

BDOHP Interview Index and Biographical Details

Sir (Peter) John Goulden, GCMG, 2001 (KCMG 1996; CMG 1989)

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BRITISH DIPLOMATIC ORAL HISTORY PROGRAMME

RECOLLECTIONS OF SIR JOHN GOULDEN GCMG

RECORDED AND TRANSCRIBED BY ABBEY WRIGHT

AW: This is 26th March 2019 and Sir John Goulden is recalling his diplomatic career with Abbey Wright. Our first question always John is “Why the Foreign Office?” What brought you in?

JG: The Foreign Office by accident really. I was destined to stay on at Oxford because I'd done quite well as an examination type boy. I'd got good results at Oxford, and everyone assumed I'd stay on and become a historian. I think that's what my father most wanted because he'd been denied the chance to go to university, to Oxford in fact, by his own father because the family didn't have enough money, and he was the eldest son. I was coasting towards staying on and doing history, but beginning to realise that academia is not quite the same as being a student. I looked around and there were lots of competitions going on. One of the most prestigious ones was the Foreign Office exam so I thought I'd do that as a sort of insurance policy. People had said it was a fun competition, and an interesting challenge, so I thought I'd do that but the chances were that I wouldn't follow it up. I didn't do very well in the Foreign Office exam, much less well than I expected as a brash young man. I was in that generation where those who were not doing National Service were competing with those who were much older and who had done National Service. The intake in my year was quite disparate. Half had done serious things in National Service and the rest of us were just callow young men and a couple of callow young women.

I did get in, and then I had the dilemma as to what the hell I should do. I asked my tutor because I knew nothing about the Foreign Office at all. I'd only ever seen a diplomat once in my life. During my second vacation at Oxford I went on an overland trip to the Himalayas. We drove through the northern route through Afghanistan in a clapped out Land Rover. By the time we reached Kabul it was even more clapped out. We parked in front of the Ambassador's Residence. We'd never been into an Embassy before, and we were talking to people there and they were helping us a bit, and suddenly we saw this apoplectic old man jumping up and down on his balcony, waving his fists at us. It was the Ambassador objecting to the fact that we'd put our very dusty Land Rover in the middle of his parking spot.

AW: Can you remember who he was?

JG: No! I think he took early retirement soon after.

AW: We'll have to look him up. *(nb dates match Sir Michael Cavenagh Gillett).*

JG: But that was my only vision of the Foreign Office.

I talked to my tutor who said he knew exactly the guy to talk to, he said "There's only one person to advise you here - Bill Hayter who is Provost of New College but has also been Ambassador in Moscow - and I'm sure he'll spend half an hour with you and tell you about the pros and cons of both careers". He actually gave me over two hours and it was a wonderful cursory introduction to both lives. At the end of it he said "I think you should join the Foreign Office". That perplexed me because he'd been very balanced up to that moment and I said "Why?" He said "Both of these careers are uncertain. You can't tell in advance whether you're going to enjoy it or be good at it. If you go into the academic world, which is a very lonely and narrowing world, and you don't succeed, nobody will really want to employ you because a failed academic is of no value on the job market. If you go into the Foreign Office and you don't like it or do very well in it, you can always find an issue of principle on which to resign and the world will be your oyster". On that rather cynical advice I opted for the Foreign Office, always assuming that I'd be back in Oxford within five years. It was a gamble in a way.

AW: An early mentor?

JG: Yes, I'm very grateful to him.

AW: Having taken that decision, off you go. In those days the Foreign Office didn't have the induction process, the start that they give young people today?

JG: I think it was a very defective induction. We had a short induction, it was introduced by caricature figures and it was done in a very unimaginative way. The first talk was by somebody in Personnel called John Wilson, who introduced the chairman with a phrase which I shall never forget. He said "It is not given to everyone to become a legend in his own lifetime, but this has been the achievement of Sir David". This wizened old Ambassador nodded sagely. I didn't know quite what Sir David's great achievements had been but he was very proud of being the first diplomat to wear soft collars. I think he must have said four or five times in the course of the week that we should be beware of showing

'trop de zèle'. That was clearly one of the things they wanted us to remember. But it was a very poor introduction to the diplomatic world and particularly for people who were going abroad as I was. I did the Language Aptitude Test which was a wonderful, inventive way of telling whether you were any good at languages. On the strength of that I got a trunk call from London to Sheffield where I was living saying "We want you to do a hard language, tell us which you want to do". I said I would think about it and ring them back but they said "No, no, no, this is a trunk call, you've got to tell us now". They gave me a long list from Chinese through to Amharic. I hesitated between Turkish and Persian because I'd been overland on an expedition to the Himalayas through both of these countries and had lots of friends in Iran. But they were members of the Mosaddegh family and I thought that might be a liability if I finished up in the Embassy in Tehran. So I plumped for Turkey. I'd liked Turkey very much having travelled through it in both directions. Almost everybody on the course with me shook their heads in amazement and pity because the really switched on people were learning Chinese if they were pessimistic, Russian if they were optimistic, or of course Arabic if they were that way inclined. I went off to do Turkish at the School of Oriental and African Studies and then in Istanbul. I had a very good time at SOAS, I had a good tutor and I was working perhaps an hour and a half or two hours a day on full Foreign Office pay. The only real chore for me was I had to go home and teach Diana Turkish in the afternoons.

AW: You were already married?

JG: Yes, and of course wives weren't taught languages at that stage. So I had to teach her Turkish, which was a good way of getting it right in my mind and she picked it up very quickly.

JG: Istanbul was even more of a paradise because I was told "We don't want to see you, just get lost in the bazaar and come back in five or six months' time fluent in Turkish". But I had no duties or anything like that. I went to one rather formal dinner at the Consulate General, otherwise I was ostracized and it was exactly what we wanted.

AW: A sort of immersion?

JG: Yes, total immersion but in the city, not in a family. They hadn't got a family set up there.

Ankara, 1963-76

And then we went to Ankara. At the end of the year I took this rather stiff exam, which was the price one paid for our paid sabbatical, and then I started my life. But I knew absolutely nothing about diplomatic life, and nothing about the Foreign Office. It was a real baptism of fire because the weekend we arrived in Ankara in December 1963, Makarios, the President of Cyprus, abrogated the Cyprus Constitution and took out all the safeguards that we'd put in for the Turkish Cypriots. It immediately sparked a series of inter-communal riots in an island where people had co-existed and almost all the villages were mixed. It was the first occasion where we saw ethnic cleansing on a large scale after the War. The Turkish Government were under enormous pressure because their people were being badly treated. They were constantly threatening to invade. London for a period was quite interested in Turkey and my job was to report what was happening in the press, on the radio and to go out and mix with the demonstrations because I was the only person in the Embassy who spoke good Turkish. My evening job was to put on my jeans and a T shirt and go out and be a demonstrator. I found myself outside the British Embassy, not actually shaking my fist, but observing the mob shouting execrations against the terrible British.

The Turkish Government encouraged the demonstrations because they were a safety valve. They didn't want to invade but they wanted to blame us for not invading, because we were one of the three guarantor powers of Cyprus, along with Greece and Turkey, who were nearly at war. So we were the ones that people looked to, to sort this out and of course we didn't. For my first four months I was working certainly every day, nearly every night, and very, very long hours, something I was quite unused to after the cushy time as a language student. In that period I learned more than I should have had to learn if we'd had a proper induction course. I didn't know what a telegram was, what a submission was, I didn't know how papers were processed in the Office. I had to pick up all those basic nuts and bolts very quickly and it wasn't a comfortable time for me. And we were not terribly comfortable in diplomatic life. I was a grammar school boy from Sheffield. I hadn't been exposed to it. I knew nobody in the Foreign Office. Living the diplomatic life in a strange city in a strange profession was quite exciting but it was also rather challenging in those first months.

AW: So there was no one to answer the "how do I do this?" questions.

JG: My predecessor Timothy Daunt was very helpful and his wife Patricia, they were very encouraging and they told us it was going to be fun and we were going to enjoy it. And we

had a wonderful Ambassador, a New Zealander, called Denis Allen who went on to become Deputy PUS. He was very able but laid back, relaxed, informal Ambassador and his wife even more so. They gave us a really comfortable induction in that sense. Otherwise my job was the typical Oriental Secretary job. I was told “Don’t get involved in the diplomatic set because none of them speak Turkish and they live in their own world of tame Turks. Your job is to go out and get to know the students, the trade unionists, the journalists, the politicians and we don’t want to see you on the cocktail circuit”. It was great fun. I spent a lot of time down in the National Assembly, most afternoons in fact, when it was in session. I drank Turkish coffee with any politician I could get my hands on. It mattered because the Turks were on the edge of invading Cyprus, so it mattered to us to know what was happening. Denis Allen said to me once “I want you to go on doing this as long as your liver will stand it”!

We travelled the country. There were big elections in 1965 and we went to about thirty-five, that’s about half, of the provinces of Turkey in the far east and on the west coast. We went to local party headquarters, we went to lots of political rallies, we talked to the mayors. It meant that by the time we came back to Ankara, we had a different view of where Turkey was going in that election.

AW: You could see what was really happening?

DG: Well, most people in Ankara assumed that the establishment party, Ataturk’s party, was going to win the election because they’d had a military coup and the military favored them anyway. Everybody thought they were going to win. When I got back I wrote a report the night before the election, saying that it was pretty clear to me that the opposition party, that nobody held out any hope for (the Democrat Party, the leader of which had been executed a few years earlier) were going to win because they were much better organized and supported. That’s how it turned out and I think that was a vindication of the Oriental Secretary system. It’s a thing that we paid a heavy price for in the Foreign Office when we phased it out. We paid it in the Balkans, we paid it in Iran very obviously and in plenty of other places too.

So that was Turkey, we picked up the ropes of being diplomats, living abroad and so on. Ankara is not a demanding capital, it’s not a place where very high standards apply. We got to know lots of nice people. We had our first experience of opera and our first experience of ballet because Ninette de Valois was setting up the Turkish National Ballet, so we saw a lot of her. We went to the theatre because we spoke the language. Frankly anything we did in

Turkey counted as work, so all the fun we had could be written off as work. It was a paradise in some ways. It was a lovely country to travel in and we had wonderful holidays. In those days Turkey was still virgin territory for travellers.

AW: So next – and these were the days when you didn't have a chance to apply for your next job, you were just told where you were going?

JG: Yes, I don't think I had any experience with anybody in Personnel except in the very beginning. I was called to the Head of Personnel Department just before I went to SOAS to do Turkish. The Head of the Department was John Ford, a very elegant guy. I went into his huge office, the first one inside the Foreign Office that I'd been to. He had a set of files in front of him. He crossed his legs rather languidly, glanced at a file and asked: "Well, Goulden, and how was Kuwait?". He'd got in front of him the file for Mig Goulding with whom I was confused for the whole of my career, more or less. I thought it was not a very promising start to my life in the Diplomatic Service.

We arrived back in London and had nowhere to live. I had read quite a few diplomatic memoirs by then and had got the impression that young diplomats tended to live in flats in Queen Anne's Gate, just the other side of the park. I went to an estate agents in Queen's Anne Gate and said "My wife and I want to buy a flat in this area". They took a look at me and said "Well ... yes... And how much do you think of spending?" I mentioned a figure and doubled it because I was a bit unsure. He said "I think you might be able to just about buy a garage in this part of town for that money". So rather more realistically we settled to live in Blackheath.

FCO London, Northern Department, 1967-1969

My first department in London was Northern Department which was one of the two great departments of the old Foreign Office. It was a very tough, efficient department. It had a marvellous tough Head of Department in Howard Smith who went on to become Head of MI5. He was very demanding but a very good trainer. After three years of freelancing in Ankara, Howard taught me brevity, focus and accuracy. There were lots of very talented Desk Officers from whom I learned an enormous amount, most of them a career step more experienced than I was. We had a vast Third Room which had four Desk Officers. I had an Assistant who gave me a very rough induction into the ways of the Foreign Office, quite

bruising in some ways, but I learned a lot from it and I'm not mentioning names! It was a terrific training and it put you at the centre of the Cold War.

I was Desk Office for Hungary and Romania and later on I took on Czechoslovakia, just at the time of the 1968 Prague Spring. One of the main things I learned in Northern Department was how different the Eastern Europeans are from one another. The idea of a satellite or of a Soviet Bloc was just a journalists' caricature. The Hungarians were very loyal to the Soviet Union in everything that didn't matter to Hungary, like foreign policy, and defence policy, but they were slowly edging their way towards an independent economic policy. The Romanians were exactly the opposite. They were completely opposed to the Soviet Union on foreign and defence policy but they were running a Stalinist internal system.

On my first day in the Office, there was this guy with his feet on an adjoining desk and he was having a very long chat with a chum on the phone. The conversation went on for about half an hour and he kept repeating that he was "really very busy, very busy indeed" but he never took his foot off the desk. He was a nice colleague but quite eccentric. He kept his shooting guns in his combination press and at times when things got fraught, and they often did in Northern Department, he would take his guns out and polish them and service them. But he was very helpful and I learned a lot from him and the other two people in that room. But the FCO was a bizarre world. It was very grand in many ways but most of the offices were dingy and drab. The first thing I had to do every morning was light the fire and then press a bell for messengers to come with scuttles full of coal. We had messengers running hither and thither all the time. Nothing was done electronically, it was very labour intensive. But it was an exciting baptism in the ways that the Office worked.

The Department was really overburdened during the period in the run up to the Prague Spring and I took over most of the Czechoslovakia Desk. There were moving broadcasts coming out of Prague. It was at that moment that I had the great pleasure of summoning the Bulgarian and Hungarian Ambassadors to tell them that Michael Stewart would not be paying the visit that we had long planned to their countries because they had joined in the invasion. I had the pleasure of telling the Romanian that, because they had stood out against the invasion, we would certainly be going ahead with their visit. They were delighted. Ceausescu at that stage was not the villain he later on became. He was an independent figure, a bit like Tito, putting a spoke in the Soviet machine. They were desperate for this visit to go ahead because the Russians were conducting military exercises on the Romanian border of the kind

they'd conducted on the Czech border before invading Czechoslovakia. They were frightened to death of this and they hoped that Michael Stewart's presence in Bucharest would help to deter the Russians.

AW: And you accompanied him?

JG: Yes, and it was a fascinating visit. They really rolled out the red carpet. We had more caviar than I've ever seen in my life. But also they were remarkably frank. I was used to conversations with Eastern Bloc diplomats where you get the party line until a late stage when they would sometimes start telling anti-Soviet jokes. The Romanians were also very party line in that way. But in Bucharest at this moment of crisis for Romania, we had a meeting with the Prime Minister, a man called Maurer. He'd been arguing the usual Soviet argument that both blocs should be abolished, that NATO and the Warsaw Pact were anachronisms that we should get rid of. Then he said "I've said my say on that but now put your pencils down. I know that for you NATO is the guarantor of your security, but you must understand that for me the Warsaw Pact is the main threat to Romania". It was quite an eye opener. The other big eye opener was when Ceausescu said "I'm really worried about what's happening on the border, we aren't getting much information about what the Soviet Union is up to, could you give us any idea of what's happening?" After consulting London we gave him a lot of material about Soviet troop movements, the sort of stuff which normally in Northern Department would be classified Top Secret. It was very useful of course to feed that to them because they were then able to take measures which the Russians then noticed. I'm not sure if the Russians seriously intended to invade, but it was a moment of real fear in Bucharest.

AW: How was Michael Stewart during this visit?

JG: He was a lovely, modest, slightly pedantic man. He was an ex-schoolmaster, an intelligent old style, Fabian Socialist. He hardly ever relaxed. Even at midnight, he wanted to discuss the issues of the day. But also a little bit naïve. As we drove into Bucharest from the airport, the Romanians, I suppose to ingratiate themselves, had forced all the cars, all the bullock carts and all the buses into the gutter so we could go straight through without any traffic problems at all. That shocked Michael Stewart, who observed at the time "This isn't communism at all, it's fascism". So it was an eye opener for him as well as for me.

AW: And who was looking after our Embassy?

JG: It was John Chadwick, and Guy Millard was the Ambassador in Hungary. I never got to Budapest until much later in my career but I did enjoy those meetings with Eastern European diplomats where, after they'd sung for their supper and said the things that the Russians wanted them to say, you could then relax over the brandy in the evening, or after lunch, and they had the most insightful and amusing anti-Soviet jokes. But they were very different from each other and we were beginning to realise, rather belatedly, how different they were. And that's the reason why we Desk Officers proposed to the Head of the Department that we should change the name of the department from Northern Department to Eastern European and Soviet Department, which is what it became.

AW: So that's when it changed, it's much more specific?

JG: Yes, that's right. One of the things we discovered in Northern Department at the time of the Czech crisis, when we found some important papers were missing, was that at some stage in the past some difficult papers had simply been put under the floorboards and others had been given, what we used to refer to jokingly as 'the Claims Department treatment'. With really difficult papers about long distant past claims we would send them to Claims Department for comments. That would give us six months respite!

AW: You mentioned in your notes about George Brown creating some fun and games?

JG: Yes, it was an interlude of light relief. The Turkish President who had been Chief of the General Staff who then staged the 1960 coup, a chap called Sunay, came on a State Visit and I had to interpret. I spent about a week on that. He was a big, stolid Turkish General and he had a big stolid Turkish wife. One side of George Brown was that he could be extremely charming and had a very good way of hitting it off with people. He decided he would hit it off with Sunay's wife by establishing that she was his girlfriend. He gave a great reception for them at Hampton Court and the Royal Ballet performed there. As we went in to Hampton Court with the Browns a band was playing dance type music, and I remember George's wife saying "Oh my God, there's dance music, George will be dancing in no time". The Browns went in to receive the Sunays. Madame Sunay had a great brocaded dress on and a huge Ottoman brooch in her very substantial cleavage. George Brown advanced towards her and he couldn't take his eyes off her cleavage. He held his hand out and I thought he was actually going to put his hand there, but he didn't quite. He said "What a charming brooch it is" and fondled it a little. The Turkish delegation all looked around as if nothing was happening. I thought we might have some trouble but the President sensibly

ignored it and George Brown obviously succeeded because as I escorted Mrs Sunay to their car she was still giggling to herself “girlfriend”! She didn’t take offence, it was part of his enormous charm.

We also had a difficult time at the State Banquet at Buckingham Palace. It was a very grand occasion; I’d never seen anything like it, pipers and everything. And at the end of an occasion like this, the guest is expected to retire so that the Queen can then retire. But General Sunay thought that would be very impolite and so he stood his ground. The Queen beckoned me over and asked me to mention to the President that it is normal for the guest to leave. So I explained that to him but he said “Oh, no, no no, that would be very bad manners. A Turk could never do that. I will wait until Her Majesty retires and then I will retire.” So I went back and relayed all that but the Queen said that was not how we did it here and could I explain to him a little more clearly that it was for the President to leave. I went back and said it again, this time rather more clearly “You really have to do it, it’s what everybody does”. He went and then the Queen went to bed. But it was a funny bit of silly protocol.

