

## **LORD GILLMORE (David Gillmore)**

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TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW GIVEN BY LORD GILLMORE - 17 MARCH 1996

Interview conducted by Lady Barder (Jane Barder)

JB = Jane Barder: LDG = Lord Gillmore

JB: It's the 17 March 1996. My name is Jane Barder. I am talking to Lord Gillmore at his home in London. Lord Gillmore was born in 1934 and retired in 1994 as Permanent Under Secretary at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Head of the Diplomatic Service. He was appointed CMG in 1982, GCMG in 1994 and he was made a Life Peer in 1990. He was educated at Trent College and King's College, Cambridge.

JB: Now, although you finished your career, Lord Gillmore, as Head of the Diplomatic Service it was by no means your first choice as a career when you left University?

LdG: No, that's right. I was one of a number of people in the 1960s who benefited from the option of a Special Competition for entry into the Foreign Office expressly designed for late entrants. I think that that no longer exists in the sense that there is no special competition. You can join the Foreign Service, the Diplomatic Service, at anywhere between immediate post graduate age, 22 or whatever it is now, and 40-plus. But at that time there was a special entrance competition, and one or two people who are good friends of mine who served with me and are still serving, joined at the same time. They came from academia, from the military, from business. I think the idea at the time was to try to draw into the Diplomatic Service people who had had some rather different outside experience in order to, as it were, leaven the bread of people who had come straight from University into the Diplomatic Service. And I must say, as I would say, wouldn't I, that it was a splendid idea. Certainly it suited me very well because it was the way I went.

JB: Well you'd had experience in all those. You'd been a teacher, you'd been working in business and you'd been in Reuters.

LdG: That's right, yes.

JB: Why did you eventually decide to take that option in to the Diplomatic Service?

LdG: Well, it's ... Looking back I'm never quite sure one is ever entirely clear about one's motives, and I suppose, as with everything else, chance plays a part. But I started off, after Cambridge as a sub-editor at Reuters in London and spent two years working in Fleet Street. Reuters in those days was much less of a big business operation than it is now. It was really much more of a news service. It hadn't developed into the sophisticated business and banking and international finance institution that it has become. It was very much more a pure journalistic operation; and I spent two years there as a sub editor. I went into that partly because I was interested journalism, and had done a bit of journalism at Cambridge. As a teenager I had always wanted to become a Diplomat. But I suppose at Cambridge, having done my National Service (most people in those days did their National Service before they went up to University) I was suddenly daunted at the prospect of being a bureaucrat for the rest of my life. I decided I was going to do something in what I laughingly called the real world and so managed to get this job with Reuters. They had just started, I think for the first time, a Graduate entrance scheme. I spent two years there. Then I moved from there, through some contacts and friends, to work in a French company in France. It was an interesting experience. Our business was, for those days, quite high technology. Our company made all the flexible packaging material for pharmaceuticals, chemicals, and food packaging, which are now taken for granted but which in those days were considered rather revolutionary. The flexible milk carton; we had the licence for all of France for tetra-pack milk cartons. We used to provide the packaging material for all the pharmaceuticals and so on, so it was considered quite high tech. although nowadays it would be thought to be almost before the Flood. But it was fun and I actually ended up by running a factory on the outskirts of Paris with all the attendant problems of managing personnel, ensuring output and so on. It was a lot of fun, and I spent four or five years there before I saw that the owner was looking around to find a buyer. He was getting old and wanted to get out. I thought that, as this rather spare Englishman in this outfit where in fact I didn't use my English from one day, or from one year, to the next - it was entirely in French - and without a qualification as an engineer, or as a salesman or as a marketing man, I was going to be the first to go when he sold out. So I thought the time had come to get out while the going was good, which I did ...

JB: Came back to London, worked as a teacher and wrote a novel. Had, at least had a novel published?

LdG: Well I had just got married, and so we took off for about a year, on my savings, which were minute but enabled us to live in the south of Spain, in those days a relatively unknown part of the world. This enabled me to write a book before I came back to a job teaching in London.

JB: Did you find, when you then eventually went in to the Diplomatic Service in 1970 it was, when you were aged 35, with that background, did you find the Foreign Office a very isolated kind of culture? Did you find it ... What was it like?

LdG: It was very strange, because I had never worked inside the Whitehall bureaucracy before. Its manners, customs, habits, quirks, were quite unknown to me whereas people of my age in the Foreign Office had been already at it for about ten years.

JB: Was it in any way closed to you?

LdG: No, people were extraordinarily welcoming. I thought I would find it difficult to fit in. But I found people quite extraordinarily warm and welcoming. I think that I thought myself a stranger animal than they thought me, which was pleasant. But it was faintly bizarre in those days because the Foreign Office in 1969/70 was a rather different place from now. I started on 1 January 1970 (in those days we worked on 1 January) and I tootled in as instructed at about 9.30 to find absolutely nobody around at all. At about 10 o'clock people began to turn up in the Personnel Section in Curtis Green Building as it was then. I was eventually ushered in to talk to my personnel officer who said that they had just the job for me, right up my street. When I enquired what it was, they said it was in Defence Training and Supply Department and, as you can imagine, I was rather flummoxed as to what it was or why this had anything remotely to do with me. When I, greatly daring, enquired why this had anything to do with me, the officer said "Well you speak French don't you?" I still didn't see what that had got to do with defence training and supply until it turned out that one of my dossiers was Concorde and collaboration with the French on military aircraft and that sort of thing. So anyway I set off for that, but within one month they had abolished that department which meant that I was transferred to Aviation and Telecommunications Department. It was all rather perplexing. I remember the very first day in the department, which was 1 January, finding my way (it took me about two hours to find it) into a mezzanine in what is now part of the rebuilt office. A mezzanine floor in Downing Street East where I was ushered into a freezing cold office, faced with a pile of wood and paper in the grate and a coal scuttle with some lumps of presumably smokeless coal. I wasn't in the least bit sure whether I was supposed to

light my fire or not. I thought perhaps I'd better not. So I sat in my overcoat until lunch time. No-one having appeared, I then went out to lunch. Eventually; in the course of the afternoon, somebody put their head around the door and asked who I was. Apart from that I had no contact with any other human being the whole day. Things got a little bit better after that. But it was a fairly mystifying experience. I remember that within the first week the assistant in the department, who by then I had met, came stumping along the corridor (he had one leg, a peg-leg) and announced that Tony Benn had gone mad about Concorde and that we had to submit. Well in my dictionary "submit" meant "give way". But that was not in fact his intention. We had to argue that we should not unilaterally abandon the Concorde, which some members of the then Labour Government wanted to do. So I learnt what a submission meant, and what a minute meant and how one set about producing a submission. I even got legal advice from the then Deputy Legal Adviser who, with great reluctance, was prepared to offer a view. But it was only when I begged him, since I was so new, to produce something for me in writing did he eventually get a rather ancient fountain pen out of his pocket and write something on the bottom of a minute. So then I could say that I had got legal advice.

JB: So it would all be very different nowadays with lots of mature entrants. There is training now.

LdG: There is training nowadays. No-one trained me to do anything. I was expected to find out by some sort of strange form of osmosis. I suppose one did. Arguably it is a rather effective way of learning. It's the deep end principle.

