the time at the Quai d'Orsay but it wasn't anything to do with Africa. But another thing we did which was later on under Labour, though elements of it had started earlier, was to take an initiative on human rights and corruption in Africa. Britain took over the presidency of the EU in January 1998 for six months. EU foreign affairs are conducted through the Council of Ministers, which has a separate secretariat from the Commission so in

practice you have national policies coordinated by the Council to produce a common policy. Apart from Ministerial meetings there are groups of experts, i.e. officials, from all the member countries who meet on a regular basis to discuss specific areas or issues, such as Africa, Middle East, or wherever. In my case it was Africa and we decided that what we needed out of the EU was a common policy on human rights in Africa. Human rights would then cover everything - corruption, democracy, and totalitarianism. To get a common policy would be quite an achievement and it would mean successfully co-ordinating with the French. The French had a problem with corruption; we did as well, but much less serious. Some corrupt activities probably involved fairly high-up people in France, not just companies but senior politicians as well and perhaps one element in this caused the division between the Quai d'Orsay and the Elysée Palace, which I mentioned. In 1998 when we took over the EU presidency it was for us to determine the agenda. We had already prepared the ground. We had got a previous presidency to propose it and we had got a lot of allies. We were then able to persuade the Quai d'Orsay to come along with us in a joint approach. Once it got going, we really made progress. The significance of it is that once you have a common policy it has not only a political effect, but there is also a legal obligation on the member states to observe the common policy to which they've agreed in the Council of Ministers. We got such a policy (I was looking it up the other day actually) and then we followed it up with a series of conferences with the French, one in Britain, one in Paris, about implementation. I co-chaired it with my French opposite number so he was the lead chair in Paris and I was the lead chair in London. When in Paris I started giving specific examples of corruption he actually took me aside and he said 'you are getting onto some very dangerous ground, please don't'. He was afraid of our treading on some sensitive senior toes. It was very interesting.

MG: What more could you do? You could presumably just overlook it.

RD: No, the main thing was to ensure that action was taken, without mentioning the specific companies or politicians involved. There were all sorts of issues; you've heard of blood diamonds? Well blood diamonds are one example of a commodity, which feeds life-threatening corruption. We were trying to do something about blood diamonds and we were trying to do something about oil revenues. We'll perhaps come to that a bit later on. Both are examples of sources of corrupt wealth for elites or for individuals that were often used to fund criminal or indeed rebel groups. Jonas Savimbi the Angolan opposition leader was

using diamonds seized from the Congo to finance his operations whereas the Angolan rulers were using oil revenues corruptly.

MG: Were we corrupt in similar ways but to a lesser extent or are we whiter than white?

RD: No, some British firms were engaged in corruption partly because it was almost unavoidable. If you went to Nigeria you couldn't get a contract at all in those days unless you paid something to the Minister. We tried to stop this obviously by persuading the British companies not to do it but they almost always lost out as a result.

Nowadays we have an OECD wide legislation (because you've got to do it internationally) so companies in this country can face prosecution by the British authorities for corrupt activities overseas.

MG: I don't want to paint the UK side as being more honourable but there is a difference isn't there in having to say, pay bribes to ministers to get contracts so that you can then legitimately explore for oil in Nigeria and an individual back in the UK or France making a fortune out of taking 'dodgy' money the other way. Unless our press keep quiet about it, it's less publicised.

RD: It is less publicised and I agree that we have a better record than most and nothing like the type of corruption I've mentioned in Angola or Nigeria. But there's another element, and this is perhaps a very controversial personal view, in that we have a lot of money in British banks, because we are a financial centre, which is basically from the corrupt proceeds of e.g. Nigerian oil ministers. We are now able to block it to some extent but I think it would be quite wrong to see us as entirely innocent in all this. But I think it is fair that we're much less corrupt than some other countries in the respect of having people who really benefit at home, British people. I think it is much more that in some parts of the world we regarded it as a normal way of doing business that you had to pay a back hander.

MG: Well it's certainly the case isn't it that a lot of the more famous French politicians have been accused of corruption? It may not have been in Africa but there are quite a lot of allegations of corruption.

RD: Misuse of electoral funds of course. Well, no we don't. We've got 30 conservative MPs, albeit in a very mild way. In a sense it's a good example of how strict we are. I think these comparisons are quite difficult to make, I have no doubt that we had a more ethical foreign policy even before Robin Cook's innovations. When he came into office he demanded an ethical foreign policy which provoked a remark from one of my very senior colleagues at the time: "do you really think we had an unethical policy beforehand; if so what?" Most other western governments pursued ethical foreign policies based on human rights, and civil and political liberties. But there were corrupt elements in some countries and I pointed out one on Africa in the French presidency. And that I think was partly historical. It was partly because French Presidents for a long time had a particular role in Africa which in a sense was hardly foreign affairs for them. It was rather like the Commonwealth for Britain. (We have the Foreign and Commonwealth Office) but more so, closer to overseas territories. Not so long ago the French tried to imitate the Commonwealth and set up "la Francophonie" but that's more linguistic. For example the Romanians are members of la Francophonie which I don't understand. But then our Commonwealth now includes, for example, Rwanda.

MG: Yes, we've had some strange admissions to it. The thing I'd forgotten of course, because you've had so much time in Africa, is that during all this you are operating out of London, so you must have travelled the world an enormous amount.

RD: In this period I am operating out of London. Probably about one week in six in Africa, on average. This was one example of where our strict attention to propriety does have consequences. Foreign Office officials weren't allowed to accumulate air miles, absolutely right - I was travelling thousands of miles paid for by the taxpayer and it would be quite wrong for me to benefit personally from the air miles that they earned. But I wasn't allowed to use them even for official travel. I had an official travel budget, and to have been able to use the air miles would have saved public money, it would have saved the taxpayer money. I ought to say something about the Commonwealth because, part of the new Labour Government's policy was to pay greater attention to the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth in the 1990s was still very much an organisation which brought together people with a common heritage and that heritage was having had British rule and therefore often British laws, British ways of doing things, court procedures, whatever. There were all sorts of conferences and meetings where different specialists or professionals would swap notes, exchange experiences and get to know each other. For example, the judges would get

together, even from countries like Zimbabwe and South Africa which followed a different legal framework, the Roman-Dutch as opposed to Anglo-Saxon, but their judges benefited because their court procedures were very similar to ours. So the Commonwealth was a real force for good, I think. Commonwealth countries were certainly favoured in aid policies partly because they were usually regarded as being on the side of the angels. But of course some members of the Commonwealth, New Zealand for example, felt betrayed over what had happened with the EEC in 1973, when Commonwealth Preference ended. On the other hand, we had defended the right for example of Caribbean sugar producers to carry on selling large quantities of cane sugar into the EU, to Britain, long after the Commonwealth Preference had ended and long after the EU had wanted to favour its own beet producers. So as usual there were two sides to this. But nonetheless, Commonwealth was regarded in the popular mind as being something of the past. When I took over responsibility for the Commonwealth in late 1995 I discovered that we were going to host the next Commonwealth Heads of Government conference, known as "Choggam" (CHoGM), when all the leaders of the Commonwealth get together, not just for an hour, but for several days. When you consider who those leaders are, it's a third of the world, it's very, very important. They also meet informally for a weekend, without officials. It was going to be my job to recommend what we should get out of it as Britain, what the agenda should be, and how we should follow it up. There was going to be a series of these chairmanships; the CHoGM would be in October '97, we were then taking over the Presidency of the EU in January '98 and I think we were also going to be chairing or hosting the G10. These were very important international roles and opportunities for Britain. They had to be coordinated and I found that whole process absolutely fascinating. We were conscious that there was going to be an election before the Commonwealth Conference and so we had to try to make sure that what we agreed with other Commonwealth countries at official level was going to be acceptable to the new government coming in, whichever party would form it. So we decided to focus on economic issues, which is where there was most overlap between the main parties. We of course had exchanges with people in the then opposition Labour Party which you have to be very careful about, but it's part of our wonderful system, and we do have a good system, that this kind of cross party consultation by officials is accepted. Indeed, when you come to an election it becomes an obligation.