AW: Yes, protocol the world over is different.

JG: Yes and I could quite understand why a Turk would think that was not the right thing to do.

Treasury Centre for Administrative Studies, 1969

I then had an interlude when I went to what was then the Treasury Centre for Administrative Studies, but later on became the Civil Service College. The course lasted ten months and was meant to give us a belated education in modern management technologies. We had good lecturers on macroeconomics and micro-economics, statistics, game theory, and computer programming. I wrote my own computer programme in 1969, I was really proud of that. The biggest benefit of the course was that it put the Foreign Office people in touch with Home Civil Servants with whom we’d had little contact. A timely antidote to the Foreign Office feeling of being rather superior, we were studying rather difficult subjects and we were finding it at least as difficult as they were. It was an extremely useful interlude.

AW: So they were catching up on all the early training that wasn’t there?

JG: Yes, that's right. And by then I had the answer to the dilemma I'd had at Oxford when I talked to Bill Hayter. Because in my first years I went back to Oxford regularly and I always thought to myself "I've made a mistake, I ought to be here, it's much nicer here". But at the end of this period in Ankara, Northern Department and then on the Civil Service College course, I began to realise that it was probably the right career for me and that I was getting the variety and stimulus that I might well not be getting in academia. I think at that time I decided that I wasn't on probation and the Foreign Office wasn't on probation and that this was going to be my career.

Philippines, 1969-71

But they then did a rather strange thing, they sent me to the Philippines.

AW: Did you have any choice in that?

JG: I had no choice at all and I never found out what the rationale for it was. But in retrospect it was quite a useful thing to do. They probably wanted to broaden me out and show me a wider range of bilateral Embassies. It was a small Embassy which was a useful experience because in a small Embassy like that you do lots of different things. I was the Culture Officer because we didn't have a British Council. I was the Aid Officer both for Britain and for New Zealand because we didn't have any ODA staff. And of course I did all the politics and foreign policy stuff so it was a good, broad brush education.

I had a marvellous Ambassador, John Addis who later on became Ambassador to Beijing. He was the Office's greatest expert on China at the time. But in the Philippines and previously in Laos, he was in a kind of diplomatic exile because his view of China was quite different from the Yellow Peril view which dominated thinking in the US State Department and sadly dominated thinking in parts of the Foreign Office. When Addis said "The Chinese are not going to invade Vietnam, they are much more interested in running their own huge empire at home", he was regarded as being unsound. So he spent seven or eight years in the Philippines, in the course of which he travelled everywhere. Whenever I went to a remote island in the Philippines people would say "It's interesting to see a white face here. We haven't had anybody since Ambassador Addis was here".

He was a world authority on Chinese porcelain and the oligarchs of the Philippines had bought all the gizmos and things that oligarchs buy in the first generation and were beginning to buy prestige art in the second generation. They wanted Addis's advice as to whether a

particular piece of Chinese porcelain they were being offered for several hundreds of thousands of dollars was worth having or not. Addis would go and see them and endorse it or not endorse it. He built up an amazing range of contacts. His contacts with his first President, Macapagal, were so good that he played a major part in defusing our main issue with the Philippines – which was whether they were going to go to war with us over Sabah at the time we were setting up the Malaysian Federation with Sabah in it. He said to Macapagal, who was a personal friend, “I will lose face if you let this press campaign go any further”. Of course when you are talking to a Filipino about loss of face, you’re cashing in on your friendship and he really used that. It helped to defuse what would otherwise have been a very nasty confrontation with the Philippines of the kind that we were already having with Indonesia over the Malaysian Federation.

Addis’s contacts were amazing. When he left the Philippines, to make his farewell calls he called on President Marcos and was received in his office. Marcos said “My wife wants to see you but she’s ill in bed. Could you go upstairs?”. So Addis went upstairs, sat on her bed and said goodbye to her there because of course he’d been advising the Marcoses on their porcelain collection.

It’s a funny place the Philippines; it’s an Alice in Wonderland world where you can do anything you want. So we were able to act in a company which was the nearest thing the Philippines had to a professional company. I was even paid once in some suiting cloth as an alternative to being paid money. And travel of course was a great way to getting to know Filipinos.

We had a problem as the Brits as to how we should do our entertainment in the Philippines. John Addis’s successor, John Curle, a lovely and intelligent man but an old style diplomat, believed that we should do our own thing which for him was entertaining in the formal way, black tie and all that. But this was the tropics. Addis’s advice when we arrived was that we must live like the people in the tropics: wear loose cotton clothing, eat the food they eat, don’t live in air conditioning and entertain with the grain. John Curle found entertaining a real problem because he would invite people to black tie dinners, and being Filipinos they would say “yes” but being Filipinos half of them wouldn’t turn up. He said one day “I can’t understand why they are so difficult about this, they are not behaving in a civil way when they don’t turn up like that”. I said “Filipinos dress beautifully but they don’t like black tie. If you were to say ‘come as you want’ they would not let you down, they would dress

magnificently and they'll come". We gave a party for the arty set at one stage, mainly theatre, music and ballet people and of course it was free dress. They came looking like peacocks. Filipinos love dressing up. John Curle came and he was rather shocked to see the place was heaving with glamorous looking people. They had not just come but had brought their cousins and uncles with them, because that's how the Filipinos work. Later on John Curle gave me one of the most wonderful put-downs I've ever had. We were planning one of his parties and he looked at me with a pleasant but slightly stern expression saying "I am not one of those people who believe that you can enjoy yourself only if you're wearing a t-shirt".

AW: What was the rest of the Embassy like?

JG: There weren't very many high flying people in the Embassy. It was doing the sort of job that people did in the middle sized Embassy in a not very important country. We had a growing commercial job and we had a military attaché but it was a small unit.

I ended my time there with a very big blot on my copybook. I was Duty Officer, the only person on duty, for a long weekend when we had a ship's visit. As you probably know when you have a ship's visit you almost always have a lot of consular problems. I was in and out of the Embassy all weekend bailing out sailors and things. So I decided that as I was repeatedly having to open and close all the locks and combination locks, and as I was going back every half hour, I would just leave the Chancery on the lock. Somebody went in and found the place on the lock and of course I was reported to London. I was told it was the gravest security breach one could possibly have. When I got back to London I was hauled up in front of the Chief Clerk, who I think was Oliver Wright, and he read me a very stern lecture, docked six months off my seniority and told me I had probably forfeited any chance of ever having a job dealing with sensitive defence or East/West matters. So that was a pretty weighty reproof.

Planning Staff, 1971-4

I was in the Philippines for only eighteen months instead of three years. They brought me back prematurely for a marvellous job which was as one of the three Desk Officers in the Planning Staff.

The Planning Staff is a world apart. You don't have any direct operational responsibilities. Your job is to question and plan foreign policy. We didn't do much planning because

planning is a mug's game: nobody can predict and all predictions go wrong. But we did an enormous amount of thinking ahead and interfering with other people's business. We divided our work into three areas, called 'our business', 'their business' and 'other people's business'. Our business was planning what we thought should happen to British foreign policy and we did some good papers, for example on what we wanted out of the foreign policy of the European Union that we were just joining. We did six major papers on that. We did papers on how important countries were to the UK. Because those in a department dealing with say Ruritania are badly placed to assess how important Ruritania is in the wider scheme of things. We worked out a sort of matrix of elements: trade, military, political, capacity to cause us trouble, etc. That produced a league table which was immensely unpopular with Departments but it was a really useful guide to people at the top of the Office, because it showed the aggregate importance to the UK of foreign countries, some of which were unduly neglected while others were receiving more attention and resources than they deserved.

'Other people's business' was just interfering with the Office and really walking into Departments and saying "Are you sure you should be doing this?" I wrote a paper on Turkey/Greece at that time because the Office was drifting towards supporting the Greeks in joining the European Union. I wasn't anti Greek and I wasn't particularly pro-Turkish but it was obvious to me that, if Greece joined, the European Union would be infected by the Greco-Turkish problem which was unsolved, not only in Cyprus but the broader Greco-Turkish problem. We argued in this paper that we ought to try and work out a coherent framework for Greece and Turkey to join the European Union in due course, or at least to make sure that the two things worked in parallel. But the Department concerned just wanted to solve the short term problem like "Shall we say yes to the Greeks joining the European Union?". It was a completely unsuccessful paper, as indeed were many of our papers.

We wrote a paper on resource management which pointed out "We're spending a huge amount of money on foreign policy, on information work, on British Council work, on Aid work, on scholarships, on the BBC. All these things are being decided in separate boxes, Embassies are lobbying for money and big strong Embassies are lobbying more effectively than others. It means that our spending on all these things is completely arbitrary, it's the random result of all this lobbying. Why don't we try and find a way of coordinating it so that the biggest resources, the BBC World Service for example, are spent with some regard to British priorities and British policy objectives." That went to the Planning Committee as these papers always did and the prefects discussed it as they always did. I remember at one

stage the guy who was in charge of aid policy whispered to the Under Secretary who had the information budget, "What's going to happen at the end of all this nonsense?" And the other guy replied in a whisper "Nothing at all, we're kicking it into the long grass". That paper too was a failure. But it's the sort of grit in the oyster that the Planning Staff is responsible for.

The third category was contacts with other people outside Government - academics, Chatham House, the International Institute for Strategic Studies and other planning staffs. That was really useful because it brought into the Office some of the disciplines, insights and research that was being done by academics, who were way ahead of us in some areas. For instance, on strategic studies, on nuclear strategy, some important work was being done by people in the IISS and at other universities. So we went out and talked to them and we had seminars involving them and members of the Office and that added quite an important new element into British foreign policy. The PUS always felt that Planning was worth supporting. Planning was the flavor of the month at the top end of the Office in that period. So we always had an open door to the PUS. I can't claim we were very influential but we influenced long term thinking in the Office through our dialogue with many of the Young Turks.

We did have an extremely good Head in Percy Cradock who was one of the cleverest people I've ever met in the Office. He was a Fellow of one of the Colleges in Cambridge, he'd done a doctorate in Law. He was a brilliant therapeutic debater and he specialized in preparing for battles with the rest of the Office by doing role playing with the three of us. Thus armed we would be able to anticipate their arguments and see them off. He was very much like a QC in that sense. A great boss. He was quite fearless in going in and disagreeing with the panjandrums who were running European policy at the time.

It was a great education. I had at one stage to go off and represent the UK at the first EU political cooperation meeting on a defence subject. It was a discussion of the US/Soviet Agreement on the Prevention of Nuclear Warfare which was a pretty useless piece of paper but it was part of the thaw that took the process of détente forward. I was called in by the PUS, Tom Brimelow who said "We want you to go and talk about this because you know nothing about it. I have been very much involved in drafting this agreement because the Americans have consulted us very closely. But of course you're not to let on, you're just to say it's a very good agreement". I said "I'll do my best, but it's quite hard to reassure people that it's a wonderful agreement, on which there is some doubt, if I can't say that we were

consulted". He looked at me and it was the second big put down in my career. He said "That is a naive remark". So I went off to this meeting and behaved as naively as I was requested to. And it was my first introduction to the European Union on the spot.

AW: And how did that meeting go?

JG: Oh we got through it. Nobody else knew about the subject. The EU was at a kindergarten stage on defence and strategic issues anyway. It was a good thing we talked about it and that the European Union went on talking about that sort of thing. But it was very early days, even for political cooperation on issues like the Middle East.

AW: In your notes you mention Henry Kissinger?

JG: When I was on the Planning Staff Henry Kissinger came out with one of his great initiatives, which was to make 1973 the Year of Europe. He was going to sort out Europe. He launched it with a very patronizing speech about how the United States was a global power but the Europeans were quite important as a regional power and he wanted to have a closer relationship. I think Nicholas Bayne has already told you about how late one evening he and I were given a phone call from the Private Office saying "Alec Douglas-Home (who was then Foreign Secretary) wants to give a speech to reply to this so we need material by midday tomorrow". Nicholas and I went off and we scratched our heads, we read Kissinger's speech again and we wrote a speech for him. Alec Douglas-Home didn't have time to change it and he quite liked it anyway, so in front of his rather bemused Scottish constituents he made this speech about Kissinger's Year of Europe. It was the nearest we got to having any direct influence on the Foreign Secretary in my time on the Planning Staff, but it was a heady and challenging time.

Recruitment 1974-76

AW: And so then you went to join Recruitment? That was very different?

JG: Yes. Going into Personnel was a complete change.

AW: Were you interested in doing that, did you apply for that? Or once again were you told that was what you were going to be doing?

JG: I got this job out of the blue. My predecessor had been an Assistant Private Secretary, David Morphet, a very bright character and I was simply told that they'd like me to do the job

in a month's time. It was an exciting job to do because I was only in my early thirties and I had my own Section. I was the only A stream officer in this set up and I was in charge of all recruitment to the Foreign Office from the Fast Stream right down to the Queen's Messengers and security guards. It's one of those jobs where you have far more independence than you've ever been prepared for, because the Foreign Office still got a vast number of applications for a small number of jobs, and my job was to choose out of those who'd succeeded in the selection process which ones we would take. I had an insight into that because one of my jobs was to sit on the Selection Board. The Selection Board had three people: a bright young thing, a psychiatrist and a wise old codger, usually a retired ex-Ambassador or ex-senior Civil Servant. The three of us would look at a group of five candidates and assess them from all angles over two gruelling days. From that process the FCO usually got a list of about thirty people who more or less met the specifications and I had to choose between those at the margin. It was very interesting because a lot of the people with very stellar marks in the selection process rather faded later on and some of the people I recruited after a lot of soul searching and some questioning turned out to be the best people in the Office.

AW: Not naming any names but what do you think it was in them?

JG: I think it's in the nature of selection. The Foreign Office selection process was costly and labour intensive but an excellent selection process. By and large it was very successful. There was a reasonable correlation between those who did best in the selection process and those who did best in the career. But there were these exceptions that struck me. I think it's maybe because you can't tell how people at the aged of 22 are going to be at 40, 45, 50 and the luck of the game, their health, their mental stability.

It was a job where I had to deal with some policy issues as well. One was to broaden our recruitment. I spent many months going round the universities trying to persuade undergraduates that what the Foreign Office was looking for was not people who were male, or language experts or Oxbridge; we just wanted the brightest people from anywhere. I spent most of my time not in Oxbridge and London universities but in the other universities, which was an interesting experience in itself. It was a very slow process and it still is, because if you're taking the best people out of a university system that has already been highly selective, it's going to tend to focus on those universities that are the most selective. That's an inconvenient fact that politicians and the press find difficult to accept.

But I was also involved in other policy issues. I shared an office with the guy who was in charge of structure so we were the kind of planning staff of Personnel Department. For example we covertly under-recruited. The prefects and the Office as a whole wanted us to take in 25 people every year because that is what the Office had tended to do in recent years. You could find jobs for those but some were a bit underemployed in my view. It was also the time of terrible financial cuts in the mid-seventies when the economy was in a bad state. By systematically under-recruiting, we managed to take in three or four fewer than we were tasked to take. On one occasion we were running what is called the Over Age competition for people up to 35 who had already done very well in another career, but wanted to change. That was a brilliant competition. We got strong candidates and you could see them at a more advanced stage in life, so you could take them in with more confidence. I'd done two of those competitions with good results but one year I cancelled it half-way through because our Treasury contacts had told us that swingeing cuts were coming our way in the very near future. We knew that if we took in five over-age candidates in 1974/75 we'd have to sack five people and it was ridiculous to do that, so we cancelled.

As part of broadening the Service one of the policy issues was how to remove the obstacles to women and some men joining the Service. One of them was how to relax the rules about women having to retire on marriage and to relax the rules on joint postings, so that couples could go on a joint posting and both continue their careers. We also faced the difficult question of what to do about gays in the Office. Everybody knew that there were plenty of people in the Office who were at the gay end of the spectrum. Nobody asked any questions and they often had perfectly good careers. But it became increasingly difficult as we went into the period of more intensive personnel vetting following the spy scandals, because it then became more and more obvious that people were gay. There was a palpable move among the younger people in the Office that we needed to change the ban on gays, particularly because the Civil Service, with whom we tended to march in parallel on personnel policy matters, was itself relaxing. But it wasn't solved in my time.

AW: Before we move on would you like to talk a little bit about the lessons learned in this part of your career?

JG: Yes. The Planning Staff gave me a good opportunity to view the Office right across because we dealt with pretty well every Department. One of the insights was how difficult it was for a Department where there is a turnover every two or three years to shed the illusions

that Department already has. So when you join as a First, Second or Third Secretary, you tend to pick up those doctrines as part of mother's milk. It's very hard to get that changed and when we turned up to challenge it, it's as if we were questioning motherhood.

The other thing that struck me was how very short term an operational Department's work is. Problems arise, telegrams arise, crises arise and you have to deal with them quickly because Ministers want a short term answer. So short term fixes are the name of the game and all of us have made good careers by finding short term fixes. But there is an important role for somebody in the Office to be standing back and saying "Wait a minute, this short term easy way out might well turn out to be the wrong thing in the long run". I would personally argue that the decision to take Greece into the European Union, when Greece was not yet ready to join, just because it had got rid of the Colonels and was becoming a fledgling democracy, was a mistake. We've paid a heavy price over a long period of time in the way that Greece has used its position in the European Union to poison relations with the Turks and partly to make the Cyprus problem more difficult.

AW: And this brings us neatly to the Cyprus Conferences.

JG: Yes. In my job at recruitment there were quiet periods and I think that's why I was given the chance to become part of an emergency unit that was set up in 1974 to run the Cyprus negotiations which Jim Callaghan as Foreign Secretary was going to chair. The Cyprus crisis, which we talked about earlier, boiled and simmered but this time it really erupted. The Greek Cypriots went too far by declaring Enosis, the Turkish Cypriots screamed for help, the Turkish Government were not very strong and were in a nationalistic mood anyway and they invaded Cyprus. The Turkish Army was obviously going to go right across Cyprus, there was nothing to stop it. Callaghan called two conferences in Geneva to deal with what was basically a 24/7 war situation. Southern European Department was completely overwhelmed by the build up to this crisis and so an emergency unit was set up. I think it was the first time we set up an emergency unit to deal with a war situation. I and two others, Oliver Miles and Roger Tomkys formed that unit working to Alan Goodison. Our job was basically to prepare for two two-week conferences in Geneva which Callaghan was going to organize, first with the Greek and Turkish Cypriots and later on with the Greek and Turkish foreign ministers as well. It was a time of real crisis; our High Commissioner in Nicosia Stephen Olver reported that he was actually dictating telegrams horizontal on the floor to avoid bullets coming through the window of the High Commission. There was a real

danger that the Turks would go further and occupy the whole island, leading to war between Greece and Turkey. In the emergency unit we had amazing power. One night we deployed an RAF squadron to Akrotiri with virtually no consultation except with quite junior people in the MOD. Everybody was pleased because that helped to stop the Turks in their tracks, showed that they weren't going to have a free run. It helped to freeze the situation and that's where Callaghan came in because his aim was to try and find a Cyprus solution, not just to get a ceasefire.