JB: You were a First Secretary then. You went to your first overseas posting as First Secretary, in Moscow.

LdG: Yes, in Moscow.

JB: ... after two years. Was that what you wanted?

LdG: Very much, because I'd learnt, and probably mostly forgotten, Russian during my National Service ...

JB: Oh yes.

LdG: Like so many of us in those days, we had picked up our Russian, in fact we had learnt a lot of Russian, in National Service as qualified interpreters. A lot of my contemporary Russian

speakers in the Service actually went through those National Service courses. Very good they were too. The trouble was that by the time I got to Moscow in 1972 I'd had something like 17 years to forget it all without much practice. But it came back so I was very lucky to get that job as it suited what I knew.

JB: And that was a commercial job?

LdG: Yes. Interesting job in Moscow. I think I was the first diplomat to get in after the Russians refused to issue any new visas once we'd slung out, in 1971, 104 was it? 104 Russians.

JB: 105.

LdG: ... KGB officers from London. After which the Russians refused to issue us any visas for nearly a year. I eventually got into Moscow in August of 1972. I was very warmly received. I thought it was because everyone thought I was rather a good chap. In fact it didn't take me long to discover they were so pleased to see anyone coming in because it meant that everyone else could get out. So it had nothing to do with my personal charm. It was just that, rather like the swallow in summer, I was a sign that things were loosening up and that people who had had to stay on because we couldn't replace them now stood a chance of getting out.

JB: The commercial job, particularly in Moscow, is not your normal business type job, it is much more dealing with government and government organisations, very few British businessmen in Moscow?

LdG: Yes, there were very few. There were half a dozen resident businessmen. A lot of visitors of course, people operating essentially from the UK doing deals in Moscow and there was a very substantial two-way trade, but as you say, the work, as far as the Russians were concerned, was with the government because there was no other form of commercial organisation. This was the full blood of the Soviet economy and one dealt with foreign trade organisations which were themselves dependent upon the Ministry of Foreign Trade which was of course a government organisation. So, yes, the whole thing was really dealing with the Soviet Government in one or other of its guises. It was a very good job. I think that in a way that job in Moscow and the Cultural First Secretary job were at that level the most interesting because one did have a contact with Russians who were a little bit outside the normal run of the diplomatic round. I had not much to do with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs but a lot to do with these foreign trade organisations and with the Ministry of Foreign Trade, as well as with organisers of trade shows and so forth. So one

had a slightly wider constituency of Russians to deal with than was the case with people working, for example, in the political section, in Chancery.

JB: Yes, and the Russians didn't allow much contact with them. There was a reason for all that. So, what, three years ... two and a half years ..?

LdG: Three years, yes.

JB: Rather longer than usual?

LdG: Yes, they asked me to stay on for a third year, I'm not quite sure why. I think they hadn't got a job for me. Eventually I left I think in March or April 1975, and when I left my successor, Len Appleyard, had already arrived and I hadn't got a job. In fact the Foreign Office asked me to pack up my heavy goods and leave them in Moscow and come home because they didn't know where I was going. So if people think that life is difficult in the Foreign Office now, I can tell you it was even more difficult then, so with ...

JB: Two children ...

LdG: Wife and two children, we packed our bags, the bags we could transport, and came back to London at Easter. I popped in to the Foreign Office and they hummed and hawed and said that they couldn't actually tell me what I was going to be doing, but why didn't I take some leave. So I went off ski-ing for a couple of weeks I think, and then came back and asked them if they had any idea and they eventually told me they were going to send me to Vienna but not until the summer holidays. So I had a period from April through to August when I hadn't really got a job. I hadn't got a house to live in, and I hadn't got any furniture since that was all in Moscow. But we managed to cope and I ended up by spending a little time in an Information Unit, which the government set up in Whitehall to supply members of the public with information about the European Community as it was then in answer to telephone enquiries.

JB: Referendum year?

LdG: Referendum year. It was before the Referendum so that members of the public could ring up an office in London, in fact in Whitehall, and make enquiries about what it would mean for the price of milk or what it would mean for all kinds of things which we did our best to answer.

JB: You had guidance?

LdG: We had volumes of guidance on what we were to say about all these things. I'm not ever quite sure that that was a frightfully constitutional thing, because we were officials and this was after all a referendum, but we were obviously giving a rather positive message, rather more positive than negative.

JB: Did anybody query it at the time? The Shore-ites ... the Peter Shore-ites?

LdG: I don't think they did. It was clear afterwards ... I think it was more questioned after the event than before it. But the referendum result was so overwhelmingly favourable that I think that, if we influenced in the direction of a Yes vote more than a few hundred people it couldn't have made a tiny difference to the outcome. I think nowadays it would be quite a difficult thing to do. I'm not sure it would be regarded as being exactly proper. Anyway, I did that. I was not an expert. There were a lot of experts around me. I was really a sort of glorified receptionist on the 'phone, and if I didn't know the answer I'd pass the caller on to somebody who did. So I did a bit of that. And then off for Vienna in, I think it was August of 1975.

JB: And that was not the Embassy in Vienna. It was to, what? The Atomic ..?

LdG: It was a thing called the MBFR which stood for Mutual Balanced Force Reductions. It was effectively a negotiation begun in 1970 between NATO and the Warsaw Pact to see if there was a way in which agreement could be reached on a reduction in the conventional forces in Europe. As you know, at that time in the very early 1970s there had been the great SALT Agreement which had gone on largely in Helsinki. Indeed when I was in Moscow Henry Kissinger was flying in and out, often unbeknownst to his own Embassy, as I think you will remember, and negotiating with the Russians the SALT Agreement. The idea was that this agreement, the SALT Agreement which covered strategic nuclear weapons, should be complemented by an agreement on conventional and, as it turned out, tactical nuclear weapons (that is, not long-range nuclear weapons but the battle field systems). So they had set up this negotiation which had been going on for about two years when I joined it. It comprised all the countries of NATO and all the countries of the Warsaw Pact - a negotiation which went on for years and years and years. It eventually came to a grinding halt, but in the end materialised in what is known as the CFE Agreement - CFE standing for Conventional Forces Europe, of which in fact our negotiations were the forerunner. It was an immensely detailed negotiation, tremendous hard pounding. It was quite clear the Russians



were not prepared to make any substantial concessions of any kind although they were very often on the defensive. Of course the Russians took the rest of the Warsaw Pact along with them, since the rest of the Warsaw Pact generally touched its forelock and said "Yes" to whatever the Russians were saying.

JB: And you were a Counsellor in our Delegation there?

LdG: Yes.

JB: That was headed by what? Did a Minister come out from time to time? Was it all officials?

LdG: It was all officials. I can't recall a Ministerial visit the whole time I was there. It was conducted by a very senior official. Sir Clive Rose was our Head of Mission. He was already a senior Grade 2 Ambassador, and he was succeeded in, I think '76, '77, by Eddie Bolland. We pounded on day in and day out trying to get some sort of agreement with the Warsaw Pact.

JB: Working presumably in very close collaboration with the Americans in particular?