MG: And were you also liaising with Buckingham Palace because the Queen is very involved.

RD: Yes, for the Queen is very involved. But there is a set pattern for her involvement so once the dates have been set, that wasn't a major preoccupation. It was decided to hold CHoGM in Edinburgh for a number of reasons. I had little part to play in that. One of the complications when of course we did have a change of government was to ensure that the new government also saw Edinburgh as serving their purpose.

MG: Because they wanted to bring in devolution didn't they?

RD: Yes, they did and that became one of Blair's great themes. But, there were several political issues to be dealt with as soon Labour got in. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Baroness Symons, had ministerial responsibility for the Commonwealth in the FCO but of course the key person is the Prime Minister, he is the host for it is a heads of government meeting. The Foreign Secretary attends but the heads of government have a quite separate get together at the weekend so where these take place, the image involved etc., is very important to them. Of course we had already made some preliminary arrangements, but they all had to be confirmed. Some you simply couldn't change. I was told by one of the political advisors to the new Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, that I had to make sure that whatever I wanted the Prime Minister to agree to do had first to be cleared with his political gatekeepers. I had to get these two ladies on board, one was a political secretary to Tony Blair and the other was involved more with Cherie Blair.

MG: Was that Carol Caplin?

RD: No! The two ladies who were in No.10 were political appointments, I took the advice and I went to No10 and made sure that I had their backing before I went on a recce with Baroness Symons to Edinburgh. Similarly with the substance before I had meetings with Tony Blair. That was my one and only experience of sofa government, for that's what we did, we sat on the sofa and discussed the issues.

One of the interesting things for me was that under the new financial devolution in the FCO, I had the responsibility for the budget as well as for the meeting arrangements. The hospitality

side was run by our Protocol Department who brought in an outsider, a businessman who was a contract specialist to negotiate contracts with all sorts of companies providing the transport, hotels, conference facilities etc, things which, how can I say, are beyond the normal business of a foreign office official, quite honestly.

MG: And you enjoyed it?

RD: I did, yes! I was extremely lucky, because all the work was being done by other people. I sat comfortably in a chairing meetings making sure that everything had been thought of from provision of the right programme for the ladies to the provision of loos.

MG: I'm always interested in the minutiae of these sort of things, so presumably you said that the heads of state met separately, you'd have had to lay on things for the wives of the heads of state to do things - how did you ..

RD: Yes we did. First of all I should say that in Scotland we were helped enormously by what was then the Scottish Office, the administration for Scotland in Edinburgh, an absolutely wonderful man whose name I think was Gallagher. There were outings, they would go to Holyrood, somewhere like that, there were tourist outings, so the Prime Minister's wife would play a lead role here, the Queen was of course in Holyrood and she would see all the Commonwealth Prime Ministers and hold a big reception. There were a whole host of social arrangements of this kind. I can't remember the details of the programme as I confuse it partly with the big one I attended with James Callaghan also in Scotland 20 or so years earlier. There would be, they would arrive let's say on a Friday for lunch and they would all be accommodated in a particular hotel and the whole hotel would be taken over, perhaps two hotels, so you can imagine the police involvement, the security and all that. There was a new conference centre in Edinburgh and we had to have several rooms apart from the main conference room, where all fifty or so Heads of Government plus their foreign ministers had to be able to sit round one table. We had to make sure the seating reflected their seniority within the Commonwealth, that doesn't mean you put the old Commonwealth countries first like Canada and Australia with the new countries next ... it operates in a different way.

The Heads of Government would start on the agenda on day one. There would be various agenda items, one of them for example was the flood risk to small states. I think it was at that time that people began to worry that places like Nauru would cease to exist if the sea rises more than a few feet. Then there would be, I can't remember what the sequence was, there would be a dinner of some kind given by the host, the Prime Minister or the Queen. At the weekend, they'd go to separate destinations, the Prime Ministers going to one resort and the Foreign Ministers to another. I think both went to one of the golf courses, where there was a nice hotel such as Gleneagles. And there they would spend the weekend, they would meet informally, they'd have breakfast together, like a country house weekend. They would have some discussions. Officials weren't allowed at these meetings.

MG: Does that mean that no minutes were taken then?

RD: I don't think there were. I was made to hide under the table in one of Callaghan's meetings, I think that must have been along time ago, I don't think I did it in this one. I think Tony Blair insisted on having one official, possibly to take the notes. Isn't it awful, I don't remember. Then they would all come together again and there are formal proceedings which go on on the Monday or something like that and then they'd all go home. At one time these conferences would last all week. One of the big issues was what criteria the Commonwealth should have for new members and that came up essentially because at the Commonwealth conference in, Cyprus, I think it might have been, the Mozambicans had applied to join and Mandela who was attending for the first time, (so it would have been the '95 conference) said: "Oh yes, we must have Mozambique in", and nobody dared say anything against Mandela so Mozambique came in. It was decided that something had to be done so the committee of Foreign Ministers, which looks at various aspects of Commonwealth affairs between meetings, was asked to draw up criteria for Commonwealth membership.

MG: There was also a question of expelling people.

RD: Yes and they would cover this sort of thing. I don't know whether it still exists but it was very much a part of my life while I was in London attending these meetings. The committee duly agreed the criteria which were on the lines that the State applying should have had experience wholly or partly of British rule. So Cameroon was all right which had come in earlier but Rwanda which was admitted before the criteria would not have qualified.

Nor would Mozambique. When we looked at what other States would be admissible under the criteria, it was very interesting! Palestine, Iraq - it went on - it was quite an interesting collection which showed the reach of the British Empire for a while; and Sudan was another, of course.

MG: But possibly if they had been able to join it might have been a force for good.

RD: Well who knows. I still think that very discreetly it is still a force for good because it brings people together and I think that anything which does that on a friendly basis is going to have benefits but I don't believe the Commonwealth will do what some people in the present government seem to think, that it will extend our field of influence - it doesn't work that way. There was much more common ground on values and on general demeanour than on politics and particularly foreign policies - just look at us with South Africa now.

MG: Well I think you have more or less covered that now, haven't you?

RD: Yes, I have I think.

MG: Unless there is anything final you want to say? You haven't spoken of working with Claire Short, I think you ought to comment on that really. She has had a very mixed press.

RD: Yes she's had a very mixed press.

MG: If you can say anything good for her, perhaps you should.