We were thinking long term. We were told to write a radical steering brief and in it we said that we must go for a total solution, not just a short term ceasefire. We even wrote into the steering brief that, if necessary and if it would make it possible to get a long term solution, we should throw in our two sovereign base areas as part of the solution, which Jim Callaghan not only accepted but welcomed. It was a very exhausting conference, round the clock all the time. It was unremitting, I lost a stone in weight, and I wasn't fat at the time. Callaghan was in hourly meetings with his Greek and Turkish Cypriot opposite numbers. We got a fascinating insight into the crisis diplomacy because we took detailed notes of every meeting, so we had a better archive than one would have of a war situation. We could see how the story was moving. We were getting all the telegrams and the information about what was happening on the ground. The UN was very much involved and Waldheim, who was the Secretary General, actually came to Geneva for part of that time. One of my jobs was to brief him a couple of times a day. The Americans were very interested and they were on the phone regularly to our delegation.

The second negotiation involving the Greek and Turkish Foreign Ministers was more fraught, partly because the Turkish Foreign Minister was on a tight rein from his military and from a very nationalistic government. The Turk I was dealing with most told me frankly "You're onto a loser here. I can't control these people and nor will you be able to." In the end the Turks did advance a bit further and then stopped, and that's where we are in the frozen situation in Cyprus now. It was a wonderful insight into a really skillful politician.

Callaghan had amazing nose, amazing insight and emotional intelligence. I remember him once sending the Greek Cypriot out of the room to ring Nicosia again for permission to make yet more concessions. Callaghan leapt to his feet and walked out with him and put his arm round him saying "I know what it's like having to take these difficult decisions but you and I are paid to take the right decisions. If I can help in any way ..." He managed to persuade Mavros to sell his concessions to Nicosia.

He could also be a considerate boss. When we failed in the second negotiation, we were all demoralized and got on the RAF plane to go home in the small hours of the morning having had a very difficult press conference. Everybody was exhausted, Callaghan more than anybody probably, but he went right round the plane thanking every clerk and every secretary. He sat by them one by one, patted them on the knee saying “I saw what you did, I appreciated what you did on that day, it made a difference for me”. And I thought that was a great politician using his political instincts to very good effect. But it was overall a failure, and it was probably the best opportunity that we had to solve the crisis. After that Greece became a member of the EU and was able to stymie anything beneficial to the Turks who have always played their hand in a short sighted way.

One other word about Callaghan. In a very difficult negotiation where all five nations were represented, the Turkish Foreign Minister was making an awful filibustering type speech. I remember Callaghan saying out of the corner of his mouth “I think I’m going to lose my temper. Yes I feel I’m going to lose my temper”, and he slammed his fist down on the table and did a real temper tantrum which shut the Turk up, and changed the subject and stopped what was going to be a very undesirable development. He did it in a purely theatrical way and within a minute he was back to his normal affable, cuddly Jim mode. But his ability to act that part was, I think, part of his political skill.

AW: Today is 9th April 2019 and Sir John Goulden is resuming the recollections of his diplomatic career.

When we finished last week we had just covered the Cyprus Conferences and you are Dublin bound. Would you like to tell us a little bit about how that came about? In your notes you mentioned an interesting personnel element about the job.

Head of Chancery, Dublin, 1976-78

JG: Yes. By 1976 our children were 9 and 6 and our main concern was to find a foreign posting that fitted best with their educational needs. Personnel suggested Bucharest, which was not ideal. Dublin, with good schools and easy access to the UK offered a much better choice. One of the advantages of being in Personnel is that you hear about jobs that are coming up. It doesn’t guarantee you a plushy posting but it puts you in a better position to manoeuvre. I did pick up that there was a certain amount of debate going on in Personnel

Department about two under-loaded jobs in Dublin. One was the First Secretary Political and Security and one was a newly created EU job that had been formed in 1972. It struck me that although Dublin is rather outside the mainstream of Foreign Office interest, combining those two jobs would give me a very meaty job. That matters when you are at the early stage of being a First Secretary because that's when you want to prove yourself for later on. So I lobbied the Personnel people. Of course the Inspectors are always looking for cuts and the idea of combining these two jobs into one appealed to them as it did to me. When I was selected they sent the usual put-up letter to Arthur Galsworthy, the Ambassador, the usual sort of stuff: "Goulden is quite good at drafting, sometimes a little bit impetuous, a bit of a rough diamond", the usual sort of put-up letter. Arthur replied in characteristic form saying "I don't really care about this man's professional characteristics, can he drink his Guinness and slap his thigh?" I got a phone call from Andrew Wood in Personnel Department saying "Can you come down, we have a couple of questions to ask you about this possible Dublin posting?" So I went down to his office and he said "John, can you drink Guinness and slap your thigh?" I said "I'm glad you asked that question, they are qualities I'm particularly proud of and I've done a lot of both in my time". So they went back to him and said that yes, I was going to be OK, and on these narrow grounds I got the job.

AW: Did you have any Irish connections? Family?

JG: I'd had a couple of boozy holidays in Ireland. My best man was from Northern Ireland and I'd spent some happy times in Dublin thigh slapping and Guinness drinking.

It's a strange place to be in Foreign Office terms because the job has very little exposure in the Office. Your customers are the Northern Ireland Office and other Whitehall Departments, the Army, the Police, the Intelligence Services and of course Ministers, because anything that goes wrong in Dublin is going to have reverberations in Parliament and in the Press here. So Dublin has high Ministerial exposure in a narrow area, but bureaucratically it doesn't relate to the Foreign Office at all. There was only a tiny Republic of Ireland Department which was mainly a post box between the NIO and Dublin. It matters from the point of view of London politicians because anything that goes wrong in Dublin is always exaggerated by the time it gets into the press here. We had quite a lot of things that went wrong and became very controversial. There was a famous incident, called the 'Keystone Cops' incident, when five SAS guys were pursuing some IRA terrorists in the border area and inadvertently crossed the border into the Republic and were arrested. The Irish Government

insisted that they should go down and face a court in Dublin, which was extremely risky because they were a natural target for PIRA terrorists whilst they were in the South. It went OK in the end.

There were endless controversial incidents connected with the IRA. The convicted IRA terrorists in Long Kesh Gaol went on dirty protest in order to assert their claim to be treated as political prisoners, something that our Government would never accept. We had some pretty unpleasant demonstrations outside the Embassy about that and, of course later on about the hunger strikes. I remember one day driving out of the Embassy and waiting for the traffic to ease so that I could get into the right lane to go home, and a gang of demonstrators were wandering around shouting unpleasant things about us. A rather nice old lady walked towards my car and I wound the window to talk to her. She smiled and put her face right next to mine and said "You're a fucking murderer". That was the sort of exposure one sometimes got with these people.

My job was mainly designed, apart from reporting on internal events in the Republic, to try and improve security cooperation between our security services, the Police, the RUC, the intelligence services and the Army and their Irish equivalents in the South. There was a lot of frustration in Northern Ireland about what they saw as inadequate cooperation from the Garda in particular, and there was a feeling that there was a tacit understanding that the PIRA would be allowed to organize, train, stock-pile etc in the Republic as long as they didn't do anything unpleasant on their own doorstep. That was the understanding.

AW: Did you feel that?

JG: Yes I think there was an element of truth in that and it was proved in the event by the fact that there were very few bank robberies in the South, in fact I don't think there were any while I was there. There were no terrorist attacks until one terrible one that I'll come to later. My job was basically pushing the stone up the hill to try and improve security cooperation.

My security cooperation job entailed a lot of journeys up to the North, to Belfast, by car to talk to the RUC and the Army. On one occasion I got myself into a very embarrassing and difficult situation. I got lost on the Falls Road which is the centre of Republicanism in Belfast. I was in my car with British diplomatic plates. I was completely lost. I didn't know where I was going and went up and down the road several times. Finally I found my way out but I vowed not to make that mistake again.

One of my tasks was to liaise closely with the Garda chiefs insofar as the often suspicious Foreign Ministry allowed that. I built up a decent relationship with the Head of the Garda. I once asked him over a dram or two whether they would like to compare notes with us on how we integrated intelligence from all sources in order to focus it on dealing with the terrorist threat. He said with a smile “I can show you our intelligence integration system, it’s here actually”. And he pointed to the corner of the room where there was a mailbag. He said “That’s my intelligence system, because that’s where Garda officers put reports that they want to reach me directly, rather than putting them up through the chain of command which is often leaky and sometimes compromised”. I thought it was an interesting insight.

AW: So you found the Garda cooperative?

JG: Well, Irish people on the whole were very cooperative. What was very hard to understand until one is on the ground was that, for many people in the South, Irish Republicanism of the militant kind, that the PIRA represented, was a bigger threat to them and to their political system and to the police in the South, than it was to us in the UK. There was a willingness to help but there were tremendously strong political constraints. Much of the best cooperation we did was done covertly without shouting too much about it.

Personal security was a big problem. The Embassy had recently been burned down and some of us were on IRA lists that were picked up. When you are in that kind of situation tiny incidents - the sort of things which if they happened in London you would dismiss with a shrug - become sinister and you feel paranoid about them. Twice Diana and I were convinced that I was about to be attacked, in both cases in quite isolated situations. These turned out to be completely innocent events, but you live with that as a daily complication.

The Ambassador’s security was extremely high on the list because he was a natural target and the Gardai by and large did a very good job. But in 1976 the newly arrived Ambassador, Christopher Ewart-Biggs, was blown up. That changed the picture very radically. It was a strategic error of the first magnitude by the PIRA. It caused an absolute uproar in Dublin. There was a big emotional rejection of the IRA. The Foreign Minister Garrett Fitzgerald gave an absolutely brilliant funeral oration in the Anglican Cathedral in Dublin. There was a lot of talk about rolling up our sleeves and taking much firmer action against terrorism in the future. It did lead to some, but not a great deal of, improvements in terms of security cooperation.

It was horrible in the Embassy, it affected everybody. It didn't affect us too much at the time because you just have to get on with the work. But I think, in both Diana's case and mine, it affected our retrospective view of Ireland.

Behind his Bertie Wooster image, Christopher Ewart-Biggs was a very intelligent, serious, and quite idealistic person. He arrived I think with a sense of vocation that in Dublin he could do something to develop rapprochement between North and South, and between the UK and Dublin. He didn't have time to put that into effect but I think that was one of his motivations in accepting the job. In that he rather contrasted with Arthur Galsworthy who started from the premise that the real problem was the existence of two fundamentally irreconcilable identities in the North, and quite a serious political complex between the UK and Ireland despite all the things that we have in common in terms of social and economic interests. I rather shared Arthur's interpretation and when conversation became fraught, often late at night after a lot of Guinness and thigh slapping and people started to attack rather uninhibitedly, my policy was to counter attack and to point out that the sense of grievance between Ireland and Britain was mutual and justified on both sides. In my experience Irish people respected that more than those Brits, in particular politicians, who tended to sympathise with Ireland's already very strong sense of victimhood.

These problems and complexes in the background were in marked contrast to our daily social life. Social access and social enjoyment was probably closer and better than in any other place I've been. Relations with the Foreign Ministry were sometimes quite vexed as they are with the Spanish Foreign Ministry for the same sort of single issue reasons, but I played squash twice a week with my opposite number in the Foreign Ministry and we had a very good, frank relationship, and in any other environment we would have been natural soulmates. I drank a lot with the people around the Taoiseach, particularly his press spokesman, and Jack Lynch, when he was Taoiseach, invited our family down to his house in County Cork. But otherwise we had a very enjoyable time, we sang a lot in the best choir in Ireland, inevitably called the Guinness Choir. We took Bach's St John Passion around Italy to perform in front of bemused Italian audiences, particularly in Sicily. We got a lot of pleasure out of the Wexford Festival and various other musical events and I took part in yachting races every Wednesday in Dublin Bay. It was a very congenial time.

The real difficulty, as I had to remind myself every morning, was how easy it is to delude yourself when you are in Dublin that you are on home ground. I think the starting point for a

good relationship with the Irish is to understand that for all the compatibilities and congenialities, Ireland is a foreign country and it needs to be treated as a foreign country. But our late night conversations with Irish Ministers in particular were the sort you could never have anywhere else. Every three or four months British Ministers, mainly Northern Ireland Ministers, would come to Dublin to chat to the key Irish Ministers, the Foreign Minister, the Minister for Northern Ireland and the Justice Minister and sometimes the Taoiseach. As the Paddy flowed, these conversations became amazingly frank and blunt. On one occasion Merlyn Rees, who was the very well-intentioned Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, asked the Irish perplexedly about a particular issue “But what is it that you actually want us to do?” To which one of the three Irish Ministers said “We want you just to sit there like the fucking kitchen sink”. It shocked Merlyn Rees but I think it had some effect on him because it did reveal that, particularly with a Fine Gael Government, their hostility to the IRA, going back to the Civil War, was more visceral than any hostility that was felt in Britain.

Although the murder of Christopher had a souring effect on our memories of Dublin, our time there was probably more enjoyable and more sheer fun than anywhere else.

AW: The common language makes it feel less foreign initially?

JG: Yes it does and I think that’s a problem. I wrote a paper at one stage towards the end of our time in Dublin trying to analyse what the real problem was. I may have got it wrong, but my conclusion was that it would have been much better if the Irish language had been preserved and all the Irish cultural richness had been secured properly through a separate language. Because there is so much in common between Ireland and the UK in terms of language, culture, sport, social interests, travel and all of that, and people have such a good time when they get together that, when the Irish want to show that they have a separate identity which all nations have to show, particularly in relation to a bigger neighbour, it all gets channelled into politics. We saw that quite markedly I think in the early days of Ireland’s membership of the European Union. Often the Irish were on the same side as we were, because we had common deep interests that pointed in the same direction. But when that wasn’t the case, the Irish would go out of their way to show that they were not on our side, because politics was an easy way of showing that they had a separate identity. You get it in sport as well of course, that’s why the rugby matches are so rumbustious. But it’s particularly in politics that separate identity acts as a lightning conductor, and that’s a pity. If

there was a separate language I think the relationship would have been more balanced and more comfortable. Of course it's improved enormously over the last thirty years thanks to our joint membership of the European Union.

Defence Department, FCO London, Deputy Head NATO, 1978-81

AW: So after two and a half years you are coming home to be Deputy Head, NATO. How did that happen because didn't you have a black mark against you on security?

JG: I did. But I think the fact that I was working closely in Dublin with the defence and intelligence related departments over three years had probably erased any blots on my file because this next job took me right into the thick of East/West relations. I was in charge of the NATO side of Defence Department. Because it was such a big section, I was Deputy Head of Department rather than Assistant. What we dealt with was everything to do with NATO, and all the major stuff that went through NATO connected with arms control. We had a really impressive team of people, David Gilmore was Head of Department and the Desk Officers included people like Robin Janvrin, Francis Richards and a teenage Adam Thomson.

It was very exacting work; you couldn't afford to make any mistakes in that department. I knew a lot of the strategic stuff from my time in the Planning Staff and my continuing links with Chatham House and the IISS, but it was this job that introduced me to the sharp end of the MOD and the intelligence services. It wasn't a happy Department in the Foreign Office at that time because David Owen, who was a prickly politician and was trying to establish himself after his recent promotion following the death of Anthony Crosland, was trying secretly and ultimately unsuccessfully to follow his own policies on the negotiations about the Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions in Europe and he was doing it behind the back of the MOD and the defence side of the Office.

AW: Behind the back of the Foreign Office?

JG: Yes. He had his own little staff unit to do this. I felt that tension on day one when I went down to introduce myself to the Private Office. I walked in with a nice smile on my face saying "I'm going to be dealing with you quite a lot I guess". And I got a rather sour look from George Walden his Private Secretary who said "Well I don't see what you've got to smile about". That was the mood at that time.

It was really engrossing work. It was operational in one way but very cerebral in another. And we dealt with some remarkable MOD colleagues. People like Richard Mottram, Michael Quinlan, David Omand, all stars of the MOD. And it was at the height of the Cold War. There was little risk of outright war but there was a sort of grinding battle going on between us and a Soviet Union that still looked to be very much stronger in military terms on the ground in Europe. We had several very tense negotiating standoffs with the Soviets on things like MBFR. We had very difficult negotiations in the Alliance on what line we wanted the Americans to follow in the strategic nuclear arms control negotiations. But I think it was in that period that the West's ability to hold together and our ability to deliver the benefits of economic growth gradually eroded the appeal and self-confidence of the Soviet Union. So there wasn't very much movement in the 1970s but it was rather like one of those rugby matches where in the first half very few tries are scored but you know that there's a grinding battle going on in the scrum, and in the second half one side has won that battle and starts to score a lot of tries. We held together with difficulty but we gradually pushed the Soviet Union back in this period. This led the way to the treaties that marked the end of the Cold War - the Helsinki Final Act, the agreement to ban Intermediate Nuclear Forces and much further down the track the treaty to cut conventional forces in Europe.

We also had a long and for me illuminating debate in Whitehall which was started by the impressive PUS in the MOD, Frank Cooper, about the UK-France-Germany triangle. I think Cooper understood long before we did that, although defence was a strong card for us with both of these countries, ultimately their relations with each other were more important than their relations with us. We had more in common with both, but their mutual relationship was more important. There were two reasons for that. One was that they were both anxious about each other in a way that they weren't anxious about us because they could take us for granted to a large extent. And secondly because of their experience in the Second World War, they attached much more genuine emotional importance to the project of European Union. That was an insight which came late to me but it certainly conditioned all the rest of my career. I think Cooper deserves enormous credit for having ventilated those thoughts at a time when they were not widely appreciated in Whitehall.

So that takes me to the end of my time in that Department. Hard work and politically quite difficult work given the set up with David Owen, but quite rewarding and a solid base for what happened in the rest of my career.

I then made one of those enormous leaps than rather characterized one's career in this Service. I went from Defence Department, right in the centre of East/West relations, to the Department dealing with the nuts and bolts, cash and conditions. I was promoted and I was one of the youngest Counsellors in the Office but at the price of being in a Department that nobody liked or esteemed, Personnel Services Department.

Head of Personnel Services Department, FCO London, 1981-82

AW: The Department that everybody could moan about?