LdG: Americans and Germans in particular. The French had refused to take part, but kept themselves discreetly informed of what was going on. So effectively the Germans, the Americans and ourselves, under a very high-powered American team, ran the NATO side. I am sure the other nations of NATO wouldn't like one saying that, but effectively it was run by a triumvirate. We used, for example, to meet on Saturday mornings ...

JB: Your triumvirate?

LdG: Our triumvirate ... privately, I think either unbeknownst to the rest or in a way which the rest didn't feel they needed to take too much notice of. But it was the way in which we kept the whole of the NATO organisation working collectively in the same direction. For UK purposes, it occasionally served to curb over-enthusiasm on the part of the Americans or over-anxiety on the part of the Germans.

JB: You were the honest brokers between this ...

LdG: In a sense yes. Of course the British were very concerned. We had a very large number of troops in Germany. We had tactical nuclear weapons on the ground in various guises. So we were very much a key player. The Germans of course were in a very a special position since it

was their territory. So it was very important that they were fully involved throughout. And there was a good deal of pressure from the Germans, Dutch, Belgians in particular, for more concessions than we were ready to agree. There was a very strong current of public opinion at the time which was arguing, and understandably, in favour of an agreement. The British position, as always, was somewhat pragmatic, said "An agreement, fine ... but not the wrong agreement.' We had to get the right one, and the right one was simply not forthcoming on anything like acceptable terms from the Russians at that time. But we kept the negotiations going. We did a lot of very basic work of a most detailed kind on force structures ...

JB: This is what I was wondering ... I mean it sounds tremendously technical for a non-Service person to be devoting three years to ...

LdG: Well it was, it was technical. We had of course military advisers on our staff. There were two serving military officers and an official from the MOD so it was really a joint FCO/MOD and military, I mean uniformed military, operation. But one did very usefully learn a huge amount about the structure of forces, about tactical and strategic thinking, which as it happened in my case, became very useful subsequently in my career.

JB: Well, when you went back to London, what, in 1979, you became Head of Defence Department.

LdG: That's right, yes.

JB: You weren't sick of it by then?

LdG: No, I was increasingly fascinated because, in a sense, the MBFR negotiation was a rather narrow segment of the totality of strategic defence and arms control policy. When I went back to London in December of '78 to be Head of Defence Department the whole spectrum became my baby, as it were. So that it wasn't just this negotiation about Conventional Forces in Europe, but I also covered the strategic area, the nuclear area; I covered all our own training programmes and so forth overseas. It covered the Third World, out of area so-called, non-NATO stuff. But I had by then become almost literate in the language of the military, and had spent a lot of time talking and thinking about strategic and arms control issues.

JB: And you presumably weren't wandering into the office at 10 o'clock as you'd found when you

joined in 1970 ...

LdG: No.

JB: Or leaving, even, at ...

LdG: No, it was a very arduous task. I arrived in December of '78, and started on 1 January '79. David Owen was then Foreign Secretary, and David, who has become a good friend of mine, was a very imperious and (I'm sure he'll forgive me for saying) extremely difficult master to work for. He had of course been, himself, in the Ministry of Defence and I think in his ideal world then he'd have been both Defence and Foreign Secretary. He was always very keen to ensure that the Foreign Office guided the Ministry of Defence, which didn't make my position particularly easy. But he was a man of very considerable initiative and imagination. Sometimes - and I hope he'll forgive me for saying this too - faintly dotty. I remember one occasion when I was supposed to be going to a nuclear strategic planning conference in Colorado and I was hauled off the job at a few hours' notice to go with him to Bonn to see Hans Dietrich Genscher to put to him David Owen's latest scheme for force reductions in Europe, a scheme which I knew was absolutely unacceptable to the Germans and which wasn't worth putting to anyone in the Foreign Ministry, let alone the German Foreign Minister. But we went across and did it, and were told it was a splendid initiative but in fact it wouldn't work. So we came home again. But David was like that; he was a man of tremendous energy, a bundle of ideas and initiatives. As I say, not the easiest person to work for but certainly, in terms of his own energy and imagination, a remarkable man. So I enjoyed it very much and it widened my horizon across the whole area of military strategic planning and arms control. The job became, I thought, more and more fascinating. It was also, at the time (it's hard to remember now) a very sexy subject because there was a tremendous debate, a public debate, about nuclear weapons, about the morality of deterrence through these weapons, about the strategy of arms control and subsequently, and this really came up in my next job but was already beginning to rumble when I was Head of Defence Department, the whole question of the deployment of new systems, called the SS20. This was a redoubtable weapon system which they started to deploy forward into parts of the Soviet Bloc in eastern Europe. It caused us a good deal of anxiety. A response was necessary. That response involved the deployment of our own systems, notably the cruise missiles, ground launched cruise missiles, based, we planned, in the UK, Belgium, Holland, Germany; and Pershing Missiles based in Germany. Of course that decision had to be taken in the face, I should say in the teeth, of very strong public opposition.

JB: That was a decision that was taken by the incoming Tory Government ..?

LdG: It was taken by the incoming Tory Government.

JB: Yes ...

LdG: Although ...

JB: Do you think it would have been taken by the Government that David Owen was a member of?

LdG: I think it would. David Owen would have been firmly in favour of it, I think. Whether he would have carried all members of the Cabinet is another matter of guess work. But I think that broadly speaking, as between Government and Opposition, the basic ideas were common. It was only later, when Michael Foot was Leader of the Opposition, that opposition grew inside the Official Opposition. Looking back, of course it was without any shadow of doubt the right decision. Indeed Russians have subsequently said to me that they thought that was one of the two decisions which led the Russians to realise, in the end, that they were not going to be able to compete with the West. I think historically it was a seminal decision in the last days of the Soviet empire in a sense. It really was something which I think brought home to them the fact that they were not going to bully, browbeat, even blackmail us and that that game was up. A lot of Russians have said to me how important that decision had been in making the Russians realise, the Soviet Union realize, that in a way that game was up.

JB: And you said that that decision was taken when you by then were in your next job, the job that, when you were an Assistant Under Secretary of State ...

LdG: Yes ...

JB: What role did you have then, when you became an Assistant Under Secretary in 1981?

LdG: in '81, that's right. I succeeded my boss who was supervising Defence Department, the Arms Control and Disarmament Department and the Nuclear Energy Department so that I was in the third successive job in the same field, but this time with the whole gamut of everything connected with defence, disarmament, arms control, nuclear energy within my portfolio. Fascinating job, and at a time when, as I said, these issues were very much ...

JB: Yes ...

LdG: .. top of the public agenda. So it was a highly public profile job and one had to go and speak to groups all round the country from time to time ...

JB: Which is unusual for a civil servant of any kind ... and other people ...

LdG: Yes, I think it is more common now but in those days it was unusual. One did have to talk, not in terms of Party policy, but in terms of strategic policy. We set up in NATO an elaborate organisation, two pronged in fact. One was the high level group consisting of senior officials from the Defence Ministry backed up by the Foreign Office; the other was the Special Consultative Group, the SCG, which was led by the Foreign Office and backed up by the Ministry of Defence, dealing with the arms control aspects. And we had to make decisions, first of all, about whether or not we were going to deploy these systems to counter the Soviet deployment; and secondly, and as important, whether, in making this deployment, we were going to add in an offer to the Warsaw Pact to disarm. The theory, silly as it may sound but right as it subsequently turned out, was the right one - to offer a disarmament process as we deployed new systems. The fact is that long before the demise of the Soviet Union, none of these systems existed because the disarmament process did work. But it was the most frightful business getting this through NATO, I remember.