RD: I enjoyed working with Claire Short because she was totally unconventional. She didn't stand on ceremony and was very informal. I also enjoyed it because I think that she genuinely accepted what I was saying without dismissing me as another Foreign Office toff, coming along to tell her what to do. She was very suspicious of the stereotype and I hope she learnt like so many ministers that we're not like the stereotype, or not that stereotype anyway. I did though find it very difficult that basically the responsibility for Africa left the Foreign Office. Robin Cook had said he was determined that he wasn't going to have to do anything with Africa (as he wanted to focus on the more important issues of the day) and this meant that he didn't want to see any papers on Africa but would leave it all to the Minister of

State, Tony Lloyd. Now the problem with that was that we were dealing with some quite difficult issues with Claire Short and Tony Lloyd who was an extremely clever man was without political clout. I recall an extraordinary occasion when he called me aside and asked me what the hell was going on an issue in which No 10 were involved because he wasn't getting anything out of Robin Cook's office, maybe because Robin Cook regarded him as somebody else's placeman - the whole thing was riven with these kind of rivalries. The trouble was that Robin Cook would still answer questions about Africa without knowing the background, which meant that occasionally we had to adjust policy to fit what he had said. Another complication was that Tony Blair was interested in Africa and so I was having to make sure papers went to No. 10 which weren't seen by the Foreign Secretary and that to me is entirely wrong. This all came to a point over something called the arms to Sierra Leone which was only a scandal because Robin Cook made it one partly because he insisted on speaking on issues about which he wasn't informed and partly because he wasn't informed of things that he ought to have been informed of for reasons that I have described. So in terms of dealing with African policy, Claire Short and the Prime Minister were if you like my heroes and Robin Cook well, I didn't have a high regard for him and I know that nor did he have a high regard for me either! What happened over Sierra Leone was that an allegation that arms had been shipped by a British firm to Sierra Leone in breach of UN sanctions (imposed at British initiative) became a political stick with which to beat Robin Cook who had been so hard in wielding a stick against the Conservatives over arms to Iraq. Some members of the Conservative party were delighted to have something to use in this respect. It became such an issue partly because when he was first asked by the press for a reaction he by implication accused Foreign Office officials of having: a) misled him by failing to keep him informed and b) broken the law by approving the supply of arms to Sierra Leone, neither of which were true but of course you can imagine what the press did with this sort of thing. Trying to restore some sanity, the Prime Minister said we must have an inquiry to get the facts. I thought that was a brilliant idea but I was naive in that the judge (who may be a friend of yours!), who did the work, obviously had a political agenda with which to comply. He was very skilful and I think tried to exonerate us, if you see what I mean, but in effect he made us the scapegoats. I discovered only very late in the day, and this shows my naivety, that I should have had legal representation when giving evidence to the enquiry (in fact I got help from a QC in the end through the staff association but it was too late for the inquiry's report).

MG: The thing that confuses just going on from that, is that we did at some stage send a force of some kind to Sierra Leone didn't we, and that gained Tony Blair a lot of kudos, is this a separate thing?

RD: This is a separate thing. So we had this inquiry and when this report was issued on the 27th July which was my last day in the office before I started briefing to go to Oslo as Ambassador, we'd all been given time to read it before it was published and to comment on it. Robin Cook had also been reading it and I was told that he wanted to see me. There were three of us, four of us actually named in this report as having sort of fallen down on the job as it were, but I was the senior one and the buck stopped with me, there was no doubt about that. I realised that what Robin Cook would want out of me was an undertaking not to bring him into the picture, not to reveal that the reason why he knew nothing about this was because he'd said he didn't want to, that in fact there were papers which were around the office which he could have seen. I would have said exactly what one of my other colleagues was so upset about which was that he had ignored advice on how to react to the point where this whole issue became public and had said what to our minds was exactly the wrong thing and therefore produced a scandal. We had a long talk, late in the evening, it was almost civil but I refused to tell him how I would react when asked questions by the press, and more particularly the Foreign Affairs Committee who had said they wanted an inquiry as well. Eventually we parted company with a handshake. About two years later, maybe shorter than that, 18 months later, I don't know, but when it was all over and the Foreign Affairs Committee had completed its business, Robin Cook came to Oslo on a visit. I was very nervous about this as I would normally accommodate such visitors at the Residence, so I arranged for Robin and his wife, (his second wife, whom I also knew of course) to stay at his next point of call in Sweden with somebody who had been his Private Secretary, a Private Secretary incidentally who had supported me throughout this dispute. Anyway, Robin arrived and I went to meet him at what was the military airfield because it was a private plane carrying him to Oslo and I was wondering how he would deal with me. Any rate he came bounding down the steps of the aircraft and said "Richard, how nice to see you!". He completely disarmed me and he had a very good visit. So he didn't bear grudges. All the time during my first six months in Oslo I had kept on getting telegrams saying please stand by to attend the Foreign Affairs Committee hearing, they would like to speak to you on such a day but we need to get the Foreign Secretary's approval and I knew he would never give it and he never did. It was always somebody else who stood in. John Kerr the Permanent

Under-Secretary, gave evidence; do you remember that famous scene where he put his head in his hands? I admired John for the way he handled all that. Absolutely brilliant, I don't think I could have done that but it was what was necessary for the situation. John was a brilliant thinker and a consummate diplomat but he was also I think willing to sacrifice himself for ministerial interest in a way that I probably wouldn't have done. After this affair when the report came out, when it was clear what was going to be said I put in my resignation to John Kerr and that was a really difficult thing to do, I will be honest. I thought I had been dealt with unjustly, I thought the office had dealt very badly with not just me, not me particularly actually but particularly with the junior staff who were involved and especially the High Commissioner to Sierra Leone, a chap called Peter Penfold. Of course (by resigning) I was giving up my last post to Oslo, and probably quite a lot of pension but I decided that I simply could not give the impression that I didn't care about all this. Anyway, I won't say what I put in my letter and John called me in and he said "What's wrong with you?" He threw it back: "I'm not having a letter like that - take it away!" Basically he calmed me down but the key thing was he said to me was "Just remember that in six months' time or perhaps a year's time but certainly before very long, all this will have been forgotten and they will have gone, but not you!"

MG: I was remembering the famous interview with John Nott and Robin Day when Robin Day called him a 'here today and gone tomorrow politician' and he walked out! But it's a similar thing, isn't it? The diplomats go on all the way through, but administrations come and go. It's worth remembering.

RD: It is worth remembering and he said you know, he made the other point which is of course that you're not the only person who doesn't believe what Robin Cook says, the Labour Party was full of people who say, did not appreciate Robin Cook's talents in quite the way he did.

MG: I can believe that. I remember the name Peter Penfold now, that was bandied about a great deal.