JG: Exactly. As in most strong hierarchies, top people in the Foreign Office felt inhibited about complaining that they were being neglected or that their career was not going as well as they wanted. They found an alternative way of grumbling - to complain about their allowances or their conditions of service. They usually rather charmingly added to their long letters on these subjects that they weren't of course doing it for themselves, but because of their wives and their families, who they felt were being unfairly treated. It was a job which required more empathy and psychotherapy than any I've had in the Service.

AW: And probably the thickest skin?

JG: Yes, the thickest skin! I was the only A-stream officer in a very large Department. I think we started with about 100 and I cut it down to about 70. But it was still a Department very much dealing with the nuts and bolts – the basic things that affect everybody's day-to-day living. The challenge for us was to find policies which were defensible to Ministers, the Treasury and the media but which were fair to all 6000 people in a Service, where a few had cushy jobs in nice places, but most were going round the globe in very uncomfortable places.

One of our main reforms during my time there was to introduce the Difficult Post Allowance, which compensated people for being in places like Angola, and other difficult places and gave them a considerable financial compensation for that, compared with those in hitherto very well paid posts like Paris and Rome. This had quite a good effect on the Service's attitude to the roundabout of postings. It was fairer.

We had to deal with a lot of other controversial issues like boarding school allowances and that sort of thing. Another key reform was about air travel. Our set-up was clearly out of

date and Ministers got very fed up when they received complaints from businessmen about civil servants and diplomats wandering through into first class on an aeroplane when they were crammed into economy. I'm not sure if it happened very much but they certainly complained a lot about it. Douglas Hurd decided that this was something he was going to reform, perhaps also hoping, as a man who was seen as being on the wet side of the Conservative Party, that a bit of austerity would appeal to Mrs Thatcher. There were long negotiations in Whitehall, which mattered more to us than to any other Department because we travelled more than other Departments. In the end we got it agreed that all members of the Service, irrespective of their rank, would travel in economy on short journeys up to, I think, four hours, but all would be able to travel club class on longer distance journeys. That too helped to rebalance the Service's conditions between those who were in remote places, much more separated from their children, than the classic cushy posting like Paris where you could pop over for the weekend.

We also did another much less popular reform, but in my view a totally justified one, which was to demand that all members of the Service would surrender any air-miles they got from air travel at public expense so that they could then be used with our travel agency to get more travel for the Foreign Office. We set up a little Air Transport Agency in the Foreign Office to do that. They did all our bookings and pocketed the air miles. That funded a lot of familiarisation trips by Desk Officers to find out a little bit more about the countries they were supposed to be dealing with. It also funded some travel by children to join their parents in the school holidays.

It was very unglamorous and politically peripheral work. But I think key people in the Office knew how important it was, particularly the Chief Clerk, and others on the personnel side.

AW: Who was the Chief Clerk?

JG: Mark Russell. For me personally it was good exposure. By then I was coming to the end of a second five year stint in London. So I was gradually beginning to be known in the Office and that, I think, led to what was the real break-through in my career, which was my appointment to News Department.

AW: So in that period in London you saw two Foreign Secretaries?

JG: Yes, David Owen and then Peter Carrington. Douglas Hurd was the Junior Minister and we saw a change of Government in that period which was quite interesting. In Defence Department we had to produce all the usual raft of papers for an incoming Labour Government, which would probably have gone unilateral on the nuclear front. So we had two very different sets of briefs for the two incoming governments.

Spokesman and Head of News Department, 1982-85

AW: So now the leap to News Department. Was there competition for the job?

JG: This is a job that matters enormously to Ministers. It's in some ways almost as important as that of Private Secretary because it's all about the media image of the Office and especially that of the Foreign Secretary. The Foreign Secretary chooses the Spokesman in the same way as he chooses the Private Secretary, and they usually interview quite a few. I knew that one or two people had been interviewed for the job I did. I was called over to be interviewed by Carrington in March 1982. This was at the time when the Foreign Office was basking in the glory of its bicentenary and there were congratulatory articles in the press about how well Carrington had done over Rhodesia. Just before I took over from Nick Fenn, the Falklands were invaded and Carrington and two other FCO Ministers resigned. Francis Pym was appointed and he reinterviewed me and appointed me to the job and I was his spokesman for a year. I think it's important to remember just how febrile the atmosphere was in London in March/April 1982. The mood was one of neurosis and shock. In every club I went to when I was being briefed by journalists before taking over the job, there were people moving bits of cruet round on the tablecloths, imagining they were conducting the campaign in the Falklands. The trouble was that Francis Pym was quite obviously the man who would replace Margaret Thatcher if her bold campaign to recapture the Falkland Islands were to fail. They also disagreed on almost everything and stood for different bits of the Party; there was already a rivalry between them. After the Falklands catastrophe, the British people and press demanded a scapegoat. Carrington helped nobly with his own resignation, which was totally unjustified. But the Government machine needed a scapegoat and the Foreign Office was the scapegoat. The Thatcher PR machine under Bernard Ingham exploited this wherever possible against the Office and against Francis Pym.

It was for me a very big shock to move from the nuts and bolts of Personnel to a war not only in the South Atlantic but also in Whitehall. I was frankly a bit out of my depth in that political world. I'd lived for three years without reading any of the telegrams so I was having to pick it up from scratch. Francis Pym was a shrewd operator. He'd been Chief Whip, he was very political, very canny and very sensitive to matters of image. He rightly wanted the Foreign Office to become more adept at PR and more streetwise in relation to the media, but also to Parliament. Unfortunately he wasn't there for long enough to make a change in the ethos of the Foreign Office, nor did he have time to achieve any foreign policy successes which might have helped in image terms, so we were thoroughly in the dog-house for that year.

We had a different sort of tension after the 1983 elections when Geoffrey Howe took over as Foreign Secretary, and had to coexist with a now rampant Mrs Thatcher, fresh from her great success in the Falklands and her re-election. Charles Powell, who probably is in a better position to talk about this than anybody, says that she saw Geoffrey Howe as the main threat to her in the party. I think actually there were two other factors that mattered here. One was that she was becoming resistant to advice from other Departments and notably from the Foreign Office, after her success in the Falklands and as she got to know everybody on first name terms on the international scene. But secondly I think she sensed behind Geoffrey Howe's gentlemanly and rather lawyerly manner, that he was somebody who could easily be bullied. Whatever the reasons for it, she couldn't resist humiliating him quite often in front of officials. I think it was these moments of psychological mistreatment that played in big part in her nemesis in 1990 when Geoffrey Howe made the famous speech which set the ball rolling towards her resignation.

So what does the spokesman do? Formally, the spokesman has to do the press conference every day, but the main job is that he travels wherever the Foreign Secretary travels. News Department and the spokesman have to handle every issue that is dominant on the day. If an issue was unimportant in terms of the media you could ignore it, even if it was intrinsically important. But everything that's top of the agenda for the media circus is top of your agenda. That applies to the big issues but it equally applies to minor consular cases. Often it's the latter that matter most in the media. We forget about it afterwards and the historians don't write about them. But for example the Nigerians attempted to smuggle a dissident called Dikko out of Heathrow to Lagos in a box and it was intercepted by a sharp-eyed young

lady and it was prevented. A young nurse in Saudi Arabia died as a result of an accident at a drunken party in Saudi Arabia and her estranged father alleged that there was a cover-up. That sort of issue caused us more trouble for a short period than almost anything else. But for the Secretary of State, of course, it's the big, intractable issues that matter most. Should Intermediate Nuclear Forces, Cruise Missiles and the like, be deployed in Europe to counter the SS20s which the Soviet Union has already deployed against Europe? Should British firms contracting for the Siberian gas pipeline be the subject of sanctions by the US Government? What should we do about our huge budget deficit with the European Union, how could we put that on a better basis? What should we do about the fact that we would lose Hong Kong in 1997, which by 1982 was already a pressing issue? Those were the issues which really dominated the Foreign Secretary's agenda.

Visits to the Middle East were a compulsory part of his agenda. They were usually pretty unproductive. We spent long fruitless hours debating with the hard austere Assad in Damascus, with hand-wringing Egyptians in Cairo, with perplexed and friendly Jordanians who would show us year to year the map of Israel's progressive colonisation of the West Bank. And of course inflexible debates with hardline Israeli Governments. The press almost totally ignored these well-meaning efforts by the British Foreign Secretary to solve the problems of the Middle East unless the Foreign Secretary made a mistake. Once, for instance, in Damascus at his departure press conference, Francis Pym was asked a question about our attitude to a separate Palestinian state. He mis-spoke in his reply. Instead of using the set formula which he had been given, he adlibbed and got it wrong. We didn't think much about it as we flew to Cairo. By the time we got off the plane in Cairo, the story was over all of the agencies and the press that British policy on an independent Palestinian state had suddenly changed. There were phone calls from No. 10 saying "What the hell is happening?" Washington was interested, etc. By then it's impossible to sort the problem out. You need to set the record straight but Francis Pym was unwilling to state that he'd mis-spoken, which would have killed the story. Even then it would have taken time to catch up with the story that was already rolling round.

There is a lot of hard slog in these Foreign Secretary trips, with each side doggedly restating its position. That was the norm when dealing with the Soviet leaders, from Gromyko to Brezhnev and Andropov. They were all good hard line sloggers. In the Hong Kong negotiations we had that in spades because the Foreign Ministry in Beijing had clearly been

told that they should batter us as hard as they could in order to make us simply hand Hong Kong over. That would take up days and days of our discussions and all you could do was to batter back. But it wasn't until we were admitted, belatedly, to the presence of Chou en Lai or Deng Xiaoping that it was possible to make progress. At that stage, things began to move with bewildering speed because they were in such a strong position in their dictatorship that they could make concessions and suggest deals which a democratic leader would be afraid or even unable to make. When we had our most important meeting with Deng Xiaoping, it was an amazing setting. We sat in a big circle with Deng Xiaoping in the middle and all his acolytes on that side and Geoffrey Howe in the middle next to him and all his acolytes on his side. Between Geoffrey Howe and Deng Xiaoping there was a spittoon into which Deng would spit from time to time which gave enormous emphasis to his pronouncements. He opened this meeting with the rather gnomonic statement: "We must open the windows and see the mountain". Our interpreter translated that and we said "Yes, but what does that mean?" and it took about half an hour for our respective interpreters to agree between themselves what he meant. Meanwhile Deng was having an occasional spit into his spittoon. But what he meant was, gentlemen to business, now's the time to cut the deal. Amazingly he said "there are eight issues between us, we're going to give way on four, two of them we need to negotiate further and two we're not going to move on". That really broke the ice. It was very hard after that to convert that sudden moment of truth into a treaty but it was still a remarkable moment.

One of the insights from my time there, which is perhaps worth mentioning, is the sheer range of pressures to which a senior Minister is exposed in foreign affairs. He's almost always over-tired, over-travelled and over-burdened, and he has to spend a lot of time in Parliament defending what he's done. Geoffrey Howe was a very conscientious Minister. He only slept for four or five hours a night. He read his briefs very thoroughly. But the price he paid was that he was sometimes so tired he would actually fall asleep in the middle of a sentence and take a quick cat-nap. It was a bit disconcerting but he had the remarkable ability to wake up after a couple of minutes and finish his sentence.

AW: How did you all react?

JG: We waited for him to wake up. But we knew by then that, although he was only half way through a sentence, he would be able to finish it quite coherently.

AW: Can I ask – on these trips, were they the huge roadshows that they are now with a cast of thousands accompanying press? Or was it lower key?

JG: Most of our visits were to places like Brussels, Bonn, Paris, Washington doing quick business. On those we would not take the press, we went in the HS125 and it would be a team of about five, two Private Secretaries, a Spokesman, and a couple of people from the Department. On the big events like Hong Kong, it was a real circus. We would take a big plane-load of journalists from London. From Hong Kong they would send a huge planeload of Hong Kong journalists. My job in that negotiation was to brief three totally different audiences. One was the Chinese who actually turned up to press conferences but only wrote what they were told to write by the Party. The British journalists were their usual combative and demanding selves. But it was the Hong Kongers who, in contrast to the Chinese journalists, were terrifically on the ball - very independent, very nervous, very distrustful and much the most demanding of the three. When we travelled with a large group, we would take one of the big RAF aircraft. It was an interesting arrangement. On a long journey like Hong Kong, our part of the plane was configured so that there were virtually no seats. We would immediately change into tracksuits and blow up airbeds and go to sleep. The Secretary of State had a bed but the rest of us were sleeping on the floor of the aircraft. The journalists at the other end of the plane were of course getting free booze, so we'd arrive with our gang quite spruce, having got back into our suits and quite well rested although we'd done briefing and preparation on the plane, and the press would get off very grumpy and quite often rather hungover. It was always a difficult time because they needed to file a story on arrival and of course there was no story. Nothing had happened yet, so they were making bricks without straw.

I was talking about the pressures on Ministers. The public knows when they are dealing with a prominent subject, like say Hong Kong. But actually Geoffrey Howe's inbox covers twenty other subjects which demand attention. And often they require an urgent response, often at a time we don't know the facts but when the pressure for some media reaction is irresistible. Good examples were when the scrap merchants arrived in South Georgia from Argentina, when the US invaded Grenada, the plan to ban trade unions from GCHQ which seemed like a non-event at the time but became a very big one, and various arms sales which also start small and become controversial.

One of the difficulties is that desk officers who are producing briefing for Ministers on these subjects find it hard to grasp what Ministers really need. They don't need a long erudite analysis with tons of paper behind. They need something which is extremely brief, clear and to the point so that they can grasp the subject and deal with it, or disagree, but at least they know what they are disagreeing with. I got an insight into this when I had to stand in for Baroness Trumpington who was one of the junior Ministers in the Lords and who was due to make a speech somewhere or other but had to go somewhere else and I was told to take it over. I asked for the material and the speech and was told that she hadn't been given a speech but that they would give me the material that had been prepared for her. They gave me a thick wad of briefing material and past speeches by others, which was all she was going to have, poor lady, as the basis for making her speech. It was completely useless for her, and it was completely useless for me. So I had to improvise on her behalf. The difficulty is that the average desk officer didn't see what use the Ministers made of the briefs. There was no feedback, although that was later on improved. I proposed, as a partial remedy for this, that all desk officers should spend one day in a Private Office, just to get a flavour of this endless flow of difficult, time urgent issues. But I was told that this would clutter up the Private Office too much, so it wasn't done.

One of the novelties of being Spokesman was that it was my first exposure to the Prefects' morning meeting of Under-Secretaries which the PUS chairs. The Private Secretary and the Spokesman usually brief first on the salient issues of the day. Since the Falklands, the Office was becoming slightly more alert to the need to handle the media better, with good lines to take, defensive lines but also proactive lines, bullet points from speeches, guidance out to posts etc. But the top end of the Office still sometimes hankered after the good old days when the Times Diplomatic Correspondent used to turn up at Reception and present his compliments to the PUS and ask whether there were any issues which needed to be reported that day. He would usually get the message back that "The PUS presents his compliments to the Times Diplomatic Correspondent but there is nothing to be reported today". One PUS complained to me several times, as if rather surprised, that the hacks were not on our side. That of course is the real dilemma: because you are trying to feed with information that will favour your case people whose métier demands that they should find out things that you don't want to tell them, and put their own very independent gloss on all of that. Journalists often don't really want to let the facts come between them and a good story. There were some

very honourable exceptions to that. From my time I would single out people like Hugo Young and Peter Jenkins as outstanding journalists who wanted to know the facts before they finalised their story. Some journalists were frankly devious opportunists or ideologically blinkered. Most, because of the nature of the job, were torn between the wish to find out from us but also to put their own gloss on the event. I realised rather belatedly in my time in News Department that the real problem was not the quality of the journalists, which is usually high, but the nature of the commercial world in which they have to work. I wrote a note to myself when I left News Department in 1985 which I could quote:

My main insight, then, is what an unsatisfactory place is the world of news. A feckless public which seeks amusement rather than information, an insecure industry obsessed by the competition for customers and advertising revenue and a profession without a career structure or a clear ethical basis. All of these combine to make the generation of news an erratic process prone to distortion and accident. How often is a major story overlooked or a minor one played up because of the accident of staffing. The "cancellation" of a visit by Francis Pym to Saudi Arabia led the news reports for a whole Bank Holiday weekend, not because it was an important event, it really wasn't, but because journalists who would normally be generating other news stories were on holiday. Trivial events in South America received undue coverage and were given unwarranted angles because a TV correspondent happened to be visiting relatives there and wanted to combine business with pleasure. Non-stories are kept alive and genuine ones downplayed by the accident of whether ideologically committed journalists are allowed or refused their head. Not only with the pops but increasingly with the Times and the Guardian, one has the impression that they are not newspapers, but comics or daily gossip sheets, more interested in trends, personalities and scandals than facts and issues.

In Whitehall it's a rule that one Department is always in the doghouse and is cast as the current whipping boy. For my first 18 months in News Department we were the whipping boy, the scapegoat. Any setback in foreign policy was naturally the subject of snide asides or hostile articles. This unfortunately coincided with the Thatcher-Pym rivalry. Foreign policy issues loomed quite large and we had no major successes to report, though one or two were slowly in gestation.

Once a Department is fingered in that way as the scapegoat it's very hard to shake this image off because the political correspondents take over. They brush aside the diplomatic correspondents who tend to know their subject very well. The political correspondents don't have much foreign policy expertise, but they do have a nose for the political sacrificial lambs. When the PM is in the ascendant, as Mrs Thatcher was after 1982, they fawn in front of her and her Spokesman. Once they have written a damning story about a Department, it's very hard to catch up again because they've got the headlines. In that situation, stories that can go wrong do tend to go wrong.

A good minor example of that was the US invasion of the island of Grenada. A British subject on the island tried to report by telex to the FCO that US troops were about to land. He telephoned or telexed the wrong number in the UK, which happened to be a plastic bag factory. The employee in the factory who took the message then phoned it to the wrong part of the FCO, and was asked to send a fax. The fax didn't get through to the right people in the Foreign Office until the invasion had happened. It wasn't a significant story because even if we had known in advance, we weren't going to do anything to prevent the Americans. But, in the absence of proper news because the US was imposing a news blackout, the main story of the day was the inability of the Foreign Office to act when told that a former colony and a member of the Commonwealth was being invaded by our main ally. Scapegoatery when it happens goes hand-in-hand with bad luck. On that very day, Geoffrey Howe had truthfully told the House of Commons that he had no information of any such plan to invade Grenada.