JB: Whose idea was it then, was it a British idea, or the Americans?

LdG: I think the British and the Americans were very much in the lead. The Germans were again absolutely crucially important because the Pershing systems at least were only for deployment on German soil. In any event the crucial decision was reached at a meeting of the NATO Council in December of 1979 by which time of course Lord Carrington had become Foreign Secretary: and it was an unusual meeting in that, in addition to the Foreign Ministers of the NATO countries, it was also attended by the Defence Ministers. In fact I think that I had never seen so many Ministers in the same room at the same time before. It was also particularly difficult because, untypically, we really hadn't drafted the communiqué at official level in advance of the meeting, as we were not at all sure of what the outcome would be. That, some people would say, is the ultimate officials' nightmare because they like to have things clear cut and know where they are going before they get there. At least one could say it was likely to produce a lively and stimulating meeting, which is what it did. Effectively, what we were deciding on was what became known as the double track decision, that is to say a decision that we were going to deploy these new systems to counter this

latest bit of Soviet bravado, and at the same time, and this is the second of the two tracks, to offer a process by which we would eliminate all sub-strategic land-based systems except for the very short range ones, what became known as intermediate range systems. We offered to eliminate all those on both sides. And that was the deal we came up with and that eventually, after the most tense, not to say fraught, meeting of the NATO Council, reinforced with Defence Ministers, that was the decision we reached. But it wasn't easy and for some countries, I remember particularly Belgium, who had to agree to accept the deployment of cruise missiles on their soil, it was exceptionally difficult. But we got there in the end, after a great deal of heart-searching, and announced the decision just before Christmas of 1979. It was one of the most interesting and stimulating and fraught occasions I can recall. But Peter Carrington was as always superb, and his cool and steadiness and his wry sense of humour, his persuasiveness, played an absolutely crucial role in getting this through. It was one of the great performances - a quiet, steady voice of commonsense and calm when not all of his colleagues were in the same state of relaxed, commonsensical, down-to-earth, realism. He was superb. I think the Americans recognised that he had played a crucial role in talking to his European partners, persuading them that this was the right way to go. For me, I mean looking back, what is gratifying (perhaps one tends to congratulate oneself when one shouldn't) was that it was actually the right decision because it did have a huge impact on the Soviet Union. It had a huge impact I think on public opinion, and because all kinds of things had happened in the years before which had not been really to NATO's credit, it showed that when the chips were down, or when push came to shove or whatever the jargon term is, NATO could actually take a tough decision. And that vis-à-vis a Soviet Union which was still offensive and belligerent and prone to trying to use the nongovernmental organisations, the Peace movements and the rest of it, it showed them that we could actually face them down. And face them down we did. We had of course to go through all kinds of paroxysms of protest. Thousands of people on the streets in Germany, ladies on Greenham Common here, and so on. But in the end what happened was that we removed all those intermediate range systems from Europe once and for all and that was the prize we were after. But we had to do it by being tough, and it worked.

JE: Were you meanwhile building up close personal relations with your opposite numbers particularly in Europe. How much does it depend on that kind of ...

LdG: Well, I think ultimately ...

JB: Not just at conferences but ..?

LdG: I suppose that the truth of the matter is that basically it's government policy which guides, but you can get things done effectively and quickly, efficiently, if you are in a relationship of trust and confidence, perhaps even friendship with your key opposite numbers. I had some extremely good friends in Europe and in America. I spent an awful lot of time to and fro from Washington and from Brussels, in fact I seemed to live on the Red Eye Special or the Friday night Cattle Truck from Brussels. We were constantly moving to and fro. But yes I built up a very close relationship with people like Larry Eagleburger and with Rick Birt, who were closely involved in this, and with whom I think it is true to say, I'm sure they'd feel that it's true, I hope they will, there was a great deal of close friendship and trust. They are people who I stay in touch with even now.

JB: Would that then give ammunition to those who say that the role of Embassies in the modern world is declining and things depend much more on officials in capitals?

LdG: No, I don't think so because there was only one of me and I couldn't be everywhere at once, and the Embassies were in touch day by day with our German, Dutch, Italian, French opposite numbers and of course in Washington too. So that an awful lot of work went on between the visits preparing for them, exchanging ideas, exchanging thoughts. And receiving ideas from the Embassies too; guided by Bonn about how you played things with highly sensitive German public opinion, for example what were the pitfalls to avoid. I mean one used the Embassy's advice as well as their channels of communication relentlessly. Oh no, on the contrary. Although one travelled around for these large scale meetings and occasionally for private sessions with one's American, Dutch, French, German opposite number, the day to day business was done by the Embassies. You had to have at the Embassies people who were as literate in this arcane but intensely serious business as were the people in capitals. No, it is a myth, this idea that simply because you can move someone in a Concorde or in a Jet across the Atlantic ...

JB: Or pick up a telephone.

LdG: ... or pick up a telephone. It doesn't work like that. It's a very simplistic view. It isn't how things are. I relied hugely on remarkable colleagues working in the Embassies in Bonn, Washington, The Hague, Brussels, Rome, who were completely switched in to the local machine of government. The Ambassadors themselves were close to the Ministers involved in the countries concerned. They could talk privately, try out new ideas before we put them into a wider

public domain. All of these endless series of contacts, *démarches*, private conversations and so on were vital to getting the thing through. You couldn't possibly have done it just from capitals. You needed competent, able and expert, people on the ground and that, my God, we had. So that was really very much the key issue at the time. I mean there were a lot of other subsidiary issues, and one of them was the whole business of our defence and strategic arrangements out of area, outside the NATO area. All of which came to a head in March and the first day of April 1982 when the Argentines walked into the Falklands. All of a sudden there was intense concentration outside Europe. Strategic and nuclear affairs was overtaken by the awful business of the Falklands War. I say awful because it meant that Peter Carrington resigned, that we had a full scale war on our hands 8000 miles away, with at the outset very little prospect, as we saw it, of being able to get them back, get the Falkland islands back. That, I think history will show, represented for Mrs Thatcher, as she was then, a turning point in her fortunes. I think I'm right in saying that up until then her position in the opinion polls had not been particularly strong. It was a tricky time for the Foreign Office, what with Lord Carrington's departure, and a measure of blame attaching to us which led to the Franks enquiry afterwards and so on. We were not regarded with any affection anywhere in Whitehall, least of all perhaps in No 10, which made things difficult. The Deputy Under Secretary who was my boss, Patrick Wright, and I had to cox and box, sitting on various meetings including the Chiefs of Staff meetings and we both of us followed it day in and day out, I should say day and night in and out. One came home very little during those three months. I think the truth of the matter is that without Margaret Thatcher's absolute conviction that this was a war which she was going to win, that she was going to get back the Falklands by force if she couldn't get the Argentines to pack their bags and go, it could not have been done. She was, by any standards, quite extraordinary. One can say that without any political bias - just as a matter of objective observation. But it was a difficult time for the Foreign Office.