RD: It was. Peter bore the brunt of it in a way. And he bore the brunt of it because of the way this whole thing had to land somewhere and he was possibly the most vulnerable in that he had made the most misjudgments if you like. He'd actually disobeyed instructions but he

was an extremely brave man as well as a very good man to have in this appalling situation. Remember the situation that he went into was that we'd had a series of coups in Sierra Leone which was a failing state and (this goes way back in the '90s) we had been trying to restore order, get the military out and so on because it was a desperately poor country. Huge problems not least blood diamonds. We eventually succeeded and in came elections. A new president was elected who was actually ex-UNDP, an official, an intelligent man with a bit of experience in politics but not actually a politician. He came in and what happened was that he too was chased away by militants. We desperately didn't want to revert to what had been going on before when we had all these teenagers chopping their parents up. So we did not withdraw recognition from the Government which continued to operate in Conakry in Guinea which is bang next door, with many similar problems actually, so we moved our High Commission to a hotel in Conakry and Peter Penfold, having escaped from Sierra Leone, from Freetown, managed to set up there, very difficult. He was still the British Government's channel to the Sierra Leonean President and his Government operating from Conakry and this was an attempt to stop the military boys who had taken over from claiming any legitimacy. Now the whole idea was that the elected President would come back and there was a West African force being assembled (called ECOMOG) which was going to drive back the rebels. This was under the auspices of ECOWAS, the Economic Community of West African States. These (organisations) were attempts to find regional solutions to the regional problems. ECOMOG were probably going to go in. We had said that we would not provide military support and indeed we'd immediately adopted an arms embargo. This was imposed through an Order in Council which is drafted by the legal people and we in the Africa Command were pretty ignorant of its full implications. I should say that we'd arranged for a UN resolution imposing an arms embargo to be the basis for this Order In Council. But unlike this UN Resolution, which was aimed at the rebels, the Order in Council forbade or made it illegal for the supply of any military equipment or troops, armed people to the territory of Sierra Leone. So when eventually we had to send in a frigate, HMS Cornwall I think it was called, we had actually to change the UN resolution in order to justify the change in our legislation in order to legalise the sending in of a warship. Can you imagine anything quite so stupid? In fact, the UN resolution would not have prevented *Cornwall* going in and nor would it have prevented any kind of British role with ECOMOG. When we went to change the Resolution, which we did very quickly, our allies in the Security Council couldn't understand what the fuss was about and we had to actually explain to them that our law, derived from the original Resolution and our legal advisors said that new phraseology,

which they provided, was required. So we had to change it. The Americans were just gobsmacked at the incompetence! Anyway, the consequence in Britain for us was that we had to change our legislation to allow what became a Great British act. After this first incident with them, we sent in the commandos and Peter Penfold went back as a hero. He was criticised in the Report, the Legge Report, and I suppose that I have to acknowledge that some of that criticism in that report was justified in that he'd disobeyed policy and I had failed to rein him in. But I think you have to say that he had very good reasons for doing so.

MG: What became of him? Did he go on to other things or did he come out?

RD: I can't remember to be honest. He'd been a Governor General in a colony in the West Indies which I think was in a way, was part of his merits as a High Commissioner in this terribly difficult situation and which perhaps gave him a feeling that he had more authority than he actually did. Anyway, it all came out relatively all right in the end. What actually gave rise to the Arms to Sierra Leone affair, was that the Sierra Leonean President along with one of his ministers, one of whom effectively had a kind of private army in Sierra Leone and ECOMOG of course got in touch with Penfold and sought help or were offered help, I'm not sure which, from a company called Sandline and Sandline was basically run by somebody who ran mercenaries. If you remember about that time the role of mercenaries was very highly controversial, causing problems all over the place not least in the UN where they wanted to ban mercenaries which would of course have meant that we would have had to get rid of half the British Army, not least the Gurkhas. That was all put aside. It was very sensitive and Sandline had a particular, newly retired British officer called Col. Spicer who was running this particular operation for them. They had been out and they'd actually seen Peter Penfold who had given them no discouragement for what they were doing and in my view, quite understandably.

MG: Was that his error do you think?

RD: That was his error, yes. But they'd also, just as they were about to supply some equipment and I'll come to that in a minute, come to the Foreign Office to see a chap called Craig Murray in the East African Department. He explained the law to Col Spicer. What actually Sandline were doing was sending some equipment which would be deployed with the Nigerian element of ECOMOG. So any arms which were being sent were going to go to

Nigeria anyway and not Sierra Leone. However, somebody somewhere, the press perhaps, picked up that they were doing an operation in Sierra Leone, it was published somewhere and Lord Avebury who was very hot on the use of mercenaries picked it up in the House of Lords and referred it to the Foreign Secretary. The Foreign Secretary of course didn't see the letter. It came to East African Department who quite rightly referred it immediately to our UN Department and because they were responsible for all UN resolutions and sanctions deriving from them and basically we all waited for the usual draft reply to come back and be sent to Lord Avebury. I knew nothing of this at the time. However, the next development was that Customs & Excise suddenly arrived in Africa Command, (all the three departments and me and all of our staff were all in one place, one corridor) and wanted to seize all the papers - a complete surprise. I was in Brussels at the time feeling very pleased with myself because we had just made a breakthrough on this new Human Rights Policy (which I described earlier.) I was passing through emigration at Brussels airport and was told on a mobile phone what was happening. From Heathrow I went straight back in to the Office and I immediately alerted John Kerr and I sent him a note. Again it was a Friday evening, if I remember rightly. We learnt later that in the UN Department there was an enforcement unit, which we didn't know about, and on receiving Lord Avebury's letter they had immediately alerted Customs to a possible breach. So we had a situation where all our papers had been seized or sequestered, we were not allowed to touch them, we were not allowed to talk to each other about Sierra Leone. We had to be put into purdah so I was cut off from all my colleagues. It was just an appalling situation, you know, trying to run an active situation. It meant that for example I couldn't talk about the issue with my colleagues on the so-called board of the Foreign Office. Some of them wondered whether old Dales has got himself into hot water - you know the sort of thing. Anyway Customs & Excise got on with their work and that was fine. Sandline was also raided and Col Spicer, was very upset. After a while we heard from Customs & Excise that they didn't think there was a case and it didn't think that there was any offence, which was fine except that the lawyers for Sandline, (Berwins?) had just sent a letter not just to the Foreign Secretary but also to a whole host of Cabinet Ministers saying that they were acting with the approval of the Foreign Office, which of course was not true

MG: That's nice!

RD: Nice? This letter did go to the Foreign Secretary; he did see it actually, but a whole host of others too. And this letter basically specified that Sandline were operating in cahoots with the British High Commissioner to Sierra Leone in Conakry and with the Foreign Office in London who were fully informed of everything so there it couldn't possibly be in breach of any sanctions. Now that was easy to reply to, it really was. However somebody leaked that letter to the press. Sandline denied that it was them and the suspicion is that it was actually one of Robin Cook's rivals in the Labour Party.

MG: Oh dear!

RD: That was what I was getting from my political sources. I don't know. Either way I know he had a lot of enemies. He was asked about it by the press, and that was when he refused to take the advice to reply that 'this would be unacceptable if it is true', but not to say 'oh dear, I know nothing about this, it looks as though my officials are in trouble'...

MG: That is bad.

RD: It wasn't quite that, but that was the implication of what he said and from then on it all blew up and became the 'arms to Sierra Leone affair'.

MG: It became a bigger deal.