We had a worse incident, with much more lasting damage and embarrassment, when Geoffrey Howe announced in January 1984 that the Government was going to ban trade unions from GCHQ. The Government faced a real problem here because GCHQ was critical to our security and intelligence cooperation with the Americans, but the trade unions were exploiting this, as part of a wider trade union action, by paralyzing GCHQ from time to time. This was obviously causing great embarrassment and affecting not only intelligence gathering but also our cooperation with the Americans. The Government seemed to have a plausible solution which was that they were told by GCHQ management that staff there would not object to losing their union cards provided they were given £1000 compensation. Unfortunately the issue became quite toxic when, I think it was, 13 GCHQ staff refused to hand in their cards and the TUC and the Labour Opposition made this into a national issue. Late in the day, the TUC offered a no-strike deal if GCHQ staff were allowed at least to keep

their union cards, but by then Margaret Thatcher sensed their weakness and was determined to insist on no trade union there at all. It was left to Geoffrey Howe to take the flak. There was a particularly embarrassing moment when, in an interview with ITV's 'News at Ten', he was asked a question based on some false information he was given by the interviewer, and said something in reply that wasn't quite right either. I complained to the editor of the programme the next morning and he apologised. But when Geoffrey Howe used this apology to defend himself in a rather acrimonious Commons debate that afternoon, ITV blithely denied that they had apologised. So we had a very difficult weekend over that.

When stories go sour, the tendency among Ministers is not to conclude that the policy is wrong but to blame the way in which the information is presented. In part they are right. The FCO was slow to get better at its relations with the media. The remedy was partly to improve our PR. Two areas where we were particularly weak – consular matters and relations with Parliament and Westminster - were given much higher priority and integrated into our handling of overall foreign policy. We began to anticipate problems more. We tried to brief more generously and we took some risks with the media which paid off. In 1984, after the BBC had done a rather negative series on the Treasury, we allowed Simon Jenkins and a BBC TV team to do a fly-on-the-wall series called 'With Respect Ambassador' which allowed direct access to a lot of officers and spouses at all levels in the Office. It produced quite a positive picture of the Office. The editor, Anne Sloman, thanked me for being "rare among press officers, someone who was always more concerned to open doors than to close them". I was quite chuffed about that.

But the main cure to our being in the doghouse was not just to improve our PR but actually to raise our performance and simply to slog it out until the wheel of fortune turned. And the wheel of fortune does turn. Our time in the wilderness came to an end when another Department came into the focus of the political correspondents. I think it was the Home Office's turn so they went into the doghouse. But the turnaround for the Foreign Office was mainly due to good work by talented officials in particular areas and by good Ministers, in particular Geoffrey Howe, in getting good results, basically in four areas.

The first was persuading the US Secretary of State George Schultz that it would be a mistake for the US to apply sanctions against British firms which were contracting for the Soviet gas pipeline. This is now a forgotten topic but it would have threatened jobs and the economy and

it would have fundamentally soured Anglo-American relations. Geoffrey Howe put an enormous amount of time into lobbying to get that changed, including in Washington with Senators, and it was changed.

The second big issue was the EU budget issue which came to a climax at Fontainebleau. Unusually I kept a diary for the two days of that crucial Council. I wrote in it on the day before we left for Fontainebleau:

'We will settle if we get a new budgetary system which begins in 1985 on the basis of a 1983 refund of 1100 ecu or more. Mrs T won't enjoy that. She'd be much happier with 1125 ecu. But none of the others want to go beyond 1000 ecu, that's the figure at which the Germans had scuppered a previous European Council in Brussels. This only emphasises the pivotal role of the French. They have the Presidency. They are about to become net contributors under any budget settlement with us. They will have to bear the second largest share of the refund. They have kept most of the reins in their own hands. Roland Dumas has spoken to Sir Geoffrey four times in the last week. But Mitterrand was in Moscow until yesterday and hasn't focused properly.'

So when we set off from Northolt in the plane with the PM and all her party:

'I found everyone energetically discussing the mechanisms of how to withhold our budget contribution in the autumn following an unacceptable proposal from the French Minister for Europe Dumas.'

The Council actually started with Heads of Government wasting three hours in what I described as: *'the sort of jejeune ideas about East-West relations which would have been ridiculed if uttered in public'*.

After a short briefing on the five refund options, Foreign Ministers were told to go away and do better. At dinner that night Sir Geoffrey was in a minority of one in opposing the Dumas plan and the PM was becoming quite tetchy. Behind the scenes, our people were trying to persuade Dumas and his people that a triumph for the French Presidency depended on their offering a refund in the high 60% area without time limits and without a threshold. Next morning in the Council there was *'much argy-bargy about theology'*, but most countries were

still camping on a time-limited 60%. As the Council was ending, the French Presidency said in desperation that they thought we could probably get 66.6%. Then Kohl intervened to say he couldn't go beyond 65%. Mrs Thatcher and Geoffrey Howe between them forced that up to 66%, and crucially without any UK contribution to Germany's abatement. At that stage Mrs Thatcher went into her private room to reflect by herself before coming out to say 'Yes', to the horror of the Treasury members of the delegation.

AW: That was a thing to witness!

JG: Yes, it was a very great achievement by both her and Geoffrey Howe. It laid the foundations for a much healthier relationship with the European Union in the ten years that followed.

The third big issue was Hong Kong. Mrs Thatcher was very reluctant to accept that we couldn't just stand on our sovereign ownership of the island because of course the lease of the New Territories, on which Hong Kong depended, came to an end in 1997. Geoffrey Howe was buffeted between her, a robotic Chinese Foreign Ministry, which wanted us simply to hand over, and the Members of Hong Kong's Executive Council, who tried to convince him that the Chinese were bluffing and we shouldn't budge at all. It took some heroic negotiations by a brilliant team of Foreign Office members, particularly Percy Cradock, David Wilson and William Ehrman, to convert Deng's formula of 'One nation, two systems' into a viable prospectus for Hong Kong. Meanwhile I had to brief three disparate groups of voracious journalists - at least the Hong Kong and the British were voracious, the Chinese were pussycats by comparison. I got permission to brief the editor of the Far East Economic Review in confidence before the final deal was released at the press conference, because they were going to press at the same time. When I told him the details of what had been achieved he was frankly flabbergasted. I still think it was a very good deal, certainly the best we could have possibly got at the time.

The fourth big issue that helped with our turnaround was that we did in the end win the battle to deploy air-launched cruise missiles and Pershing missiles in Europe to match the SS20s that the Russians had already deployed. This was a battle in which the Government faced very strong opposition from the Soviet Union of course, but also from Labour and from the ladies of Greenham Common. If they had won, we would not have been able to deploy those

weapons, and we would not have secured the agreement we eventually got to ban all of them. Geoffrey Howe and Michael Heseltine were the key figures in what was basically a propaganda war. In the end NATO managed to make an intelligent arms control offer to entice the Soviet Union into proper negotiations. We offered to ban all such weapons and that was what emerged in the final agreement. In my judgement this was one of the critical moments in the Cold War. I think if we'd lost that, the successors of the hardline Soviet leaders, including Gorbachev, would have been less likely to recognize that they were on a downward slope.

Needless to say Margaret Thatcher took the credit for all four of these achievements, although in fairness to her she does deserve some of the credit, because it was her firmness and her strong image which enabled us to negotiate from a position of comparative strength. But close observers of the scene knew that Geoffrey Howe and his talented team had done much of the heavy lifting and this helped, slowly, to get us out of the doghouse.

A word about Geoffrey Howe. He was a very rewarding Minister to work for. He had a very strong sense of strategy and a keen eye for detail. But he also had that dogged persistence which a politician needs in order to succeed ultimately. His obvious shortcoming was his rather ponderous, quiet manner which Denis Healey brutally and brilliantly lampooned by comparing him to a dead sheep. Geoffrey tried very hard to reverse the joke. He worked out lots of counter ploys but Denis Healey trumped him every time. It's odd because in a TV age politicians, in my experience, have an image which is pretty close to the reality. In Geoffrey's case, his image was only a small part of the man. His image was quite a dull one, at a time when other politicians appeared more flamboyant and extrovert. But as well as being a very intelligent man, he was humorous, generous and had enormously wide cultural interests. When we were at the UN General Assembly, which is a gruelling week of wall-to-wall meetings from morning to night, we usually allowed ourselves a Wednesday evening off. On one particular evening most of our team were going off to have oysters at the bar in Grand Central Station. Geoffrey asked me what I was going to do. I said I hoped to go to the Met to see a good production of 'Lohengrin'. He said that he thought I probably wouldn't be able to get tickets but, if I could, he would be very interested in a ticket. He said "If you get me a ticket, I'll arrange something for afterwards". I did get tickets. When we emerged from the Met, we got into his car and his driver went north, through Manhattan deep into Harlem, and we stopped at a rather dingy looking joint in Harlem, went

through a rather uninviting door and found ourselves in a lovely nightclub where Aretha Franklin was singing her soul music and we spent the rest of the evening listening to that. That was typical of Geoffrey Howe. He didn't need to go to bed until four o'clock so it didn't matter to him. He had both interests; he was a keen jazz fan and a keen classical music fan. I had a high regard for that man.

AW: You mentioned earlier about a piece of fake news. Nowadays there is a lot of talk about fake news, was there much of it then or was that incident ...?

JG: No. I think that was a genuine bit of bad journalism. An item about GCHQ and what would happen to those who refused to give up their union cards came up on the tapes. Somebody at ITN misread it, fed it to the interviewer who said "Mr So and So has said this, what do you make of that?" And of course Geoffrey is by himself in front of the camera, he has to adlib and he adlibbed in a slightly mistaken way, and the story was headlined that night because ITN picked it out as the headline from the interview. But it wasn't fake news, I don't think. At that time there was a lot of dark propaganda in East/West relations. The Soviet leadership, who were pretty ponderous and unimpressive, were quite good at springing false arms control initiatives like "We will reduce by this, if you promise not to do that". They could do that because they had plenty of stuff to reduce and they would remain massively superior in the same capabilities. But in general, no. If it was fake news, it would be exposed. We certainly didn't have politicians who boasted about their use of fake news.

AW: Relations with the EU, you went to all the Foreign Affairs Council meetings?

JG: Yes, and of course that led to my next job which was Head of Chancery at UKREP. I spent more time in Brussels at EU meetings than anything else in my job as Spokesman. That was a pleasure in many ways because the British journalists at the European Union were excellent, particularly the FT journalists were of outstanding calibre, they still are, but the other journalists doing the routine jobs were very good. We hadn't yet reached the time when journalists were sent to Brussels primarily to write articles about bendy bananas and the sort of stuff that certain Daily Telegraph journalists were writing in the nineties.

AW: That wave hadn't quite started ...

JG: No. And because we got a good budget deal and because the agenda was going our way, we were in a comparatively comfortable position. We were basically setting the agenda on the main issues as we'll come to when we talk about UKRep Brussels.

Head of Chancery, UKREP Brussels, 1985-88

AW: Today is 23 April 2019 and Sir John Goulden is resuming the recollections of his diplomatic career. When we closed last time John, you were off to UKREP in Brussels as Head of Chancery.

JG: That's right. When I finished as Head of News Department I was too young to get a serious Embassy. Because our children were then teenagers, we didn't want to go somewhere far distant to get a medium sized embassy that would have been good training. So I asked if I could be posted as Head of Chancery to UKREP Brussels. I'd been to lots of EU Councils, G7 Councils, NATO summits, so I knew the agenda pretty well. My job at UKREP was a mixture of four different things. There were the usual Head of Chancery jobs, but with the difference that UKREP Brussels is mainly staffed by non-FCO people, and although they were of fantastic calibre, they often needed a little bit more help in adjusting to the rather peculiar EU form of diplomacy. So that was quite a meaty job. The second one was to try to get better jobs in the European Union institutions for Brits. That was something that had eluded us right from the start when we joined too late and which became more difficult as new countries came in, like the Greeks, the Spanish and Portuguese, who all had a better claim to new jobs. We never really caught up, and that was one of the big problems with our relationship with the EU. My third chunk was all the constitutional and structural questions that come up in the EU, many of which are excruciatingly boring. I sat on a committee called the Comitology Committee for example. It was important because it was there that the Commission pushed its agenda to wrest more decision making powers away from member states. The fourth area, which was the most important, was that I was the UK representative on a thing called the Antici Group – that's a group, entirely francophone, set up informally outside the EU structures, of the main aides of the Perm Reps, in my case Michael Butler and David Hannay, to basically co-ordinate work and business on the way up to the Councils. It was an exciting part of my work, I really enjoyed that. It was particularly important during our EU Presidency, when we had to try to kickstart our Internal Market

initiative by getting about 200 agreements through in six months. It was a major industrial effort but it was successful.

The Internal Market was Britain's, and Mrs Thatcher's, greatest legacy to the European Union. With the help of Jacques Delors, we'd managed to get this thing called 'Internal Market' put on the European Council agenda for Copenhagen in 1983. We had the usual briefing meeting with Mrs Thatcher on the night before the Council, and she stormed in and said "What's all this rubbish about the internal market? It's bound to be just another bureaucrat's charter, it'll be more EU red tape" etc. I suppose charitably you could say that she was doing one of her usual ploys of testing out a proposition by opposing it to make sure that it was sound. She did a lot of that, and this was a good illustration of it. It took several hours, I think probably three hours in the end, for the UK team - mainly Geoffrey Howe, Michael Butler, David Williamson and David Hannay - to convince her that the internal market was a good thing and that it would benefit the United Kingdom. It would get improved access for British firms, British professional associations, etc. that we were currently denied since the EU had not been designed for our benefit. I think in the end she was persuaded by a PR ruse that we put to her that on the morning of the Council the next day, she should stagger into the Council Chamber weighed down by a pile of forms and plonk them laboriously on her table so as to attract attention, and then she would explain to her colleagues that these were the forms that a typical small firm in our countries had to complete before they were able to operate in another member state. Typically of Mrs Thatcher, having denounced the idea as a bureaucrat's free-for-all the night before, she advocated it with enormous conviction at the Council and she got her fellow Heads of Government to endorse it as the main agenda item for the early/mid 80s. And it was. She also did well in getting Lord Cockfield into the job as Commissioner for this. He was absolutely terrier-like in his devotion to this job, and he deserves a lot of the credit for having achieved it.

UKREP as a posting is exhausting. It's not just the huge range of business that is followed avidly by every Government Department in London and the interest that they show in the most minute details of what we are talking about in Brussels. There is also huge institutional and media interest, and every meeting that we went to, however late it ended in the small hours of the morning, had to be reported by telegram before we went home to bed. So you would quite often find yourself with some very sleepy secretary at 3 in the morning

dictating five or six telegrams in order to make sure they were on people's desks first thing that morning. London expected that service. The strange thing is that the staff at UKREP, who were I think the hardest working of any I came across in my whole career, also managed to find time at the 11th hour just before our Christmas party to produce by far the best Christmas Review we ever had, and this year after year. Very much improvised at the last moment but there was a lot of satirical talent there and a lot of things to satirise.

The dialogue with London from UKREP is more intense than anywhere else. But it also means that you've have scope to influence your instructions, probably more than anywhere else. That happens through a daily dialogue between desk officers and their opposite numbers, and of course the Perm Rep is in London for a meeting with all the senior people once a week, at which the marching orders for the next week are set out.

Sometimes the instructions we got from London were unrealistic and overly ambitious, because Departments often show what David Williamson aptly described as 'the fierce courage of the non-combatant'. This is where folk in London give you instructions that nobody is ever going to be able to meet, but they think they are keeping you on your toes. It was well illustrated when we were negotiating another British initiative to impose tighter budget discipline on the EU institutions. The Treasury gave us an armful of ridiculous and over-demanding red lines that we could not cross. It was left for Finance Ministers at their Council to try and resolve the four or five remaining issues. As it happened Nigel Lawson was coming out of that meeting on a Sunday night just as Geoffrey Howe and his party arrived for a Foreign Affairs Council the next day. Geoffrey was very interested to know what he'd achieved, and Nigel was able to announce that it had been a total success and he was very pleased with the outcome. "Marvellous" said Geoffrey. "So you managed to get x?" "Well" he said "I decided that we could let that one go". "Well" said Geoffrey "even so, you did brilliantly to get y..." "No" said Nigel "I thought we could probably try that at a later date" "Still, it was a major gain for you to get z...?" "I decided that we could let that one drop". It was an illustration of a problem that all delegations had, where fierce courage at home comes face to face with unchangeable realities in the multilateral negotiation. We didn't suffer from that more than anybody else. We tended to secure our demands probably more often than most. But it did mean that there was a damaging feature which has I think harmed the UK position in relation to the EU, and that's the tendency of Ministers and the media to claim personal credit for everything that's successful that comes out of Brussels, but

to blame Brussels or the civil servants for decisions that aren't going to be popular at home. That of course has a drip, drip effect on public opinion.

I don't think that anybody who works in the centre of Brussels, particularly in the national delegations, is unaware of the institutional defects of the body. Some of the bodies are dysfunctional. Some of them are quite unnecessary; they've been created to plant a flag in a particular country, so almost every country in the EU has some large EU institution creating employment, but often not creating very much else. There's the Parliament which is marked in my view by too much posturing and incoherence as well as the free-loading of some of the MEPs. The budgetary control is not good enough and I think it's fair to say that the Commission and the Court do have a bias towards coming to conclusions in favour of integration rather than subsidiarity, which would leave the implementation of problems, policies in the hands of each state. There is some truth in the belief, in Britain at least, that some member states are very happy to identify somebody else as the scapegoat for blocking something that they themselves don't necessarily want. We would often go to delegations and say "This proposal from the Commission is rubbish, isn't it? It's not going to help you very much?" And they would say "Yes, we'll try to oppose it but we do hope that you'll take the lead". It was a particular problem sometimes with Mrs Thatcher. When the EU wanted to identify a scapegoat, she was quite content to be identified as that. We would often tell her in briefing meetings that this was a subject which was causing much more offence to countries a, b, c and d and that she could leave her colleagues from those countries to oppose the matter in the Council, because for them it was more important than it was for us. But what would happen was that after the Commission had made its presentation, the Ministers from countries a, b, c and d would take out their newspapers or pretend to be very engaged in some activity quite separate from the Council, and after a pause of about 45 seconds usually, Mrs Thatcher would grab the microphone and say "Oh come on let's not waste time, we all know this is a very stupid idea". And she would then set out the seven reasons why it was a very stupid idea. It helped others to let us take the blame for policies which they opposed at least as much as we did. That was quite a strong phenomenon in Brussels particularly with Mrs Thatcher. She was not a Council tactician, to her credit and also to her discredit. We'd have liked her to sit quiet more often and let others take the flak and the pain.

I think people in the UK have consistently failed to understand how much influence the UK has had in Brussels. In addition to the Internal Market, we led the cause for EU enlargement,

agricultural reform, political cooperation and budget discipline. They are among the major topics of those decades. We also discovered that, with a few exceptions, the European Court of Justice and the Commission, particularly the bits of the Commission dealing with state aids, were mainly on our side in favouring a rather rigorous interpretation of what had been agreed.