JB: How near did she come to losing? It was pretty finely balanced, wasn't it?

LdG: I think that she never really ... do you mean lost the support of her colleagues?

JB: No, I meant lost the war.

LdG: There were some pretty nasty moments. I mean there were some serious setbacks. The awful problem of the Exocet missile which caused havoc, but could have caused much greater havoc, with our Fleet. What was a very serious problem, one of the things that I was involved with, was trying to prevent the Argentines getting their hands on any more. In these days of



discreet arms salesmen around the world that was not impossible. You wouldn't believe the places where we had to intervene to prevent the Argentines getting hold of more weapons. But that was a great risk. I think there were other moments that were pretty ghastly. The *Galahad* incident. There was a night when the *Canberra* was unloading after we landed our troops. The *Canberra* I think was still painted white. We hadn't had time to repaint her before she set sail, and she was unloading troops on a bright moonlight night still painted white and visible, I would imagine, from 40 miles away to the naked eye. That was a night that one was glad to see go by, with the *Canberra* out of range of the Argentine aircraft. Before we actually landed, before indeed the Fleet got down there and became engaged in operations, we tried all kinds of approaches to the Argentines to see if they would ... if some arrangements could be found whereby they withdrew. But those efforts proved to no avail. I remember Christopher Mallaby, now our Ambassador in Paris, who was Head of Planning Staff, used to present a new plan every morning before 8 o'clock. He was quite remarkable in producing imaginative new ideas. But none of them ever turned out to be acceptable to the Argentines. More fool they, but then I think the nature of totalitarian regimes is that, in the end, they lose sight of their own interests as well as everything else. The key of course again in all of this was the Americans. The ability of Nico Henderson, who was Ambassador in Washington, Tony Parsons who was Ambassador to the United Nations, to keep our end up in public relations terms, particularly with the American Government and in Tony Parsons' case with the international community, was crucial. We never had an adverse vote in the Security Council or General Assembly during that period. Tony Parsons was able to keep that at bay. Nico, in his remarkable way, was able to gain eminence across the United States. His regular appearance on breakfast television became almost a kind of feature of those three months. But above all, the kind of personal contacts that he and his Embassy staff had established, and some of the rest of who had been dealing with these same Americans on a whole range of other issues, meant that we started from a position of trust and sympathy. The actions of Cap Weinberger, then Secretary of Defence in Washington, and a number of others giving us their support against some opposition - Jeanne Kirkpatrick and Tom Enders and others who were not very much on our side - their actions were seminal. We got weapons, equipment, intelligence from them which was invaluable. Air to air missiles, intelligence from satellites and so on which was crucially important to us. That support, built up on a relationship established over years and years, including individual contacts, was crucial. I don't say it made all the difference, but the fact that one could pick up a telephone and talk to somebody in Washington, go in his office, and talk to him on a basis of absolute trust, was very

important to us. And the same was true I think throughout Europe. The French actually were extremely helpful to us. Again, personal contacts do matter. They don't perhaps change the situation from black to white or white to black but they make it a hell of a lot easier to deal quickly and efficiently with a problem if you know who you are talking to.

JB: Do you think Mrs Thatcher recognised this, the value of this?

LdG: Well, I think in her own terms her relationship with Reagan, direct relationship with Reagan ...

JB: No, I was meaning the Foreign Office.

LdG: The Foreign Office. Yes, I think to some extent she did, although she was pretty cross with the Foreign Office throughout this period. I went with her (there were only three of her two Private Secretaries and myself) to Washington immediately after the end of the war, in July 1982. One of the most remarkable 48 hours of my life I think. Do you want me to tell the story, is it worth telling?

JB: Oh I'm sure it is, yes.

LdG: Well the reason she was going to the United States actually in effect had nothing to do with the Falklands War, although the Falklands War which was over by June, preceded the visit by a month. She was actually going to deliver a speech to the United Nations Special Session on Disarmament in July. I don't have to tell you that disarmament was not something high on Margaret Thatcher's priority list at that particular juncture. However, she had a speech which I drafted for her which she rejected I think twice. Michael Quinlan came in to give a hand and eventually we got something which was halfway acceptable. Then I was told by No. 10 that I absolutely had to go on this trip. We travelled out after Questions on the Tuesday and spent the whole journey out going over this speech again and again and again. We landed in New York to be greeted by Tony Parsons, our Ambassador at the UN, and went to the hotel, spent an hour and a half with Tony Parsons talking about UN aspects of the Falklands in the aftermath. At midnight Tony Parsons got up to go home. It was already about 5 o'clock our time, 5 o'clock in the morning. I rather optimistically stood up to go to bed. Margaret Thatcher said "No no, I want to go through that speech once again" and we spent another hour on it until 1 o'clock, before sending it off to the typist to be typed up overnight. I came down at what I thought was an early hour in the morning, to find Mrs Thatcher, dressed and coiffed, in her sitting room. I asked if she had

slept well, which she thought was rather a strange question because she didn't do much of that. But she said she had, and had I seen the television this morning. I said no I hadn't, because I'd actually been getting up. She said "Well you missed a very important programme" and I thought it must have been something tremendously important, on the Falklands or on disarmament. When I enquired what it was about, she said it was about Mark Twain - "You ought to have seen it" she said in her inimitable way. Anyway we spent the morning in New York - she had to make the speech, she had a meeting with the Secretary General, she gave a reception, she had lunch, I think with the President of the Security Council, and she gave a Press Conference. We then shot off from New York down to Andrews Airforce Base to go and see President Reagan. She said to me when we were getting on the 'plane, "I can't think why President Reagan wants to see me" and I said something rather idiotic like "I'm sure he wants to congratulate you on your great victory in the Falklands". "No he doesn't" she said, "He wants me to be magnanimous in victory and I'm not going to be". So we arrived at Andrews and were helicoptered in to the Reflecting Pool and were driven to the White House where we were greeted by George Bush and Nico Henderson, our Ambassador, and ushered into the Oval office. So there was Margaret Thatcher and her three officials (her two Private Secretaries and me) and Nico Henderson. She rather shook the Americans by starting off by talking about (I think it was in this order) extra-territoriality, a ghastly word meaning the right of the Americans to prevent British companies operating on American licences exporting to countries of which the Americans did not approve, a problem for John Brown's compressor stations in pipelines in the Soviet Union, where the Americans didn't want us to supply the (US) technology and where we said "No no, this is a British export".

We were in a sort of confrontation. Mrs Thatcher spent twenty minutes elaborating in the most enormous detail on this problem and saying the American position was awful and untenable and she really wanted them to give way. This I think rather took President Reagan aback because he looked more and more puzzled.

JB. He wasn't concerned with the detail ...