RD: The irony is, Peter Penfold says in his evidence that he certainly did not give approval but I suspect that he did not give disapproval either. But in Craig Murray, Col Spicer chose exactly the wrong person to try and allege that he supported him, because Craig Murray had extremely strong views on firms of mercenaries like Sandline and he was absolutely meticulous in telling people about the fact that there had to be a peaceful transition. When talking about the UN resolution there was no way he would have authorised or given any kind of hint that Sandline were doing something that would be approved. It is just inconceivable. But that was alleged and Craig got tremendous stick. I think we all suffered a good deal of stress but he and Peter Penfold needed I think proper support. What I asked for was basically counselling, they needed a mentor with them to help them through this. Honestly it was difficult. Peter Penfold was put on indefinite leave, it was just outrageous. I

did actually say formally to the Chief Clerk that the Foreign Office was in breach of its duty of care ...

MG: Have they set up better practices since, do you think?

RD: I hope so, yes. I don't think it would be repeated in this way. The other thing is that, I at this time didn't even know about the legal representation to which I was entitled but certainly for anybody involved in inquiries, e.g. the Iraq business, it is the most appallingly difficult issue to be confronted with a lawyer or a barrister or in this case a judge who is, yes, cross-examining you, interrogating you on issues which have legal implications, about events which you have got only the haziest recollection. I was thrust a document - 'Have you seen this document before?' I looked at it and said, "there's my initial on top so I must have done", that's incriminating. I didn't say that I don't remember it. I don't know whether you in your job remember every paper that crossed your desk? My secretary when talking about this long after the event said 'Look, when you've not read something, you just tick it through, you put your initial by it, just a squiggle. When you've read it you always put your name' - which was true, I hadn't read it, I'd just ticked it through passed it on as something I hadn't got time to read. Other people had seen it. What this paper was was the operational plan so I should have read it! However all this was a nonsense because, as Custom and Excise had found, there was no breach of sanctions.

MG: The consequences shouldn't have been that bad.

RD: It's this feeling of being interrogated about details. I always think of people of being asked about an alibi 'where were you at six minutes past nine last Thursday night?' And wonder how they know.

MG: Well that's why of course it's a cliché in detective novels, the person with the perfect alibi is suspicious because generally you can't remember what you did last week and the further back you go the more impossible it is.

RD: Anyway, I think the issue of legal representation has now probably been dealt with because it was totally unacceptable that people gave evidence to an inquiry without it.

HM Ambassador, Norway, 1998-2002

MG: I think we've now arrived at October 1998 and you are destined for Oslo.

RD: Yes. Oslo was my last post and I had applied for it under the system some while before. Why Oslo? Well, I was at the end of my career and I was happy to go back to Scandinavia. Oslo was the post that happened to be available at exactly the right time before I hit my 60th birthday, so I didn't really choose Norway as much as Norway chose me. But it was a wonderful post to finish in, not only because it is such a very friendly place to British people but it is also very close and I was able to pop home frequently when I needed to because I had both a very elderly mother and issues with my children. I regard Oslo as being really the peak, the nicest place. In the Foreign Service, when you move from country to country you make friends which may or may not have anything to do with your work but it is very difficult to keep up with them when you move to another country and make new friends. When you come to the last post you know that the friends you make there will last, particularly if it's in a country not too far away. And that is what has happened. We go back every year to spend time with the friends we made then, some of whom were made through Elizabeth who played in one of the amateur or semi-professional orchestras in Oslo. So we have friends whom we met through that connection and others who might have started as an official contact but became very personal friends. The great thing about Norway was that I felt that there was enough professional interest to make it fun during the day as well as at the weekend and it was a very exciting place to be at times, despite its image. This is because some of the issues that come up which are really, however boring they sound (such as treaties on oil pipelines), so important to our interests and theirs that succeeding in getting the right kind of agreement gives a lot of satisfaction. There were foreign affairs issues, the Balkans was in a mess and the Norwegians had the chairmanship of OSCE, one of the organisations through which Europe was trying to help solve the problems and there was some tricky issues involving the Arctic, with the melting of the arctic ice, and the growing strategic importance of that area at a time when NATO's attention was really focused on what we called 'out of area activities' in the Balkans and also further afield. After the Cold War, the relationship with Russia was not given a high priority. In Norway, which has a border with Russia, you could be very conscious of the fact that this enormous country is very close and can be very dangerous. So we had a number of issues on which we wanted to get Norwegian's fullest co-

operation and others on which I was probably trying to persuade my own side to pay more attention to our own strategic interests, one of which was the arctic region.

MG: Is that because people were trying to stake claims to it, to the oil and resources underneath it?

RD: Yes. The basic issue is that those waters which run right across the North of Russia from the Bering Strait to the arctic waters of the North Atlantic are strategically important to Russia, China, Norway and to other countries in Europe including UK. And to the Americans, you've only got to look at a map to see that. For much of the year some of those waters are simply frozen solid, indeed until recently they were ice-bound for all of the year. So you've got a number of issues arising. One is that if the ice is melting you can start getting at the resources under those waters and there are very substantial resources in the Arctic Ocean, particularly the Barents Sea but also slightly further east than that. Shipping interests are beginning to come to the fore as it becomes possible for ships to sail from the Pacific to the Atlantic via the North East Passage. All this while there was a dispute over the national boundaries in the Arctic Ocean. This involved not only Norway but also Canada and the US, and even Denmark because of Greenland. The Russians claim that the whole of the seabed below the arctic is part of their continental shelf. If you look at one of the geological, seismic maps, there is some force in that argument. Happily nowadays we have a mechanism for sorting out that kind of dispute, the Law of the Sea, and so far that has been applied where the disputes have come to a head. The issues are complex. To give an example, the boundary between Russia and Norway continues from the coast into the sea, every maritime country has rights to economic exploitation of the seabed up to 200 miles from its coastline. So the angle of that line from the coast is going to be terribly important for the division of resources under it and Russia and Norway had been arguing about this line for decades. They actually came to an agreement in 2010 but at the time I am talking about this complex of conflicting substantial interests was growing and we needed to do something about it. Now I know from going back there that:- a) it has, if anything, got worse: b) there are all sorts of organisations which are now dealing with the practical problems that derive from it and c) everybody is much more conscious of it. We now have enormous military exercises up there just like we did during the Cold War. So there were these kind of issues which were very good for a diplomat to be dealing with. Norway is a small country but is very wealthy and also has very

similar views and values to us and therefore we often need their support internationally. Norway is also a major aid donor one of the few countries which gives 1% of GDP. One of their special activities is in conflict resolution. They look for conflicts where they can perhaps help towards a peace agreement not necessarily by mediation but by facilitation. There is a famous example of course in the Oslo Agreement on the Middle East, which even if it didn't result in a settlement set down principles, which are still being put forward, notably the two state solution. Another example was Sri Lanka where the UK had a major interest as a former colonial power and fellow Commonwealth country. A dreadful war was going on. The Tamil separatists were causing terrorist mayhem, there's no doubt about it and they invented suicide bombing, but the underlying problem was/is communal. In order to get a solution in Sri Lanka you've got somehow to find a solution to heal the communal divide between the Tamils and Sinhalese which has religious connotations between Buddhism and Christianity as well as social and political. The Norwegians provided a secret connection between the political leader of the Tamil Tigers (as the separatist fighters were called) who was in exile in Britain. The Norwegians succeeded in brokering a deal between the Tigers and the Sinhalese government (with some help from us). They then supplied troops to oversee the cease-fire. But then there were presidential elections, a Sinhalese nationalist came in and the whole deal was off as he tried to solve the problems by military means, by killing a lot of Tamils. The communal problem still remains, they are back to square one basically, and I would not be surprised if the Norwegians had another go at some stage. All this was carried out completely without any knowledge of the press, it was kept very close indeed within our own embassy there were only three of us who knew what was being done and of course we were far from fully informed by the Norwegian officials doing the work. It was very, very delicate as we were dealing with terrorists, so there were tricky legal issues. For example this Tamil leader that I referred to was quite ill at the time and receiving treatment in Britain (he has since died). If he left Britain to attend a meeting in Oslo, would he be re-admitted? If he was healthy enough to travel the ill health argument for asylum would fall, and the issue of admitting the leader of a terrorist movement would arise. Even if he was given some kind of immunity by the Government, there was always the risk of a private prosecution, not least because the communal divide had its reflections among the Sri Lankan community in UK. This sort of thing is the bread and butter of peace building but it's very difficult.