I think one of the saddest features of my whole career was the way in which the comparatively comfortable position that we'd built up, particularly after the Single European Act in, I think, 1987 – a comparatively comfortable position, outside the Euro, outside Schengen, and free from some of the sillier regulations that the Commission was trying to get everybody to adopt - this comfortable position was allowed by a mixture of Ministerial inaction and deliberate misreporting by some of the right wing press to poison the attitude in the UK to the EU, and to lead us to the crisis of confidence that was reflected in the 2016 referendum. If you'd ask most people in Brussels, they would have said the Brits were exercising too much influence rather than too little, and that the things that we escaped from, particularly Schengen and the Euro. Our opt-outs from those over-ambitious policies were major achievements, freeing us from two policies that are not going to survive in my view. I'm personally convinced that a country like Britain needs to be a member of a club of comparatively like-minded countries, especially in a world where many of the other main players have different interests or malevolent intentions. And despite all its defects, the European Union is the most effective club that's available to us. Having been PermRep at NATO, where we pool sovereignty on crucial security issues to our great benefit, I know that medium-sized countries can most effectively influence their surroundings by judiciously pooling sovereignty rather than by shouting about their independence and 'taking back control'. That applies even more to the less sensitive areas on which we pool sovereignty in the EU.'

UK AUS Defence and Arms Control, 1988-92

I went from there, after three very tiring very rewarding but exhausting years, to a major promotion, to become the Assistant Under Secretary for Defence and Arms Control. I did that for five years from 1988-92. During the Cold War, this was one of the key AUS jobs. It is hard now to think how seriously we took the Soviet threat. Right through the sixties, seventies and eighties. The threat was of course exaggerated by some in order to boost

defence spending at home, to keep it at levels that were probably not sustainable for a country of our economic weight. I remember the PermRep at NATO in 1972 arguing that our defence spending should be increased as a percentage of GDP even though at that time it was 4.5% of GDP, that's 150 percent more than it today. But the sense of Europe's vulnerability, particularly to the massive conventional forces the Soviet Union had right on the border between East Germany and West Germany, and the threat of nuclear forces that they had been developing and to which we had no answer in the eighties, created a sense of insecurity that was very real. I remember at the time reading an intelligence report about the organization and methods of the Soviet 'Spetsnaz' forces, that's their special forces who were trained to infiltrate Western Europe early in a war, I was left with a horror that stays with me even today. It was a serious and real threat although aspects of it we exaggerated. We didn't know enough about the Soviet Union's other weaknesses which countervailed. When I went, in the Planning Staff with James Cable, to Edinburgh for talks with the leading expert on the Soviet armed forces, Professor John Erikson, at the end of a day and a half of serious talking, he said "I can see that you are in for some nasty shocks". In the 1970s he clearly saw grave dangers ahead. By the 1980s, we no longer feared that we would lose the Cold War, but we were really concerned that the Soviet Union would try to use its conventional and nuclear superiority to compensate for its economic and cultural weaknesses. And I think that was why the political struggle we had over NATO's plans to match the Soviet SS20s was so important.

One reason why we won the Cold War was the very close coordination that was sustained between the US and the three main European allies. Ostensibly this was done under the cover of the need to continue to consult on Berlin because we had special responsibilities there. But the coordination among the four powers covered pretty well all of East-West relations and many other issues as well, Middle East and others. It gave the Americans a unique insight into the thinking of Europeans in general, a chance to adjust their thinking to take account of that, and it gave the Europeans a unique chance to influence American thinking at a stage when the inter-agency debate in Washington was still raging. Quite often the three Europeans became part of that inter-agency debate. We were quoted by whoever wanted to cite us in support of their case. It was a phenomenon which was appreciated by the other allies because they understood the cohesion and the coherence that this consultation produced, though they were understandably resentful of their own exclusion from it. It worked while it was discreet (and we went to great lengths to keep it discreet) and while it

had the Berlin cover. But the Berlin cover lost its credibility after 1991 and the meetings became increasingly visible. The press began to suss it out. The US, which was by then at serious loggerheads with the three European allies over Yugoslavia, allowed the whole thing to wither. I think that's been one of the major factors in the erosion of Western cohesion since the end of the Cold War. There would probably always have been some erosion but it's gone much further than it needed to, because we've lost that key steering group.

As a student I had been sympathetic to the CND's agitations for general nuclear reduction and disarmament, but I never thought that unilateral nuclear disarmament by the UK would be effective or would indeed influence anybody else. The best way of limiting nuclear weapons, which became one of my main preoccupations during these five years, was through mutual reductions by the US and the Soviet Union particularly through SALT and START, backed by significant UK and if possible French reductions on the side and by the total banning of intermediate nuclear forces (INF). I suppose that was one of the great successes of the late seventies and eighties. Control of conventional weapons was more difficult, partly because the Soviet Union had such a net superiority and was unwilling to give that up but also because of the technical problems of involving 22 different countries and their armed forces: how to define what category of weapon to include; what sort of tanks, what sort of armed personnel carriers, what sort of artillery to include; how to prevent the transfer of weapons onto the southern or northern flanks, which would have undermined the whole purpose of arms control; whether and how to limit highly mobile systems like helicopters and aircraft. We went through about three years of really intense and difficult negotiation within NATO before we came up with large cuts which we were able to propose to the Soviet Union, and which proved to be negotiable with them. That was another great success although I suspect it's now eroding.

Control of Chemical and Biological Weapons was even more difficult because the raw materials for them are of course items which have legitimate industrial use. Moscow actually denied that it had any biological weapons. Gorbachev kept assuring Mrs Thatcher that they had no biological weapons even though she was able to give him clear chapter and verse from defector information that they indeed had. It said something very interesting about the Soviet Union that Gorbachev went back and checked and still was told that they didn't have them. We knew beyond doubt that they did. In preparing for these important negotiations on all those fronts, I had one really useful card which was that I was given a

budget to commission research by academics and in some cases industry, on how to define and inspect the different categories of weapons. But especially on CW and BW, we had pretty fraught negotiations among ourselves before we had a position that we could begin to put to the other side.

Arms control negotiations are very technical and they can be very dreary. You spend more hours sitting around a table than you ever want to. But in many ways they were the most rewarding part of the East-West negotiations. One reason is that crucially any agreement that we reached had to include detailed definitions with detailed verification provisions. The data exchange and verification arrangements became a valuable tool for building up confidence between the two sides. We learned a lot more about each other's methods and capabilities and of course we could then verify them on the ground. That helped to reduce the mutual suspicion that had been a feature of the Cold War. It changed the atmosphere across the board in the late 80s. I worry now that the trend is away from arms control. It's no longer the flavour of the month as it was in the 80s and we're moving towards a free-for-all which I think is likely to undermine the stability, predictability and confidence that we have all benefitted from in the last three decades.

I had one comparatively easy arms control negotiation, and very rewarding, with South Africa. Because the UK along with the US and the Soviet Union is a depositary power of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, I and my US and Soviet colleagues had three meetings with the South African Foreign Minister, Pik Botha, in Vienna to try to persuade him that they should wind up the military nuclear programme which we knew that they were developing, but on which they were in denial. Botha was a terrible bully and he made it very clear from the start that he resented having to negotiate with three mere officials about what he felt was a very distasteful business anyway. But we found a way through by discussing with him hypothetically what a country which might be suspected of having a nuclear weapons programme would need to do in order to convince other countries, and therefore to sign the NPT and benefit from technological and industrial cooperation in the peaceful development of nuclear energy. We eventually persuaded him to sign up and it was a major gain for the late Cold War. The Russians certainly played a helpful part.

The other thing that the arms control business revealed to me was one of the great virtues of Margaret Thatcher. She was as you can imagine pretty sceptical about arms control and

particularly about accepting any constraints on our side which she wasn't confident that the other side would observe. I had a very hard time with her on one occasion when I was summoned over to No. 10 to try and justify to her a proposal that we should give up all our battlefield nuclear weapons, artillery with nuclear warheads, which we'd all developed during the early Cold War but which NATO agreed were now destabilizing and undesirable. Mrs Thatcher was instinctively in favour of retaining and if necessary modernizing battlefield nuclear weapons. She argued the case one to one for about an hour with her usual forcefulness before finally agreeing to sign up. It was an uncomfortable experience for me, but I left feeling glad that we had a Prime Minister who was prepared to take the trouble to test policy so conscientiously.

Arms control involved a lot of close personal relations with the other side. On the Soviet side they were in general impressive negotiators. They were often senior old KGB hands so they were the cream of their PolMil structure and they'd been in the game for decades. The change of attitude in our negotiations and discussions with them was one of the revealing barometers of how the Cold War was slowly coming to an end. We still had to go boringly through the parrot-like repeat of our respective positions. But then we were able to go on to a franker informal discussion over a dinner or a visit to the Bolshoi or events like that. One Soviet colleague who was in charge of negotiations on chemical weapons said "We'll go to the Bolshoi, we can talk there". I said "Do we have to go to the Bolshoi? Is there anything more interesting?" He came back with a suggestion "There is a concert of renaissance music at the Moscow Conservatoire" and he took me to that. It was an exciting experience because it was the first time renaissance music, it was mainly early church music, had ever been performed at the Conservatoire - the group performing it explained that for twenty years they had been denied import rights and the chance to travel abroad. Their rehearsal meetings in private apartments had been raided and now they were out in public able to perform their music. In the interval young Russians walked up to the platform and put roses there. By the end of the evening the platform was covered with roses. It was a very moving experience.

I got another interesting insight into the changing thinking among the senior Soviet folk I was talking to when I went to an Aspen Conference in Berlin in 1988. They organised a tour of Berlin for those of us who didn't know Berlin and three tough looking Soviet officials and I signed up. We drove around chatting as we went. As we left Checkpoint Charlie and its museum, one of them muttered something to one his colleagues. They both grunted "Da, Da".

I asked him afterwards what he'd said. He told me he said "A regime that depends on this sort of thing to keep its people hemmed in cannot endure for much longer." That was as gold dust to me, an amazingly revealing comment.

All of this was the backdrop to the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and then the breakup of the Soviet Union. This presented a big problem for the West because we had to reconcile on the one hand Chancellor Kohl's understandable and probably correct anxiety to take advantage of this window of opportunity to end the division of Germany, with the desperate attempts on the Soviet side to insist on conditions which would have made it impossible for us to continue to fulfil our defence commitments to a united Germany and later on to the Eastern Europeans when they joined. The Russians claim that they received assurances privately that no NATO forces would move east of the East/West border between the two Germanys. I'm absolutely sure that it was never British or NATO policy to accept these restraints, that would have made it impossible for us to meet our commitments under Article 5 of the NATO Treaty. But it may be that, as they claimed, the Soviet side received ambiguous hints to that effect.

German reunification was one of those sagas where Mrs Thatcher was much too forthright in opposing and Mitterrand was much too duplicitous in both supporting and opposing it. The actual collapse of the Soviet Union in late '91 was announced dramatically at a meeting I attended in Brussels of NATO and Warsaw Pact Ambassadors to agree the usual anodyne communique for a meeting of Foreign Ministers that was going to happen two days later. At one stage the Soviet Ambassador Afanasiev had a whisper in his ear. He rushed out of the room and came back half an hour later. The first thing he did was to remove the card in front of him which said "Soviet Union" and then to announce that, in the communique where his country had been referred to as the 'USSR', we should delete 'USSR' and replace it by 'Russia'. That was a highly symbolic moment. We were all pretty gobsmacked by that.

In retrospect the break-up of the Soviet empire seems inevitable and we take it for granted that the process was trouble-free. But from the inside it didn't look like that. I think Michael Alexander has commented that it was rather miraculous that we got through the period 1988/92 without a major military accident. We had to agree during that period on some extremely sensitive and often quite intractable issues: how to withdraw the massive Soviet army from East Germany and the other Eastern European states and all the equipment that went from it; how to reallocate Soviet hardware between the different republics that then

made up the successor states and in particular how to make sure that nuclear weapons were not left behind in Ukraine and Kazakhstan.

I think we were all caught by surprise by the speed of the break-up and we at least in Britain were quite slow to assess the radical implications of this. There was a lot of scepticism in NATO among the Europeans, and I shared it, about whether NATO could have a really useful role after the Cold War. It looked as though out-of-area operations, outside the limited NATO area, would continue to be blocked as they had been throughout the Cold War, by the French, who wanted to limit NATO's reach, and by the Germans, who basically saw NATO as a vehicle for protecting Germany. They didn't really conceive of it as a vehicle for protecting Turkey for example or Norway or later on the East Europeans. That concept of trying to hem NATO in to its old and now rather irrelevant sphere of operation didn't really change until the Balkan crises in the mid-Nineties. But already by 1991 we had a new NATO strategic doctrine. We developed a framework for strategic consultation with the Russians. We and the Americans had worked very closely with the Russians on some very important practical issues, such as how to find safe berths for the Soviet military scientists who had been living quite a good life and doing very dangerous research in cities whose very existence was not acknowledged in the Soviet Union. They had not been allowed to travel, but of course now they could travel and be recruited by other states. We found good employment for the main ones in Western universities and in some Western companies, and that helped to reduce the risk of proliferation which would otherwise have been very serious. It was a heady time, very rewarding particularly for people like me whose careers had been dominated by the Soviet Union and the Cold War threat.

I said that we didn't adapt very quickly to reassessing the meaning of this huge world change. One group which did adapt remarkably quickly was, surprisingly enough, the military. In the Cold War, the military had been obsessed with the need for big set piece military plans which could then be laboriously exercised in NATO exercises. If you wanted any changes, they said "Yes we can do that, in three years". The idea of fast response was alien to that mindset of the Cold War, on the Soviet side too of course. But as we became more involved in the rapidly changing situations in the Balkans and to some extent in the first Iraq War, the military found themselves being asked to produce flexible plans at very short notice. To their great credit they became adept at doing it. They realised that their pay cheques depended on their being able to deliver the goods. But they did deliver the goods and quite

often in the Balkan crisis they could turn a plan around on a sixpence. I was full of admiration for the way in which the younger officers were able to do that.

There were two big crises in my time in this job, the first obviously was the disintegration of Yugoslavia. It was a time at when the latent hatreds between the republics of Yugoslavia, which Tito had effectively suppressed, suddenly became very obvious. One effect of this was to reveal new tensions within the Alliance, within the EU and, of course, with the Russians. I remember Douglas Hurd saying that one of the most difficult issues that he had to face as Foreign Secretary was whether to recognise Croatia as a separate state before we had worked out a framework for all the Yugoslav republics and while we still had in theory an effective arms embargo on all of them, an embargo which naturally had to be lifted in the case of Croatia. He was under enormous pressure mainly led by Germany. As often happened, we had staunch French support until the French caved in. But that revealed the sort of strains that were emerging, first of all among the Europeans, but more particularly between the Europeans and the Americans. These were aggravated by the fact that we had European troops on the ground deeply engaged in ferrying humanitarian aid to the Croat, Bosnian and Serb enclaves which were cut off and starving - a difficult, painstaking and unrewarding job, but necessary - at the same time as the Americans were lecturing us and criticizing us from outside for not doing enough or not doing the right thing. But at that stage the Americans had no troops on the ground and not much insight into what was happening.

In the early 90s we still had the illusion that problems like Yugoslavia could be solved by convening a great conference of the kind that John Major bravely organised in London. We reached some quite hopeful and sensible conclusions at that conference about ceasefires, arms control and development aid. I had to negotiate the arms control part of it with Karadzic who was impassive and wily and Milosevic who was just gently fuming. It looked good on paper until the co-chair of the conference, Boutros Ghali, the UN Secretary General, turned to John Major and asked "Who's paying for all of this?". When Major turned to us sitting behind him and repeated the question, we were completely flummoxed because we had treated that as a secondary issue. It wasn't a minor issue, of course, but it was one you can't possibly solve at the same time as trying to deal with a strategic crisis. Needless to say, the outcome of the conference was not respected by any of the local parties, and the problems festered.

The other crisis of this period was the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The way in which we expelled Saddam Hussein's forces from Kuwait is one of those successes (like Kosovo) which we all now take for granted. Of course it was bound to happen, he was bound to leave. But like Kosovo it didn't look as though it was going to be a success at the time. We had a very motley coalition of forces, Arab and non-Arab as well as European and American. We had the French trying to brigade themselves with their new Arab chums in a division separate from the NATO one under the Americans. We had our own very vulnerable hostages in Baghdad. And we were worried that Saddam Hussein would in the last resort use the chemical weapons that we knew he possessed. Crises of that sort throw up some unexpected problems. One of the worst dilemmas we faced was that we didn't have enough vaccines against anthrax and we couldn't develop enough in time to vaccinate everybody. So the question was: do we give total priority to vaccinating our own forces, or do we share it in order to avoid offence with our other main allies, the Arab leaders in the coalition, etc? Another problem was how to protect the Kurds after the war when Saddam Hussein tried to exact revenge against them? That led to the creation of a no-fly zone in northern Iraq, a British initiative mainly negotiated by John Weston, which whether knowingly or unwittingly, has led to the semi-autonomous status the Kurds now have in Iraq and all the problems with Turkey that result from that.

The success of evicting Saddam from Kuwait left us with two dilemmas. One was should we go on, up the Basra Road to Baghdad and reduce his forces to nothing? This later proved to be a very controversial issue with the right wing in the States. But it was never realistic at the time among any of the coalition partners. We won this war and crowdfunded it with Arab funding on the basis of a broad coalition view that our war aims were limited to Kuwait. It was never realistic that a Western sub-group would drive on to Baghdad and administer Iraq for an indefinite period. That would have led to us becoming the problem rather than the solution and our extraction from that would have been even harder. The second dilemma which was linked to the decision not to occupy Iraq, was how to make sure that Saddam's remaining capacity to develop weapons of mass destruction should be constrained, because they were central to his power and prestige in the region. We imposed the UN inspection regime which didn't totally hamper his activities but which did so to a great extent. Over a long period of time the visits of the inspectors hampered his chances. We also in the UK took great satisfaction from stymying an Iraqi buy-up of a firm in Northern Ireland which had special expertise in nose-cone technology, composite materials which would have been of

enormous help to Saddam's ballistic missile programme. They spent a lot of money on that company and we made sure that nothing of any value ever left Northern Ireland for Iraq. But we failed in other respects. For example we wanted to persuade our universities to stop allowing the Iraqi Government to send clever military students to UK universities to study nuclear technologies. They refused and I can see why but their refusal carried negative consequences. And our efforts to prevent the proliferation of weapons in general to the Middle East and dual-use stuff in particular, was later on to become very controversial.