LdG: .. and wasn't particularly concerned with the details. She then switched to problems with steel. I can't actually now remember exactly what the problems about steel were, but there was a considerable steel problem. On that, quite clearly, President Reagan had had no briefing at all, and I noticed that, as this monologue went on, his mouth, as is the case with old people sometimes, began to fall open. Hardly anyone uttered another word. By which time we were 40 minutes into

the one hour meeting. Somehow or other President Reagan managed to utter the word "Falklands", and Margaret Thatcher jumped in immediately and said "Ah, I'm very glad you mentioned that" as if this had been something that might or might not have come up. "We have a frightful problem with the British Army boot, and I want your help" and then she went into an elaborate explanation about how the British Army boot was unsatisfactory for yomping across marshy terrain, how the British Army boot leaked, how we had cases of trench foot which was disgraceful. Could the Americans perhaps help us over boots? Whereupon President Reagan, who was by then completely flummoxed by the whole proceeding, turned to Al Haig, still at the time Secretary of State but a former General, and asked whether perhaps they might be able to help us over our British Army boots. Al Haig thought it was quite likely. Then Margaret Thatcher turned to the problem of mines, and the fact that sheep all over the Falklands were being blown up by Argentine mines. She wondered whether the Americans could supply us with flails, which you stick on the front of tractors or tanks or whatever, to blow up these mines without causing damage. So we had a few moments on flails. By then time was running out, and it wasn't long before a flunkey came to the door and said "Mr. President, the Press awaits". Whereupon Margaret Thatcher was on her feet before the sentence was finished and said "Come on Ronald, we mustn't keep them waiting" and she went out of the door to the Press Conference. The first question was "Prime Minister, did the President ask you to be generous in your attitude to the Argentines after the Falklands victory?" and she turned, with her hand on her heart, and said "No, the subject never came up". She got it dead right, and she was absolutely spot on. Typical performance, amazing performance. But after that Margaret Thatcher herself became extremely interested in this whole question that I was discussing earlier, of the deployment of cruise missiles and Pershings, and on several occasions I went across to No. 10 to talk to her about all this.

One week particularly, when she was giving an interview to Brian Walden on weekend television, she didn't ask for any papers, she just wanted me to talk about it. She put on the most extraordinarily brilliant performance on the television, all done really from memory and just from talking. She actually put across the whole case for the decisions that we had taken in a way which I think few politicians could have done. Extraordinary performance. Not an easy lady to work for, but on the other hand, in many respects what the French call a force of nature, an elemental force.

JB: Interesting to look back on.

LdG: .. and interesting to look back on. Slightly tiring. I never quite kept up with her.

JB: So, eventually you moved on, and went on to become Commissioner in Malaysia.

LdG: Yes.

JB: Was that something you had asked for?

LdG: No, I hadn't at all. It was a completely new departure for me. I had spent such a long time, it must have been eight or nine years I suppose, dealing with defence and disarmament issues that I really didn't want to change, and this came quite out of the blue. I had no experience at all. But things had gone very sour with the Malaysians, with whom we had a lot of difficulty, partly because of an increase in the fees charged to foreign, non-European Community students, of which Malaysia had by far the largest number, apart from those coming from Hong Kong. Malaysia had been badly affected, which led to a "Buy British Last" policy ...

JB: Oh that was when the Buy British last ...

LdG: Yes. By the time I got there that had been rescinded. But there was a good deal of what my children call "agro" at the time and Geoffrey Howe, who by then was Foreign Secretary said to me before I left, "Your job is to make sure that my box is not full of papers about Malaysia at night, to get this off the agenda and to settle it". Well, that was the task, to get back into a state of normal and cordial and constructive relations with the Malaysians. So there was quite a job to do there and it was all the more fun for that.

JB: It was a very volatile relationship, particularly with Mr Mahatir; it was either the British or the Australians who seemed to be in the dock usually.

LdG: Yes, sometimes both together actually. Dr Mahatir is not an easy man. I don't think that he would pretend, himself, that he was an easy man or that he ought to be an easy man. He was a hard task-master. He had very strong views. He did think that he had been let down by the British over these questions of student fees and so on. He belonged, anyway, to a new generation of Malaysians after Tunku Abdul Rahman and Tun Razak. Very much a younger generation, more radical. I think it was inevitable that there would have to be some sort of quarrel at some time which we would have to sort out. I think that it was probably good for the relationship overall that we had this out in public and sorted it out. In fact by 1985 Mrs Thatcher came out on a visit to Malaysia, really to some extent to put a seal on a re-established relationship with the Malaysians in which we could do business.

JB: That wasn't the visit that initiated the Pergau Dam Project was it? That was later?

LdG: No, that was much later; it was after I'd gone, the Pergau Dam. But there were other projects which we did, two particularly which were very significant, and where British contractors got the deal; and deals involving the Malaysian Government, so that we were back on a much more even keel than before.

JB: So when you left Malaysia in 1986 relations were in a happier state; and it was back to the Office again four years, you said, as Deputy Under Secretary dealing with Asia, and ...

LdG: Asia and the Americas, yes.

JB. Asia and the Americas. And then eventually becoming Permanent Under Secretary. At which stage did you realise that you were going to become Permanent Under Secretary?

LdG: Well not in fact until rather late on. Not until I suppose, at some point in 1990. I can't quite remember. I do remember I was asked to give an answer overnight. My wife had just gone in to hospital that day for an ear operation. So I said "Well can I have some time to think about this?" and they said "Yes of course you can. Give me an answer tomorrow morning".

JB: Really? Who presents the thing to you? Was it your predecessor?

LdG: This was Patrick Wright, yes. He was smiling, he said "Yes you've got masses of time; just let me have an answer tomorrow morning", so I rushed off to hospital and said to Lucile, who hadn't had her operation but was waiting for it the next day, "What do you think?" and she said, as she always does, "You must do whatever you think is best" so I went back and I said "Yes".

JB: So wasn't it ... I mean had you wanted to go overseas again?

LdG: I had entirely planned on, had been told to expect, my last job in some post overseas.

JB: Yes.

LdG: I was rather hoping to go to the United Nations. In fact, at that stage I was pretty sure that was what I was destined for. But it didn't turn out like that. So there I was, I suppose it must have been in the spring of 1990, facing the prospect in 1991 of taking over from Patrick Wright. I said to the office that I would like to do it, but I wanted to have a moment for pause and thought, and

they said that that was all right, I could have a few months' quasi sabbatical. So I went off to Harvard for a semester, and spent three months in Paris at the Western European Union which had just set up an institute and which I worked with for a while. It just gave one time to pause for thought.

JB: Because it is a very daunting task to take on, Head of the Diplomatic Service, isn't it? I suppose everybody in some ways knows what a PUS does, but on the other hand I can't imagine how you take on those responsibilities.

LdG: Yes, it's a ...

JB: Did you regard it as a personal thing, that you could put your own personal imprint on?