As regards oil and gas, there were huge sums of money involved. Big British firms, both oil companies and those in supply industries - everything from survey vessels, specialist platforms, to special pipework, steel pipework - were deeply involved in all this trying to ensure that they got their share of the market. The British have a good reputation in Norway and the Embassy had very good access. I knew that I could see the Prime Minister or any other Minister if I needed to, which I couldn't say of Zimbabwe. We could socialize very easily with them; we had a magnificent residence for entertainment.

MG: Tell me about that.

RD: The residence was a house built by a banker of Swiss origin in the 1850s and it had been bought by HMG in 1905 at the insistence of some Norwegians who had partly been involved with the independence issue and who wanted the British to be the new country's closest ally. They wanted the British Ambassador to be the first to arrive and therefore the most senior, and they wanted us to be properly housed. The house is a small palace, indeed the architecture is similar to that of the Royal Palace in Oslo, which was actually built for the Swedish King! It is a listed building in Norwegian terms but it's very beautifully furnished in the British style by the British Government with the right antiques in the right place and so on.

MG: Is it Biedermeier?

RD: No we put in British paintings. We didn't, I admit, have many Damien Hirsts but we had some Pipers for example, wonderful Piper pictures which were actually painted for somewhere else but brought to Oslo. This was a house built on the 18th century pattern, with suites of rooms with the doors opening into each other so that as you process through you see the wall at the end of the suite, if you follow me. These Pipers (there were two huge pictures perhaps a couple of metres high), were of urban scenes, but very Piper and designed to be seen from a distance as you walked up to them.

MG: Sounds a bit like the Hermitage!

RG: Not quite that big but I think we were probably the biggest or rather the best in Oslo, the most prestigious house after the Palace. The Russian Embassy, which was opposite, the

bottom of our drive, had been the German Embassy until 1945 and was also a grand building but not quite on the same scale. The point about it is that the residence is a device, a tool that ambassadors use to bring politicians and decision makers together. In Norway with its coalition governments and minority governments, if you want the country's policies to follow British interests or to accord with them you've got to get to know the politicians across the board not just those in government as best you can and try to influence them. Politicians will see you of course in Parliament but the best way of getting to them is of course to meet them informally and to entertain them. They will come, provided it's attractive enough. Our house was very attractive and we knew that we could put together people who would like meeting each other so the politicians or the top business people would not feel: 'oh God, not another boring dinner with the Dales!' but would find other people of interest. I don't know how people view this sort of thing now, but we found it extremely valuable in getting our ideas across. I also had an advisory group of Norwegians that I inherited from my predecessor; I don't know how many years it had been going. One of them was a professor of foreign policy and international relations. Another was the husband of a former Prime Minister, not a politician himself but an extremely able administrator and the third was a columnist of what was the equivalent of *the Times* who appeared on television and so on, a kind of John Simpson figure. The advisory group used to meet for lunch once every three months, purely informally, and their job was to let me know where we were getting it wrong, or what we should doing and my job was to tell them what we wanted to achieve. They were perfectly open and frank but also discreet. They had specific interests, the professor was much more into the Balkans, another was interested in the EU. What they said to me which was often extremely helpful and some of the things I said to them would perhaps appear in a newspaper a month later or in speeches elsewhere. It was a very good initiative and this is the sort of thing you can do in a country like Norway with a close relationship and common values. I don't think I've more to say about Norway except there was the royal connection, which shouldn't be under-estimated.

MG: Who was the king when you were there?

RD: King Harald, the present one.

MG: He's a relation of the Queen isn't he?

RD: Yes, he's a second cousin.

MG: Queen Margrethe is more closely related I think.

RD: Queen Margrethe of Denmark. Well, no. She is a more distant cousin. The Norwegian royal house was restored by a Prince of Denmark, a son of the Danish King and nephew of Queen Alexandra. He became King Haakon. He was already married to Princess Maud who was one of the daughters of Edward VII, born in Sandringham, and they lived in a house in the grounds for much of the year. So the Norwegian royal house starts in 1905 with a British queen, if you see what I mean.

MG: But the mother was Alexandra of Denmark?

RD: Yes, Queen Maud's mother was Alexandra of Denmark so Maud was in fact a cousin of Haakon. Maud and Haakon already had a son, born on the Sandringham estate, who became Crown Prince/King Olav. There is a disparity in generations in that the Queen was brought up during the War with Uncle Olav, as she called him, who was of course older than she. King Harald is a lot younger than the Queen; the two royal families don't match by age at any stage. The Prince of Wales is godfather to one of the Norwegian Crown Princes to whom Prince Edward is closer in age.

MG: Did you have many royal visits when you were Ambassador there?

RD: A number, yes.

MG: Were they State or private?

RD: The biggest of them was the Queen's state visit which took place in 2001, so in my third year there, and I was given instructions when I first went to Norway that this would be a major thing to organise. The Queen had visited Norway many times but King Harald had made a state visit to Edinburgh, to Britain, a few years earlier and was expecting a return visit. So when I started making my calls in Oslo at the beginning of my posting one of the things that was made very clear to me, not least by the King, was that my job from the Norwegian view was to make sure that the Queen came on a State Visit before I left. They

tried to invite her at an early stage, which wasn't convenient so I helped to arrange another royal to come on an informal visit to keep things going.

I suppose for me and Elizabeth another high point of our time in Oslo was attending the royal wedding in Norway of the Crown Prince and the new Crown Princess because that was an absolute fairy tale from beginning to end. The royal families from all over Europe came including Prince Charles and Prince Edward and the Countess of Wessex. Elizabeth and I, along with other Ambassadors representing reigning European monarchs, attended the wedding ceremony in the Cathedral, which was followed by the so-called wedding breakfast. This was a grand dinner in the Royal Palace followed by the ball at which the newly married couple danced the first waltz before the guests joined in. At midnight there were fireworks in Oslo and the whole party went out on to the balcony of the palace to watch. The first waltz was not something one often attends in Suffolk!

MG: What did you wear? Did you have a special uniform with a stand up collar, don't Ambassadors wear that?

RD: No! They used to and I think the Marshal of the Diplomatic Corps who is usually a retired ambassador in London does so when he presents foreign ambassadors to the Queen but nobody else wears a uniform these days. The Norwegians wear white tie on these occasions and on many others when we would wear something less. So I wore white tie. It's a typically Norwegian thing.