It began during my time in this job. Ministers in 1984 had agreed guidelines for arms sales to Iran/Iraq during the Iran/Iraq War. These banned all lethal weapons and ruled out dual-use exports that *'would significantly enhance the capability of either side to prolong or exacerbate the conflict'*. The guidelines were eventually revealed to Parliament about a year later, so Parliament knew the guidelines. And then in late 1988, junior Ministers in the Foreign Office, DTI and MOD sensibly agreed that the dual-use guidelines needed to be updated. Sometimes the word was 'amended' or sometimes the word was 'relaxed' but updated to take account of the fact that the Iran-Iraq war had ended. The formulation ruled out the export of dual-use equipment *'of direct and significant assistance to either country in the conduct of offensive operations.'* It was a small and realistic updating in the light of the ending of the war, but it was also intended to permit some relaxation of our export policies, at a time when many other countries were rushing to Iraq and other Middle East countries to sell arms. The aim was that our companies should not be unduly hampered and they should be allowed a measure of flexibility in the dual-use area. Crucially this change was not revealed to Parliament and Ministers continued to assure MPs, in the regular letters they had to send to MPs, that the 1984/85 guidelines were still in operation.

In 1992, that's four years later, I had to give evidence to the Trade and Industry Select Committee in the Commons about arms sales. We agreed with the MOD and the DTI and with Ministerial knowledge, that it would actually be quite helpful if we got on the record the fact that, although the guidelines were still in force, they had been updated to take account of the end of the Iran-Iraq war. I did that. After the evidence had been given, we were all very happy that we'd put that on the record, and interestingly there was no fall out or adverse reaction from Parliament, the media or from any of the other countries that were interested in this. But the subject did become controversial later when the prosecution of a British firm

called Matrix Churchill collapsed partly because the former DTI Minister Alan Clark admitted that he had been encouraging UK firms to circumvent the guidelines. This led to the setting up of the Scott Inquiry to review whether there was a discrepancy between the Government's stated guidelines and the policy's implementation. It became obvious very early on to Scott and everybody that no lethal arms had been exported; no proper arms that can be used to kill people had been exported. The focus then naturally shifted to what had happened about dual-use equipment. In my view Scott was wrong to conclude that the guidelines had been changed in a fundamental way. They were simply updated to reflect the ending of the war. But I think he was right to criticise the Government for deciding not to reveal that guidelines were being implemented more flexibly. The debate in the Commons on the Scott Report didn't focus of course on the good news that we had not exported arms to Iran or Iraq, but it did focus on the fact that the more flexible export policy on dual-use had not been revealed publicly. I had to give evidence to the Scott Enquiry and my earlier statement to the Trade & Industry Select Committee was quoted by the Opposition to the embarrassment of Ministers. Interestingly, in her evidence to the Scott Enquiry, Mrs Thatcher, who endured a long and quite gruelling session, said that she would have preferred to have been informed about the change over the guidelines and to have seen it published earlier.

I think that takes me to the end of Defence and Arms Control, it was clearly one of the meatiest jobs I did.

AW: And the change from Lady Thatcher to John Major which must have happened during the AUS job? Did this impact on the work?

JG: John Major of course had been Foreign Secretary for a short period as well as Chancellor. He was very conscientious. For his first visit to Washington he stayed up all night reading and marking his briefs and identifying the questions he wanted to pursue the next day. He made a very good fist of this first testing exposure. That first meeting in Washington is always quite an ordeal because you are dealing with people who are right on top of their subjects and a huge machine. They're looking to see whether you are as good as your predecessor with whom they had very close and productive links. But I think John Major made a good job of it. He didn't do the job for long enough to have a lasting impact though he did try hard to make a difference in the Yugoslav crisis. He took that conference

very seriously. At that stage the balance of forces and the trend of events was against settlement.

AW: Today is 14th May 2019 and Sir John Goulden is recommencing the recollections of his diplomatic career.

Ambassador to Turkey, 1992-95

AW: And so we are off to Turkey again? From your notes I gather you waited a little while for Turkey?

JG: Yes, I was in London for five years doing the defence and arms control job, which was a fantastic job and it changed every year so I had a completely different agenda each year. I was really enjoying it, although it was wearing work with a lot of travel involved. During those five years I was often invited to Personnel to be told that I should take an Embassy. “You need an Embassy. It’s about time you did an Embassy. If you want a decent Embassy later on, you’re going to have to do a medium sized one now”. They offered me some quite attractive places but I never hesitated because Diana and I had sweated blood over learning Turkish and preserving our Turkish, and we were quite determined that we wanted Turkey. Ankara was now a more important post than it had been in the 60s so that was an additional attraction. Eventually it did become free, later than we had hoped, and we got the job we wanted. It was a major change because unlike UKREP and UKDEL in Brussels, a bilateral embassy as you know is a place where spouses play a much bigger part, it’s much more of a partnership ...

AW: A double act?

JG: Yes a double act, and this was particularly true for us because Diana was one of the only two ambassador’s wives who spoke Turkish. It was a holiday in a way because we discovered that everything we did in Turkey, be it culture, or theatre or archeology, or travel or sport, or even just going out and having a very nice *mezze* with friends, all of that counted as ‘work’. It added to our understanding of Turkey and to our access in Turkey. It was quite different from a multilateral embassy in that crucial sense. So it was like being on a holiday for the two and a half years we were there, quite hard work but still a lot of time to do

other things. I translated a novel by Turkey's equivalent of Virginia Woolf which with difficulty was published and hasn't sold terribly well since, but it was great fun doing it in cooperation with her and counted as part of one's getting into tune with the country.

AW: So your Turkish must have been extremely good?

JG: Yes it was good when I left 1967 and it was quite good when I arrived back in 1992. But it was very difficult doing a novel because she is a Virginia Woolf type writer. She doesn't end her sentences and lines of thought trail off, which doesn't matter in English because you don't really need to know how the sentence is going to end when you start it. In Turkish the verb is at the end so, until you know how the sentence ends, you don't know what it means. I was constantly saying to her "Adalet, what is going through this person's mind where you keep putting dot dot dot? What thoughts are there?" She said "I mustn't tell you, it's part of the novel", so it was a bit of a challenge but I enjoyed it very much.

We had two very big advantages in Turkey. One was that, as I say, we spoke Turkish and I was the only Ambassador who spoke good Turkish and that's a big plus in a country which feels itself misunderstood and misinterpreted. I was often the Ambassador that the television or radio turned to in order to get a foreign comment on an event concerning Turkey. I tried to do most of my business in Turkish, even with the brilliant linguists of the Foreign Ministry. They sometimes humoured me and sometimes didn't.

AW: But they must have appreciated you?

JG: Turks in general did. It's one of those countries that, if you say two words in Turkish, people would get very excited and if you can speak it well and joke with them, it's a fantastic entrée.

Our second big advantage was that we had a wonderful Embassy compound right next to the President's Palace, the Prime Minister's Residence and the Foreign Minister's Residence. The four properties were together on the top of the hill. This was the result of a decision by a junior diplomat in the 20s who had bought up some scrubby land on a hilltop far outside the centre of what was then the small provincial town of Ankara. Rather typically he was censured by the Treasury for having spent a sum of money which in today's currency would

be a few pounds. The net result was that over the years this dusty, rocky bit of Anatolia became a wonderful garden, certainly the nicest garden in Ankara and one of the nicest in Turkey. It had a huge range of facilities. We had a school, a shop, a chapel, a club, a swimming pool, we had two tennis courts and two squash courts and of course the Residence, which had been built to impress the Turks in the 40s that they shouldn't throw in their lot with the Germans. So it was built on a very grand scale, something we would never contemplate now. That gave us a marvellous base for attracting Turks to come and enjoy the facilities with us. When we left Turkey, I gave the President a jar of honey on the grounds that our bees had almost certainly colonised much of his back garden and stolen the nectar from his flowers. We did keep bees. The other big advantage in terms of property is that we also had the majestic Pera House in Istanbul which had been the old Embassy, modelled on the Reform Club, a very fine but rather austere building. The Ambassador has traditionally had the run of the *piano nobile* of that building with its ballroom and grand entertainment areas. That too was a fine base to attract the real movers and shakers of Istanbul society. Not so much society as the people who run Turkey commercially, culturally and in terms of the media. We went to Istanbul at least once every two months, and that was a necessary pleasure.

The sort of contacts that we were trying to build up both in Istanbul and in Ankara were really invaluable when we needed to get a frank read-out of what Turkey was up to, especially during the Balkan crises which dominated that period. It was the main foreign policy issue right through the period and it got worse from 1992. Turkey is a very lonely country. It has difficult neighbours and a difficult relationship with pretty well all of them. It's outside the European Union and it's a bit of an outsider even in NATO. So it is not surprising that the Turks have their own agenda and their own illusions, rather like the Brits, about their imperial past and their status and role in the world. They believe that they have a historic leadership role in the Middle East, for example, which is an illusion. They believe, with better basis, that they have a special status in the 'stans', the former Soviet republics of Asia. It's slightly overstated but it's a useful role, it brings them some very useful business. In the case of Bosnia, it was very problematic because the Turks are viscerally anti-Serb and they saw themselves as the defenders of the Moslem Bosnians who converted to Islam during the Ottoman Period. It was very frustrating for the Europeans to be endlessly criticised by the Turks for being pro Serb and pro Croat (which we weren't), while they were supplying

arms illegally to the Bosnians and doing absolutely nothing to help our efforts to get humanitarian aid conveyed through to the isolated Bosnian villages.

The other big issue during my time in Ankara was of course the European Union. Not many people in Western Europe understand how angry the Turks are when they see Ottoman ex-colonies like Cyprus, Romania and Bulgaria being given the red carpet treatment to join the European Union when Turkey is forever kept in the waiting room. That fosters a partly justified suspicion that the EU is closed to non-Christian countries. And it certainly goes with their belief, which is fully justified, that the European Union is too vulnerable to blackmail by the Greeks and the Greek Cypriots on any issues that could be to the disadvantage of the Turks. It's a *leitmotiv* of European Union diplomacy. All of that rather saps Turkey's will and drive to be part of the Western community, with consequences we now see every day. During my time in Ankara the UK took a position which was partly sincere but partly opportunistic: we staunchly supported Turkey's accession to the European Union, safe in the knowledge that the French and the Germans would never countenance that. My private view was slightly different. It was that Turkey needed to be given a closer association with the European Union than it enjoyed, and it eventually got that through the Customs Union, and that we should show Turkey the light of eventual membership at the end of a long tunnel, but that we should dispel any illusions that that was going to come any time soon.

AW: A bit more honest?

JG: Yes, and to manage their expectations in a way that left them less disillusioned.

I talked about the need for good personal contacts. They were vital in one important part of the Embassy's work which was sorting out the many problems that are faced by British tourists and British expats living in Turkey, getting them out of prison and getting them out of court and getting charges dropped against them, allowing them to leave the country and all that sort of thing. Good personal contacts certainly got me out of a very tricky situation, when a nosey neighbour of ours in Ankara reported to the Foreign Ministry that we were demolishing a vital piece of Turkish heritage. Actually what we were doing was demolishing the completely useless, decrepit remains of a building, no longer usable, to build a good residence for my Deputy – who, because of the security situation, needed to be in the compound rather than outside. I was summoned by one of my best friends in the Foreign

Ministry and given a very severe lecture that I was in deep trouble for having vandalized this important part of Turkey's heritage. After listening contritely, I asked my friend what he advised me to do. He said "The Heritage empire comes under a very fierce lady professor at Ankara University. I suggest that you go and grovel in front of her in your best Turkish." So I did that, I grovelled very eloquently and we were let off and now our Deputy Head of Mission has a nice secure residence in the compound. It's the way things are done in that part of the world quite often.

AW: And generally on the consular work, were the Turks reasonably tolerant of British tourists and any bad behaviour or was it hard work?

JG: They were very tolerant of bad behaviour at a low level, drunkenness and that sort of thing, because the British tourist is a very important part of their tourism economy. Turkey, rather mistakenly, set itself a bulk target for tourism rather than a quality target. So it gets a vast number of people looking for very nice cheap holidays. Most of them are fine but a few of them are going to cause trouble. It's more difficult when it gets to the legal level because the Turkish legal system tends to grind on in a very straightforward and predictable way. Getting people let off is not really compatible with a good legal system just as a Turk getting into trouble here would not expect to evade justice. One asset was that we had very good vice consuls. Our local staff in Turkey were outstandingly good, probably more useful than the UK based ones overall, certainly on the consular side. They had excellent contacts locally and they could call in favours and they did excellent work day in and day out. I was full of admiration.

One of the other big issues we had to decide, partly in the context of the EU membership debate, was the conundrum about whether the Turkish establishment, the upholders of the Ataturkist heritage, were right in their fears that the new right wing political parties which drew their support from the countryside and from the largely Muslim poorer part of the population, whether these people were trying ultimately to subvert the secular structures that Ataturk had set up. Almost all our well educated upper middle class contacts in the universities, in the press and also in politics had fears on that score which were almost pathological - probably even more so now, following the coup and what's happened since. My view at the time was that people like Ozal, who was a very good President, and Erdogan, who at that time was a very good mayor of Istanbul, recognized the need to work within the

system and within the rules set by Ataturk, and that a swing of the pendulum in the direction of the overwhelming Muslim majority in Turkey was probably quite a healthy and overdue development. Erdogan's behaviour in the last two decades, emasculating the army, taking over the Ministry of Education, establishing a huge concentration of Presidential power in his own hands, taking over the media and the judiciary, shows that I was probably over-optimistic, not to say naïve.

One reason for thinking that Erdogan and his colleagues might have quite a progressive role in Turkey in the 90s was their readiness to look again at the problem of how to accommodate the Kurdish minority. The Kurds are not a tiny group of people in the south east, they are a population of hundreds of thousands in the main cities of the west and all of the south coast. The Turkish police and the military and most of the political parties tended to see any concessions to the Kurds, even on the cultural or educational level, as a threat to the unity of the state. "You don't understand these people, give them an inch and they'll take a mile" was the theme of our conversations. And it was a real dilemma: will a little bit of cultural and educational self-expression help to satisfy Kurdish aspirations or does it put the country on the slippery slope to independence and civil war? And that for the Turks was a deep seated phobia, perfectly understandable if you go back to the 1920s when the Ottoman Empire was broken up in exactly that way. Each minority that asserted itself got a state as a result. The Kurds were the big exception. I argued at the time that a policy of meeting Kurdish aspirations wouldn't be harmful and could be beneficial. I used to point to the example of Wales where the huge effort that goes into cultivating Welsh universities and education in the Welsh language has had a very beneficial effect in terms of self-esteem and has taken some of the sting out of political separatism in Wales. But as I say Turkey's experience at the end of the First World War left everybody concluding that it was too risky a course. And eventually Erdogan joined that line of thinking, which is where we are now on the Kurdish problem.

We travelled extensively in the Kurdish areas, partly to understand what was happening there, and when we did that we became very concerned about the predicament of the Christian communities in the south east. This is a church, the Suriani Church, Syrian Orthodox, which has clung tenaciously to its identity and beliefs and its rituals for nearly 2000 years. We had a sort of watching brief for those monasteries which we visited in the 60s. In the 90s we stayed at their biggest monastery which was called Tur Abdin. To get to

it we had to travel through the Kurdish badlands with a convoy of six Turkish gendarmerie armoured vehicles. We arrived early evening and the gendarmes had expected that they would stay the night at the monastery too. They were absolutely terrified to be told that there was no space for them in the monastery, and that they had to then drive back through the Kurdish badlands in the dark. But that was the atmosphere at the time. The Archbishop at Turabdin looked after us very nicely. I went to the service at 5am in the morning which was an amazing theatrical experience. One evening at dinner he unlocked a decrepit safe and took out several bundles of cloth in which were wrapped 8th/9th/10th century bibles, which had annotations in the margins that learned monks had put in over the centuries. The Suriani are a crucial link with early Christianity. But already in the 90s they were under serious threat. The Turkish authorities saw them as neutral or possibly even disloyal on the Kurdish issue, and the Kurds cast covetous eyes on their agricultural holdings which they had built up over the centuries, turning rocky plateaus into lovely agricultural fields. They were increasingly seen as aliens in a world which is more and more mono-ethnic Turkish and a very large proportion of the Suriani have now left for Europe where they practice as silversmiths. I think the future of this long tradition in the Middle East must now be in doubt.

We were extremely sorry to leave Turkey after only two and a half years. We'd expected to be there for four. I've got a very soft spot for the Turks. They are tough, reliable and loyal although their Government often shows the stubbornness and the inflexibility that goes with those virtues. But we couldn't say no to the lure of NATO, which had been the other *leitmotiv* of my career.

AW: So they asked you to leave and go to NATO?

PERMREP UKDEL NATO, 1995-2000

JG: Yes. I spent the remaining five years of my career at UKDEL NATO. It's a very strange world, NATO. A lot of the best work is done by the military, often at quite junior levels, often invisible to governments or the public. And much of the high politics is done by Heads of Government and Ministers at a stratospheric level. The job of the North Atlantic Council, where I sat, is to provide the continuity, the oversight and the day-to-day crisis management. Discussion in the Council is often formal and for the record. But that's only the tip of the iceberg. What really oils the wheels of the Alliance is the informal contacts

away from the table. The key event of the week at NATO is the PermReps' lunch with the Secretary General which goes on for two or three hours where people go through the next day's Council agenda and tell each other pretty frankly what they are going to say, what matters and what is for the birds. I used to go back from those lunches and send probably five or six telegrams to London, some of them quite long, so that I could get instructions for the next day in the light of the mood that had emerged. I rarely quoted people but I could always sum up the atmosphere. It was under a sort of Chatham House rule, but it was immensely useful in preparing everybody for the more formal discussions the next day. Of course discussion in Council was often far from formal when we got into a real crisis, like the Balkan crisis.

In between these lunches and Council meetings, Ambassadors often warn each other privately as to what's coming up. Sometimes people would come to me and say "I've got bizarre instructions for tomorrow, it would be really helpful if you could give me some material so that I can report back that I've come up against a brick wall". There were very vivid examples at the time of Kosovo. The Italian Ambassador tipped me off that he'd been instructed by Rome to lend his support to a Vatican proposal for a ceasefire half way through our bombing campaign against the Serbs, during the Kosovo War. He wanted help in seeing off this foolish idea, which would have given Milosevic a breathing space to complete the ethnic cleansing of Kosovo, getting all the Albanians down into Macedonia, which is what he was busy doing. When the Italian proposal came to the Council, our response and especially a very blunt one from my forthright Dutch colleague, gave him the material he needed to convince Rome that this idea was not going to fly.

The Council at NATO is much more collegiate than the Committee of EU PermReps although they look like each other in some respects. NATO in general doesn't deal with the sensitive domestic win/lose matters and it rarely leads to a country being isolated, defeated or humiliated. We work by consensus and that's a laborious process but it pays off in the end. It is an even more inward-looking body than the PermReps in Coreper, partly because all the delegations at NATO are co-located in one building, so you don't have to cross the city to talk to each other, you just walk down the corridor and you're in each other's offices. The collegial ethos was sustained even when we took in the eight Eastern Europeans, first as Associates then later on as full members. A Council of 26 is obviously unwieldy but not everybody speaks and there is a tacit recognition that some people will say more than others,

and it's right that they should because they've got more to say. The Eastern Europeans fitted in very well with that and they brought what was to me a very welcome dose of realism about what was happening in Eastern Europe and beyond.