LdG: Yes, it's very daunting. Patrick Wright is, had been and is, an old friend of mine. I'd seen him at close quarters and seen what it meant in terms of his working life, and that was pretty frightening. I was also pretty daunted by the fact that I'd never worked in the Administration in the Foreign Office, any form of the Administration, and therefore that whole side of it which is very important for the Permanent Secretary, was something completely new to me. But, there were other sorts of fright. The Permanent Secretary has to deal, like all Permanent Secretaries in Whitehall, with the Foreign Affairs Committee - more dauntingly still with the Public Accounts Committee. As the Accounting Officer vis-à-vis the Public Accounts Committee, you are answerable to that Committee for the way the money, which has been voted by Parliament, is spent. So it is a fairly daunting prospect. There were moments when I was overcome with complete terror at the whole idea of doing it. I suppose the comfort is that, once you start doing it you are so damn busy that you haven't got time to be frightened, and probably just as well too, because it was working under very high pressure. One worked enormously long hours. I think that one can put a certain personal imprint on it. I wouldn't exaggerate that because, after all, I know very well I could have been knocked over by a 22 bus and the thing would have gone on just as well as the day before I was knocked over by the 22 bus. But one tries to put some sort of personal imprint on it. I think the difficulty during my period was that change of all kinds was coming. The problem was to manage change in a way which was sympathetic to the one asset, the one great asset, which the Foreign Office has, which is its people, the people who work for it; and yet to do it in a way which actually did bring benefit to the Service, using the best of 20th century science, technology and so forth, which enabled us effectively to do more with less.

JB: How much of your time did you have to spend on administration and management changes? How much of your time was spent on what people regard as foreign policy?

LdG: I suppose it's about, half and half, although it varied of course so very much. You'd sometimes spend a month where you did a lot of policy work, and another month where you were facing a Public Accounts Committee enquiry into something, where you spent the whole time thinking about that. So it wasn't a constant, day in and day out. But I think, looking back, probably about half and half.

JB: And do you think that's as it should be? Do you think that Permanent Secretaries should be spending that amount of time?

LdG: I think it's inevitable that, in a system where you are the Accounting Officer, and where the Public Accounts Committee expects you personally to be able to answer questions and not keep turning around to colleagues sitting next to you and asking them to answer the question, I think that's inevitable. I think, also, that it is a good thing that they should be mixed and that they should be in some sort of balance. Whether it's 50-50 or 60-40 is an open question, because the execution of policy depends very much upon the ability to manage it. They are inextricably interlinked. The decisions you make on policy have implications for funding, they have implications for personnel, they have implications for all the logistic systems which we use. Really to try to steer things in a sensible direction requires you to understand both sides of the equation. It's fine to make brilliant policy, but if you have no means to carry it out, or can't produce the means, or don't know how the means can be extracted from the system, then you're whistling a bit in the dark. So I think it is important to do the two. I think that, looking back historically, some PUSs have done much more on one than on the other. My hunch, but it is no more than that, and it is certainly not a right answer, is that a balance of about 50-50 is right. Perhaps a little more on the policy side. But it also depends on the person, I think. What his qualities are, and what he's good at. But certainly I think that during my period as PUS, and I suspect also now subsequently, it's managing change within the Service which has become crucially important, because you cannot execute policy, you cannot provide an effective Diplomatic Service to carry out that policy, unless you've got the nuts and bolts right. In a sense the policy and the nuts and bolts to carry it through are part and parcel of the same problem.



JB: And when you use the word change, is that in any sense a euphemism for ...

LdG: Reductions?

JB: Cuts in resources?

LdG: Well, I think I was quite lucky. I think that during my time on the whole we didn't have to face any major cuts, nothing that was absolutely impossible.

JB: But we were opening up new posts with no new resources.

LdG: We were opening new posts. That was the trick; and the question was really whether we could do it in a way that was a little bit different from the way we'd done it before. Using very small posts, but trying to take advantage of all the new technology that was available. I mean, in the old days, you remember, we used to have cypher clerks and secretaries and so on. Well in the days of the computer, of word-processors, of much more sophisticated cypher technology, automation of one thing and another, you can do an awful lot with far fewer people in a small post. My sense was always that we had to bend every effort to making sure that we sustained a worldwide operation. We ...

JB: Was that also what Ministers got?

LdG: They were very much ... they demanded this, indeed, because no Minister likes to be presiding over a Service which says it can't do it, hasn't got the resources to do it, can't have a Mission in Uzbekistan, or wherever. Least of all do they like it when the Germans, and French, and Italians, not to mention the Americans, Japanese and others are doing more than we are. So they wanted that, but they didn't, at the same time, will us any more resources to do it with. The trick was trying to find where we had spare resources, where new technology was making more resources available to us in terms of human beings, and using those resources, the humans who are, as I say, our only real asset in the Diplomatic Service, using our staff efficiently. I can't even now remember how many new posts we opened during my time. It was an awful lot. And we did it, on the whole, successfully I think. A lot of people found it very hard going in these new posts in outlandish places, but they coped remarkably well, and did a fine job, very often in posts where the chief demand was from British industry.

JB: That would be in the old Soviet Union?

LdG: The old Soviet Union, where people wanted to have a British Diplomatic representation

because there were important contracts to be won. Take the oil and gas industry. Important contracts to be won, where effectively, their opposite number was the government still, and that required diplomats on the spot whose job it was to deal with, and advise about, dealing with governments. It was essential, I thought, and Ministers were egging us on in that direction anyway, to have an Ambassador or a Chargé d'Affaires, on the spot to do just that. I think that, you know, in countries like Azerbaijan where there were interesting options for British industry, Kazakhstan with its gas, and so forth, it was important to get a British representative on the ground. Otherwise the French, and the Germans and the Americans and others would have been all over us. We were able to do that partly because we were managing the Service very tightly, and because we were able to use new technology to make savings in staff, which are not only our great asset, but our most expensive asset. So by and large we were able to do it. What is distressing is to see, that after we had achieved what I thought was a relative equilibrium, a broad general consensus with Ministers, with Parliament, with public opinion in general that we had got the size and shape of our Service about right, it is distressing now to see that, all of a sudden, there is a new round of reductions which is going to undermine all that effort we made to sustain our global activity on a stable basis. The difficulty ...

JB: And the morale of the people who are operating.

LdG: And the morale of the people who are operating. I mean, again, if your chief asset is people, as it is, their morale becomes an absolutely crucial element. The remarkable thing about the Diplomatic Service was that it is a Service of intense loyalty, intense devotion to its task. In that sense I was as lucky as any, as a Head of anything, because I don't believe that anyone could have had a more loyal or dedicated Service to run. But you can't push that too far. There comes a moment when people get fed up, morale begins to sink, and that's disturbing. But, quite apart from that, bad as that is, no business would try to run its railway like that and you've got to have sort of ...

JB: Or railway, perhaps!

LdG: Or railway. I was trying to avoid the use of the word railway, perhaps a bad model. But you can't run a railway like that sensibly, if you are from one year to the next never knowing what the resources are going to be next year. You can't plan sensibly. I had thought, when I left, that we had arrived at a kind of consensus across the broad body politic on what the size and shape, and the cost, of our overseas effort should be. But alas that's been turned upside-down by the new

demand for new cuts coming shortly after a point at which I thought we'd achieved some equilibrium. And that makes it very difficult to run it sensibly. No business would try and run its business like that at all, it would be daft.

JB: Douglas Hurd was the Foreign Secretary for all of your ...

LdG: All of my time.

JB: Himself an ex-diplomat, and presumably, I'm sure, you got well.