The wedding was very controversial because the bride was the daughter of a divorced journalist who was an alcoholic and who had said all sorts of outrageous things to the press. She had been involved in the drug scene and she already had a child who the royal family has taken in and made part of the family but of course he had no inheritance rights. She wasn't a royal - far from it- but her brother had been ADC to the King, so there were some connections.

The tradition in Norwegian dinners and grand occasions is that you have a big dinner, you have dancing and so on and then there will be a supper, which they call the "night meal" and that may come out at 2 o'clock in the morning and takes various forms, but on this occasion they wheeled in hot dog stalls. Can you imagine in a gilded palace, with everybody in white

tie being confronted with hot dogs with tomato sauce and mustard! It was absolutely hilarious actually!

MG: What did the women do - did they have to change clothes at some stage or did they wear the same things right through - you can imagine if you go to a ball you would wear a different dress than that which you would normally wear to a wedding in a Cathedral?

RD: You have a very interesting question there and I'm not sure I can provide the answer. I think that I had to wear white tie and tails to meet Prince Charles at the airport and drive with him to the palace where a special car took him straight into the cathedral, so I think the answer is yes, we were all in our finery to go to the cathedral first.

MG: So he flew over in it or changed on the plane or such - extraordinary!

RD: That all went all right. One other issue of interest I think is language. Norway is one of these countries where they all speak English and it's terribly difficult to find opportunities to practice Norwegian, but many of us spoke it.

MG: Did you speak any Norwegian?

RD: Yes. Don't forget I had learnt Danish before, it's the same language. The Norwegians don't like that but they are very similar.

MG: So is it also similar to Swedish then?

RD: Swedish is more different than either of those two.

MG: In *The Bridge*, a TV programme of which I'm enormously fond, the detectives come in from either country and speak to one another perfectly happily.

RD: I used to attend party conferences in Denmark when I was there where the political parties from the five Nordic countries would come together. They would include the Finns who all spoke Swedish. The participants would all speak their own Scandinavian language and would be mutually understood. The one which the Swedes and Norwegians had

difficulty with is Danish, believe it or not. But they moderated their dialect a bit. Of the three Scandinavian languages, which are close together, Swedish is to my mind the one that is the most different; it has a more varied vocabulary while the language of Norway was basically Danish until recent times, despite its having been under Swedish rule in the nineteenth century. For 500 years Danish was the language of the ruler in Norway, it was the language of the establishment, it was the language of the educated people. It was the written language. That continued until independence and then the nationalist movement came up with an artificial language called Nynorsk, New Norwegian, which is artificial in the sense in that it is an amalgam of dialects from the west coast which were regarded as 'real' Norwegian. They are closest to Icelandic - Iceland was populated by Norwegian exiles a thousand years ago. Finnish is totally different, but Finland was Swedish for centuries so Swedish is another language there, their second language. Danes have a very dark, guttural form but Danish and Norwegian are really, I would say, dialects of the same root language. Of course they are all, like English, of Germanic origin.

MG: But English has strayed further away

RD: Well we've had so much French, Latin, Romance influence. But anyway, the point I was originally going to make was that it was very easy not to bother with learning the language, and many other countries' diplomats did not bother, for everybody could use English. However, if you wanted to know what Norwegians are thinking and saying to each other you've got to know the language. They don't speak English in parliament, they don't speak English in coffee bars or wherever so when it came to things like party conferences in Norway, who would be there? The Swede, of course, the Dane usually, the American, the Russian and me. Very occasionally, the Chinese came. The Swede and the Dane would be there for obvious reasons, but it tells you something about the importance accorded to language by the big powers, the Russian, the American and the Chinese.

MG: Very interesting

RD: And that is one of the reasons why I thought we were moving towards Little Britain when we closed our FCO language school. The idea that somehow we can go out in the world and speak English is not only arrogant but also seriously misguided. We need to understand people we are dealing with if we are to get what we want. That is my view.

MG: I think you are correct. Now you've got to tell me about when you came to finish in Oslo and then your ending life as part of the Diplomatic Corps and then tell me your views on how the Foreign Office has changed.

RD: Really? Ok. First of all the leaving. The rule when I joined was that we retired at 60 and I knew that I was going to be 60 on a certain day in August in 2002 so I knew that I would have to retire by then. The rule was that you had to be home from abroad for your actual birthday. So it happens that there was an important oil and gas conference, an industry fair which alternates in Aberdeen and Stavanger and was in Stavanger in the year that I retired. It takes place at the end of August when my birthday was and I suggested that I might stay on a few days since I knew all the people and it would be very difficult for my successor to get there in time. But no, I had to retire at that time so my deputy had to do the honours. I thought that was not so much hard on me, I didn't mind all that much, but it was not a good way to handle major issues where British interests were very much to the fore. My successor who arrived a few weeks after I left was a lady from Scotland. She was absolutely brilliant. She was much luckier than me in having more time to prepare and she went up to the North of Norway where we arranged for her to stay with a family in Tromsø for a couple of weeks to immerse herself in Norwegian. I had done that in Denmark but only on my second appointment there at the beginning of the '80s and that was valuable. I was very thrilled to be succeeded by someone who felt as strongly as I did about the importance of language. Anyway, I had to leave Norway to retire. We had lots of farewell parties and lots of speeches. The Foreign Office has a marvellous way of dealing with you if you have been an ambassador and had all the pomp and circumstance and that comes with the job, particularly when you leave when you get extra pomp - you go to lunch with the King and that sort of thing. You get VIP treatment at the airport on departure but on arrival at Heathrow you stand in the immigration queue like everybody else and struggle with your luggage on to the Piccadilly line. You lose the title Ambassador as soon as you enter Britain. One further point about the royal connection - King Olav started a tradition that the Norwegian King accepts an invitation to dinner from the Ambassadors of Britain, Denmark and Sweden but no one else.

MG: Really! That's a great honour.

RD: It's a great honour and what you do is you arrange the guest list to provide an opportunity for the King and the Queen to meet distinguished people (in this case from Britain) who you, the ambassador, would like to promote, or whom the royals would like to meet informally. So when my turn came (it rotates, one each year so I only had it once), we had on our list for example, Ron Watts from Shell for business reasons but also Robin Knox-Johnston because the King is an Olympic sailor and he was thrilled to meet and spend time with him. It's a dinner for only 16 people with no hangers-on so it was a very relaxed and informal occasion. The King and Queen also invited us to a private lunch (as distinct from the formal dinners at the Palace on State Visits etc.) It was a sign, not only of the importance of the Anglo-Norwegian relationship, but also that the royal relationship means something lower down. And indeed on one occasion on a royal visit, which I think was Princess Alexandra, Elizabeth and I were included in what amounted to a family party in their country palace (Skaugum it is called). Present was a friend of the King who had actually been imprisoned for fraud. I mention this because this is not something the King would have done on a public occasion. The King is very loyal in that way: -once a friend always a friend. Many people thought that this chap was dealt with unjustly. I don't know if he was or not but that dinner was obviously another occasion that we shall remember.

MG: And now do they have the same rules that you say Your Majesty once but then it's Sir thereafter when you are addressing him and can you speak before you are spoken to? The worrying etiquette.

RD: I think the palace always said that you shouldn't get worried about such rules but absolutely right, Your Majesty and then Sir or whatever but never Harald. He spent some time here at Oxford and he has British friends whom he comes to see every year and they call him Harald. But they don't advertise the fact that they are his friends and that's part of the deal. Similarly in Norway he has his private life, his friends he goes sailing with, they are better known of course but nonetheless, he is able to have some time out of the public eye.

MG: He's got a bit more private life than our Queen for example?

RD: I think he has, yes. There is of course no aristocracy in Norway because that was all wiped out through various reasons.

MG: None at all?

RD: None at all. The only aristocrats around are of Swedish or Danish origin as it were. It wasn't that they didn't always have them there but those that survived the Black Death in Norway moved with the Crown to Copenhagen in 1380 or whenever.

MG: The Black Death in England was 1348 or something.

RD: Yes, it came to Norway from England with rats from an English ship. What happened later was that the heir to the Norwegian throne married the heiress to the Danish throne and their child inherited the lot.

MG: So they coalesced really.

RD: So the kingdoms coalesced, they merged, but most of the aristocracy chose to live in Copenhagen, a much nicer place to live, or was. Gradually Norway became a Danish province. Norway is a country without much arable land, so you can't build up big estates. There is no wealth in the land, except forestry in some places, so the first really wealthy people were foresters really and then ship owners.

MG: Do they not have any farmers then?

RD: They do have farmers but they have very small holdings. They had subsistence farming until recently and even today farming is very heavily subsidised and protected. In that South East corner down near Sweden there are bigger farms but unlike in Sweden or Denmark or this country none of the mediaeval chieftains or barons were able to build up great bodies of land that was the source of their wealth and power. That simply couldn't happen. They had a few tenant farmers on their territory, but many died in the Black Death so rents dried up. When the aristocracy left for Denmark, many farms reverted to owner/farmers, yeomen. That was all in history but it does affect the social order compared with Denmark and Sweden even today for many layers of society were removed. There were Norwegian baronies in odd places but they were titular. The person who persuaded the British to buy a particular house as the ambassador's residence was a chap called Count Wedel-Jarlsberg. Wedel is a Danish family name, they are still down there in various combinations, while Jarlsberg is of course a

place in Norway and the name of a cheese. And there is still a line of this family, occasionally calling themselves Count in Norway but of course the titles are not recognised; the constitution actually bans them. So the new aristocracy, if that's the right word, became the rich. The elite were the ship owners and so on. One little story from the time of the royal wedding in 2001. We were at dinner with a particular ship owner and his wife and a whole lot of other prominent Norwegian businessmen. One of the ladies next to me said to me that she thought it was absolutely outrageous that the Crown Prince was going to be marrying this ... (she used a very derogative term) ... single mother who had taken drugs and been part of the acid house scene and she was sure that the Crown Prince ought to be made to look elsewhere. And I said "do you mean look for a princess?" and she said: "yes of course". So I suggested that the most eligible princess would be the Swedish Crown Princess and asked if she would be better? The lady was about to say yes when she paused as she realised that of course that would produce another one of these situations with the Swedish and Norwegian monarchies merging! She went on to tell me how this particular set of prominent Norwegians, (they have a name for it) had set out to make sure that Harald married well when he was Crown Prince by inviting him to parties with the eligible daughters of their number. These are the ladies of the powerful men in the economy who organised a kind of debutante season. Crown Prince Harald had fallen in love with 'a draper's daughter', (her father ran a high-end fashion shop). She'd been to finishing school in Montreux but her main qualification was, according to disparaging reports, in needlework. Anyway, King Olav took eight years to agree to the match and Crown Prince Harald had to threaten that if he couldn't marry Sonja he wouldn't marry anybody else so there would be no heir. King Olav gave in. But the point is that she was a commoner, a tradesman's daughter, but acceptable to the new aristocracy because she was one of their own. Actually she is a very fine artist and has done wonders for the Norwegian monarchy, but there is still an undercurrent of feeling that she has influence above her station.

MG: Shocking!

RD: Well yes, I wouldn't put it above the goings on in this country.

What was very impressive and I think the key to the whole situation of this royal wedding in 2001 was that when confronted with an equally determined Crown Prince, King Harald and Queen Sonia immediately drew the single mum and her son into the family. They would be

seen with this young lad, he was very young at this time, six perhaps. He appeared in the family photographs and so on. It was a huge signal to the nation.

MG: Well what I was meant to ask was your thoughts on developments in areas of your speciality like Scandinavia and Africa and the diplomatic service generally through the spectacles of hindsight. Are you going to say that you have no views?

RD: Well I do have views yes.

MG: You've got one about the language, the need to learn the language

RD: I have probably said enough about language. I think the whole idea of doing away with soft diplomacy, which is the kind of stuff the British Council used to do, in other words the cultural basis for the relationship, is a mistake. I think that it's important if you want to persuade other governments or other countries to do things which align with what you regard as your interests and values which is really the purpose of diplomacy, then you've got to help the people of both countries, or at least the opinion formers, to get to know each other. Also, you've got to develop personal contacts with them. That to my mind requires effort and means which can include entertainment, lunches, informal parties all the stuff which is so mocked for which the Foreign Office has been deprived of a lot of resources lately. I think if you need to be taken seriously you've got to show that you are serious about the countries that you are in and one of those ways is through language and another through cultural exchange. I know that the Foreign Office has been cut, cut and cut and it is politically easier to cut soft diplomacy, entertainment and language tuition than to cut embassies but our diplomats are gradually losing their tools of the trade. Do I think they can be replaced by the Internet, by access to information? No I don't because in fact the internet only carries what people think at a particular moment while diplomats need longer term trends. It is an additional tool. You can influence people through it, so yes, I'd be in favour of Ambassadors tweeting as soft diplomacy if you like, but I don't think we should start relying solely on digital sources for information and communication. You still need human contact and you still need humans to do the actual negotiation or persuading, and you need to give people plenty of practice in that

before they reach the point when it becomes serious. Maybe that is now happening, I don't know.

MG: Is it worrying?

RD: Yes, the trouble with us 'oldies', is that we've been out of it for such a long time, and it 'it was always better in our day'.

MG: But you are not necessarily saying that, I think that the onlooker sees more of the game, don't you?

RD: Yes, possibly. Another thing I would comment on looking back with hindsight, is how disappointed I am that Africa, in general, has not made faster progress after all the aid and effort that was being put in, particularly in the '90s and subsequently, and that people like Mugabe are still there causing mayhem. There have been a number of countries that have done well actually, eg Ghana, Sierra Leone, Mozambique, and it's almost as if countries have to go to the bottom before they start coming up again but those that do come up, it's quite remarkable. Ghana is a good example, they've had several changes of government in recent years as a result of elections, even Nigeria looks marginally better. South Africa is another big disappointment. I don't think that our analyses were wrong at the time, actually thinking back, they were entirely right. Possibly what we haven't done is to follow up sufficiently and in some cases were too quick to pull the plug and suspend aid when the government misbehaves rather than trying to rectify matters by cooperation.

MG: Well thank you very much. It's been a really interesting reminiscence. Thank you.