LdG: Well, I am a passionate admirer of Douglas's. He is a remarkable man to work for. I was always puzzled by Douglas, in a sense, by what people said about him. He had a reputation of being a rather cold, distant, aloof man. I must say that I never ever found him that at all. I'd worked for him when he was a Minister of State in the early '80s and got to know him a little bit then. I always, always enjoyed being with him. We used to see each other, try to see each other, alone once a week when he had the time, for a bilateral meeting. Something which I always looked forward to, because he was stimulating, amusing, lively, imaginative, a great Foreign Secretary, but above all a person with whom I found it quite delightful to have a job to do. I really couldn't have wished for a better man, a better boss, if you like. I liked him and admired him as a Foreign Secretary, but I liked him and admired him as a human being as well. A great man.

JB: Do you regard the job of PUS as initiating, thinking about policy? Is foreign policy, British foreign policy largely re-active, pro-active? Would you feel that you should be influencing the Foreign Secretary? How much opportunity is there?

LdG: I think the answer to that is that the foreign policy of any country is, to some extent, re-active; it's bound to be. I mean things happen in the world which are pretty difficult to foresee. Now you have endless enquiries about whether we should have foreseen the Argentine invasion of the Falklands or the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. You do get things wrong. You don't foresee things. In a sense therefore you are reacting. You are also reacting in the sense that the government of your key ally may change and that changes the whole nature of the game. You don't control it, you have to react to it. If you change the administration in power in Washington or if you change the government in power in Bonn or Paris, it changes things and it's a matter over which of course you have no control at all. So to some extent, you are always in a re-active mode. But if you were only in a re-active mode of course that would not work very well at all, and I think that a PUS has got to try to ensure that there is a whole stream of effort inside the office which is thinking ahead,

thinking constructively, and not re-actively. I certainly made an effort, I don't know how successful it was, to ensure that the Planning Staff and the Deputy Secretaries and myself sat round the table once a month and thought about issues which hadn't cropped up on the day to day agenda. The trick was really to define an area between the very long term - the fairly futuristic thinking which is interesting, stimulating, but not necessarily very valuable because what's going to happen in 25 years' time, is not actually frightfully important for the day to day activity of the office - and, on the other hand, the day to day running of the office. There was a gap, in the medium term, about a year, a year and a half, two years ahead. We tried to focus on that sort of issue and tried to produce a thoughtful piece for the Foreign Secretary, two or three papers a month. So we were consciously trying to think about policy issues which were not hot on the table, so to speak, but which we saw coming up. That, I think, is important. In a sense I suppose you could say that it was our inability to foresee the Falklands which caused the problem. I'm not saying the system that we introduced would actually have picked that up as a likely issue; possibly it wouldn't. But at least one was thinking about the possibility of difficulties in that time frame, and what one should do to preempt, to prevent, to avoid problems in the foreseeable future, not tomorrow or the day after, but a bit further ahead.

JB: You were PUS at the time of the 1992 Election, and at that time all Departments in Whitehall are free to be discussing things with Opposition Members. I mean would you have seen differences in foreign policy at that time? Were you allowed to be in touch with Opposition Members then?

LdG: Yes. I had a contact with Gerald Kaufman; not a very prolonged one. I think that in terms of foreign policy Mr Kinnock and Gerald Kaufman would not have meant a radical change. There wasn't, for example, unilateral nuclear disarmament which would have been on the agenda in Michael Foot's time. So it was very much a question of shifts of emphasis rather than shifts of policy. Yes, I had some contact with Gerald Kaufman. I went to see him to discuss one or two things before the Election, as did all Permanent Secretaries with the Shadow Opposition Leaders.

JB: In fact, British foreign policy is very largely bi-partisan; differences tend to be almost within Parties rather than across the Floor ...

LdG: I think the differences within Parties are now far greater than they are between the middle of the road on the Opposition or the Government Benches. Yes.

JB: And Privy Councillors of either side will be briefed on major issues which are coming up - Ireland and ...?

LdG: Yes, that sort of thing. I think that that's probably right, the differences are within Parties, which, in a way for officials makes it a lot more difficult because, within the same governing Party or the same Opposition Party you have a huge spectrum of opinions some held with great conviction which are not those of the leadership. That doesn't make it always very easy. Take the case of Europe which was a major preoccupation during my time (I was PUS in the run-up to and at Maastricht). It tended to mean that the Foreign Office became tarred with a brush of being Europhiles or Euro-fanatics some would say. Actually much less true than anybody outside really realises. But the fact was that you were often told that there was a thing called "Foreign Office foreign policy". Well there was never a Foreign Office foreign policy. There was a government foreign policy which we executed. We made recommendations to the government through our Foreign Secretary on a number of issues, but there was no such thing as the Foreign Office policy. There was the Government's foreign policy. But of course when you have splits in the governing Party it's all too easy to round on the Foreign Office or for that matter the Departments of Transport or Health, and accuse them of running their own policy, which of course is nonsense. There was never a Foreign Office policy; there was a Government policy on foreign affairs on which we had made recommendations but which it was our task to carry out. One of the great mythologies is that there is a thing called Foreign Office policy. I can tell you that the debates, the intensity of argument within the Foreign Office on any issue of foreign policy you care to imagine, is much greater than those in public, in the press ..

JB: Because they know more about it ...

LdG: ... because they know more about it. They have better intelligence, they are much better informed. The debates are much more intense. The idea that there is a thing called a consensus view within the Office on a matter of policy which has not yet been decided, is laughable. I mean, there are huge ranges of opinions and these things are argued out, I think with the greatest integrity and the greatest intelligence. Of course once Government has decided, we then execute that policy, but in the period up to the making of the policy there are intense arguments. I always find it laughable to think that there is such a thing as an automatic Foreign Office view of things. There was never an automatic Foreign Office view of things. There were almost as many views as there were players on the board, and very well articulated arguments from all quarters on practically any subject you'd like to mention. I hope and believe that they did not become public,

nor should they become public. We have to sort these things out and our task is to execute government policy. But, in the period running up to a decision on policy the internal argument is intense. The idea of a block or wedge of Foreign Office views on any one subject which is always monolithic is, as I say, perfectly laughable. All in all I was extraordinarily lucky to have been able to do that job. It was quite unexpected. Most of my life has been pretty unexpected, one way and another. But this was the most unexpected event in it. It was an immense privilege. It was marvellous to be running a highly professional organisation, full of such extraordinary people. I really had the most amazing bunch of intelligent, articulate, committed people working with me, an experience I suppose quite unlike anything else. I regard myself as being quite extraordinarily privileged to have done it. I got very tired from time to time, drained, and found the whole thing very pressurised and in a sense rather stressful. Of course one has got to try to make sure that one's stress never shows; that I think is supremely important. But it didn't, I think, ultimately overwhelm me simply because of the people I worked with. Both my Management Board in London, the top Deputy Secretaries who were part of the team, and all those splendid people in far away places who spent their life protecting, promoting, prosecuting the British interest. They were a remarkable band of brothers and I ...

JB: And sisters ...

LdG: Sadly not enough sisters. But that's another story, but I always wished that we had more. But as a team it was remarkable and I don't believe that anyone, in any walk of life, could have had anything better.