It's good being the UK PermRep because the UK has some big advantages at NATO. It functions mainly in English, everything is drafted in English, which is critical, and most statements are made in English. And some PermReps who are under instructions to use their own language often use English to make sure that everyone else understands exactly what they are saying and that nothing is lost in translation. When I was there, the UK had the key military posts, including Jeremy Mackenzie as Deputy SACEUR and we had the Chairman of the Military Committee, Dick Vincent. Physically, we sat next to the Americans so that when things were moving quickly and we needed to coordinate quickly we were able to do it out of the corner of our mouths. We also had a very strong delegation: I had three excellent deputies in Roland Smith, Brian Donnelly and Bruce Cleghorn; and half of UKDEL's staff were from the MOD and we had the absolute cream of MOD's civilians most of whom were outstanding. Another British asset, though perhaps I shouldn't be the one to say it, is that the UK has long had a very strong polmil team. Because of the salience of the Cold War, this area tended to attract good people, in the MOD and the armed forces as well as the FCO. I was conscious throughout my polmil career that I could draw on powerful support. One touching accolade came from Reggie Bartholomew, who was Under Secretary for Security Affairs at the State Department. He was recorded by one of our Ministers as saying, at a Bilderburg Conference in 1990: 'The best thing for the US to do would be to subcontract security policy to a contractor called Weston, Alexander, Goulden and Associates PLC'. I would put the emphasis on the 'Associates', who included people like Paul Lever, Peter Ricketts and others I have mentioned separately.

When the Secretary General, Javier Solana, left to become the EU's top diplomat, I reported to London that the post was ours for the asking if either Robin Cook or George Robertson threw his hat into the ring, and that we ought to do that because the other candidates who might by default have been considered were not up to the job. Robin declined but George was persuaded to take it on, at a very crucial stage in the Kosovo crisis. With his military background and political experience and his wonderful sense of humour, he was an outstanding Secretary General. In my book Solana, Carrington and George Robertson were the outstanding Secretary Generals of the period after the 70s.

Another major asset, which I don't think people appreciate much in this country, is the ability of our Ministers, drawing on their House of Commons experience, to 'play' Ministerial meetings. Defence Ministers met twice a year, Foreign Ministers met twice a year, sometimes more often. At these meetings 26 Ministers would solemnly read out a wooden speech which had been written for them by their foreign and defence ministries. Whilst this was going on Ministers like Douglas Hurd, Malcolm Rifkind, Robin Cook, Michael Portillo, and George Robertson when he was Defence Secretary, would listen carefully. They wouldn't jump in early, they'd scribble a few words on a piece of paper and pass it over to me and I'd scribble a couple more words, so they'd end up with a piece of paper with perhaps six words on it, and they would adlib right at the end, picking out the best points that others had made that suited our case and doing a kind of magisterial, House of Commons type, summing up speech, a closure speech. Quite often the Secretary General would comment "Well, you seem to have done the summing up for me." It was very helpful and people did appreciate it too; they would listen with rapt attention.

Towards the end of my five years at NATO I became the Dean of the Council, which you might think was a useful role but it turned out to be a poisoned chalice. We were about to agree to build a huge new headquarters, which now exists. It was going to cost a vast amount of money then and it was obviously going to overrun as these projects always do. I got stern instructions from London to say that we were in favour of this new NATO HQ, it was a really good thing, but under the normal cost-sharing formulae, dating back to the 1940s, we would have to pay a distressingly large proportion of the bill. So as Dean of the Council I was told that I had to make sure that any decision on funding was done on a different basis. Even the smallest member state didn't want to see its share of costs bumped up by very considerable sums of money. It was probably the toughest negotiating task I ever had at NATO.

AW: You've mentioned a number of Ministers. Did the political changes at home in 1997 impact on the day to day doing of your job or was it just a backdrop?

JG: In spite of the talk about an 'ethical foreign policy', which I think the Government intended in principle to pursue, the practical results were not very apparent. There were certain changes in relation to the European Union, in particular on the Social Chapter. But at NATO there was more continuity in 1997 than there would have been in the 1980s. The

biggest change as so often was in personalities. Geoffrey Howe had been scrupulous and meticulous in reading everything that was put to him, commenting on it, challenging it, asking for more. Douglas Hurd and Malcolm Rifkind also took briefings seriously and made effective use of them, often calling us in for an informal discussion in which frankness was the order of the day. Robin Cook had a totally different approach. He was much more a “seat of the pants” Minister, very brilliant at picking things up and often right in the judgements he could form on the spur of the moment. But any brief of more than a couple of pages was unlikely to be studied in any detail by him. What he tended to do was turn up at a meeting and say “I haven’t read all of this stuff, but what are the key things I need to say?” Often on the back of an envelope he’d write down three words, pass the envelope over and say “Do you want to add anything?” and I’d add a couple of other words. That would become his brief, but he would usually perform to it very well because he could improvise very successfully.

One of the very first things Robin Cook did was to summon about six or eight senior Ambassadors from abroad to London. I can’t remember the precise timing but it was early in his first week. He just sat and listened. “Tell me truthfully what’s happening and what I need to be worrying about?” People responded to that very well. He wasn’t an easy Minister in some ways and there were some people he took against, but he tended to listen and he was serious in his intentions. There were times when he showed unexpected emotional intelligence. During my time at NATO, I remember him going out of his way to thank Diana at a drinks for looking after Gaynor during a Ministerial visit and asking how she was because she’d had some health problems.

The other Labour Ministers were of good calibre. We had George Robertson at Defence, he was an excellent Minister and went on to be a most successful NATO Secretary General. Tony Blair was a very effective foreign policy operator. He was, during the Kosovo Crisis when I saw him at first hand, open-minded, courageous and highly influential at a time when American leadership was rather weak.

AW: What were the main issues for you at this time?

JG: The three issues that dominated our time there were the Balkans, East/West relations including the break-up of the Warsaw Pact, and the idea of an European defence capability.

On the Balkans when I arrived in 1992, the mood in the Alliance was positively poisonous. There was an absolute chasm between the Europeans, who had troops on the ground and were well aware of all the dirty doings that were going on in Bosnia, and on the other hand the Americans and to some extent the Turks, who had decided from afar that the Serbs were the bad guys and the Bosnians were the victims, with the Croats somewhere in between. There was absolutely no agreement on any role that NATO could usefully play, no structure for integrating NATO into the humanitarian operations that were being run by the UN and the EU. Eventually, but after a lot of very bitter wrangling, the atrocities by the Serb forces and their militias, that were semi-private but controlled by their government, brought us all to an uneasy but rather oversimplified consensus that the Serbs were the main source of the problem. In early 1994 NATO began its first ever military operation, first of all enforcing a no-fly zone to deter the Serbs from flying and later on bombing the Bosnian Serb positions and indeed their capital at Pale in 1995, to force them to lift the siege of Sarajevo which was, I think, the Serbs' biggest mistake in the whole war. This led in the end to the flawed Dayton Peace Accords and NATO's ground force deployment, IFOR. This was NATO's first use of serious military force and the first major action of any kind by NATO outside the area defined by the NATO Treaty. So it was very much new territory for us. We had long and fraught exchanges in the Council to agree, for example, what kind of ultimatum we were going to give to the Serbs. What should be the phrasing of the ultimatum, what should be the fall-back if they prevaricated? We also had to agree on the rules of engagement, what the forces could do and not do. These issues had to be decided in the Council. What the command structures should be, who should be in charge of this and what about contingency plans when things go wrong? It was a very interesting learning curve. It gave us invaluable experience in how to use military force for political ends because the net result was that it changed the agenda in the Balkans from being a military one to a political one. It's stuck in a political impasse now, but that's better than the hot war that was going on beforehand.

Despite this very valuable experience the second operation we had in the Balkans, which was over Kosovo, was much more difficult for several reasons. It involved us in direct contravention of the UN Charter. We had no UN authority to take this action. We were doing it against an area, in Kosovo in particular, which the Serbs saw as their heartland, and we were doing it against the Serb capital as well as their forces. Russia had been loosely involved in the Bosnia Contact Group over the earlier Bosnia War, but in this case of course

Russia was aloof and hostile to us. They certainly weren't going to give us any UN cover. For 72 days and particularly nights, we bombed the Serbs and partly because the weather was often unfavourable for bombing missions, we didn't seem to be producing much by the way of results. That's in the nature I think of totalitarian regimes. They don't crumble slowly, they tend to be very resistant and defiant and then suddenly collapse. But for 72 days we delivered extremely hard hits against Serbia. We bombed their media centre, radio station and bridges. We did a lot of damage to Serbia and all of this against a barrage of media criticism, particularly in the UK, that we were achieving nothing, doing a lot of damage and killing a lot of civilians. We did indeed bomb a train load of civilians which killed I think 55 civilians, we bombed the Chinese Embassy - both of those were by mistake. Fortunately the Kosovars said "We accept there will be civilian casualties, keep going". So they didn't squeal or try to stop us. But the British media continued to predict confidently "This is going to fail". A lot of armchair generals in this country were also of that view. The Council's role was not to choose particular targets. That was a job for the military commanders who reported to the Council on a daily basis. But we had to decide what categories of targets were legitimate. There was a wide spectrum of opinion as to how tough we should be but, as we went into the 72 days, it became clear that we were running out of useful targets. This led to a different phase, which I shall come to in a minute. But as we were discussing and agreeing categories, a senior colleague in London gave me some wise and helpful advice. He said "You must record full chapter and verse for every targeting decision you agree to, because it may be very relevant later on if there are recriminations". I did that scrupulously in a private file of my own which became quite a thick file. It became known in UKDEL as 'The Crown Jewels'. Logging the rationale for what we were agreeing to was quite a useful discipline. It helps one not to be carried away by the mood of the Council if one keeps in mind that you've actually got to justify each decision on paper and show that it's the right thing to do.

By late April in 1999, as we were running out of targets, it was clear that the air campaign had not brought Milosevic to the negotiating table. We knew privately that the key to getting him to give in was to threaten to send in ground forces because then he would lose everything and he would be arrested. But there was a real block here. A ground force operation was anathema to the Clinton Administration and US public opinion. The major NATO ally was saying "Do not even talk about it". But what happened was that Tony Blair and Javier Solana, seeing the way the wind was blowing, agreed that, although NATO HQ could not do contingency plans for a military force on the ground, there was nothing to stop the British

MOD from doing it, and that's what we did. We already had 6000 or so British troops on the ground in Macedonia and in Albania. That was in a way a signal to Milosevic. The MOD produced an excellent plan under which NATO would send in a ground force of 150,000 troops of which the UK volunteered to provide over 50,000. News of this gradually percolated round and I have good reason to believe that Milosevic became aware of these plans and that they did greatly increase the pressure on him to capitulate and accept our terms. So it ended with something which I think in retrospect has been regarded as quite a successful use of military force, because the Albanian Kosovar majority was able to return from Macedonia to which they were being deported by the Serbs. There are still serious problems in Kosovo, but they are problems which are being dealt with through a political standoff, rather than by the extermination and deportation of Albanians which was the Serb solution.

So that brings us to Russia. Cooperation between NATO and Russia began very promisingly with a body called the NATO-Russia Founding Act which later led to the NATO-Russia Council. We held monthly meetings with a senior Russian Ambassador who was appointed to NATO, a person of high calibre, and we set up lots of joint working groups to explore areas of cooperation and confidence building. There was a lot of informal briefing of the Russians, who of course being part of the Balkan Contact Group, had very close military-to-military contacts. We didn't ask too much about that but I think a certain amount of whisky and vodka was involved in those contacts. We worked particularly hard to keep the Russian Ambassador to NATO, Sergey Kislyak, who later became their Ambassador in Washington, informed of what we were doing in the Balkans. But all of this effort led to an under-performance on both sides and the fault was on both sides. The new Russians held on to the old Russian belief that they needed to dominate their hinterland because they didn't have natural frontiers or real allies. So they liked the idea of a glacis of countries that are subordinate to them, which of course had been the pattern for the Cold War. They were also obsessed by the need to be treated as an equal by the United States, the other superpower, and they couldn't accept being only one partner in a Council of 20-odd countries without a veto. That was the mindset on the Russian side. NATO for its part couldn't accept first that the Russians could veto the enlargement of NATO to Eastern Europe, after all the Eastern Europeans had endured in the Cold War. And we couldn't accept that the Russians could stop us in the UN from preventing what the Serbs were up to in Kosovo. NATO enlargement and the Kosovo conflict but also some rather loose talk about Ukraine and

Georgia joining NATO, these obviously fed Russia's phobia about encirclement. And a further obstacle was the mind-set that both sides had inherited from fifty years of Cold War. The Soviet political establishment, which had been incredibly strong and entrenched, survived the Gorbachev/Yeltsin years and was still very much alive and well during my time at NATO, and is still alive and well today. With isolated exceptions, we saw very little new thinking in Moscow. Their mood remained suspicious and confrontational. And, in fairness, some of that Cold War legacy was still apparent on our side too. Relations became particularly fraught at the end of the Kosovo crisis when the Russian military tried without warning to take pre-emptive control of Pristina Airport and carve out their own zone in Kosovo, separate from the NATO one which Milosevic had agreed to under the peace agreement. The British commander of the NATO forces preparing to go into Kosovo, Mike Jackson, was instructed by a rather gung-ho SACEUR to block the runway at Pristina and prevent further Russian reinforcements. Their initial force was very small and not sustainable, so if you stopped reinforcements they would obviously not be able to do anything. To his great credit, Mike Jackson famously is said to have said that he was not willing to start World War Three over Pristina Airport.

The third issue I mentioned is the 'European Defence Identity'. There had been a very long debate about that, going way back into the 80s. It took place initially around a body called the Western European Union, which in the 80s had its Council in London. For that reason I was the PermRep at the WEU Council when I was doing my defence job in the Foreign Office. As part of a serious UK Strategy of beefing up the WEU as the vehicle for the much discussed, but so far rather vacuous, 'European Defence Identity', we decided it would make sense to move the WEU Council to Brussels where it could work more closely with NATO. The UK willingly gave up that card. I have to say that at the same time the French refused to give up a much less important card which was the WEU Parliamentary Assembly, which continued to function pointlessly in Paris for many years.

Anyway, the WEU Council moved to Brussels and I became the UK PermRep to the WEU Council as well as the NATO Council. The WEU was a useful body even though it was rather passive. It didn't actually deploy forces but it co-existed well with NATO, and its treaty provided a key building block for the NATO Treaty and for the European contribution to NATO. But there was a long-standing wish, particularly among the French, who were still semi-detached from NATO, that Europe should be able to act independently of the United

States and of NATO in the military sphere. In the 80s some of the ideas were quite unrealistic. At the time of the terrible humanitarian catastrophe in the Great Lakes area of East Africa, Rwanda and Burundi in particular but also in the Congo, Belgium proposed that we (mainly the UK and France) should send a very large force in to protect the thousands of Tutsi who had taken refuge in the jungle of the eastern Congo. It would have been an impossible task; we would never have got out and there was no military rationale for doing it. On the other hand some of the WEU initiatives which were slowly building up were feasible and useful. We had a mine-sweeping operation in the Straits of Hormuz after the Iran/Iraq War and after the Kuwait War. We had a police training operation in Bosnia which trained the Bosnians and Serbs and Croats to form a collective police force. But underlying our long, tedious discussions on all of this, were some very sharp theological issues. Should the EU, which was slowly developing its political cooperation machinery, be able to task the WEU (which had different membership)? So, should Austrians in the EU be able to task say Turks in the WEU? It was quite a difficult institutional issue. Should the EU build up separate capabilities from those of NATO – its own headquarters, its own operational capabilities, even its own separate forces? The problem within the WEU became more and more acute in the 90s and it was partly a structural one. Half of the WEU PermReps got their instructions from the polmil (political/military) side of their governments, that was certainly true of the UK. But many other WEU partners were increasingly getting their instructions from the EU side of their foreign ministries, who knew nothing about defence but for whom adding defence capabilities to the institutional building up of the European Union was obviously a very good thing.

The UK's problems about the EU in general began to intrude into defence policy. Geoffrey Howe and Douglas Hurd advocated the building up of a defence identity, a defence pillar in NATO which would be NATO friendly but capable of being separate. Developing this idea was uphill work partly in the MOD but particularly in No. 10. Mrs Thatcher was very hostile at first to this idea. In general she was acting, as she so often did, on defence issues, as the 'anchor to windward'. She was more extreme on this than the Americans who were comparatively benevolent towards the idea. We pressed on with it and we thought in UKDEL we had made a huge gain at a Ministerial meeting in Berlin in 1996 when Ministers agreed that the WEU should become the vehicle for a European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI) within NATO structures, that there would be a European 'pillar' within NATO and that Europeans should be able to act independently using NATO assets when the

US and Canada did not wish to be involved. I still think that this would have been a good model for European defence because it would have avoided or greatly reduced the risk of institutional rivalry and of duplication of assets and capabilities between NATO and the EU.

Unfortunately, for wider reasons, we managed to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. Because the Blair Government, marginalised from the Euro and Schengen projects, decided that a British initiative to give the EU a separate defence structure would help to show that we were still, in the hackneyed phrase, 'at the heart of Europe'. Optimists also believed that putting an EU flag on defence would persuade our partners, who were spending far too little on defence, to cough up more in the common interest. I warned repeatedly that creating a separate EU defence structure would be a recipe for institutional rivalry and ultimately confusion. It would lead to duplication of institutions and it would not produce any extra defence 'beef'. But this was a political imperative in London. The MOD, who would normally have opposed this in their stalwart way, went along with it partly to please the Prime Minister, partly because they wanted to make sure their defence budget was not prejudiced by being unhelpful. The upshot was the Blair/Chirac initiative launched in St Malo. They did this with a partial blessing from the US Administration who accepted Blair's assurances that an EU identify would improve our defences. Solemn promises were made at the time, at St Malo and afterwards, that everybody would spend more on defence, that there would be no duplication, and that we'd work in the closest possible cooperation with NATO. But twenty years on, we've got hardly any extra beef and we've seen a great deal of Europe's passion for institution-building and flag-waving. I still retain the doubts which earned me, in parts of the Office, in my 39th year in the Service, the nickname of 'Cassandra'. I did point out at the time that, although Cassandra was not popular in Troy, she did prove to be correct. But that didn't earn me many friends either.

NATO changed hugely in the 90s, probably more than at any time in its previous 40 years of existence. I'm conscious in retrospect that my generation didn't do enough to solve some of the problems that were looming. By 2000 when I retired we hadn't begun to address the problems of terrorism or of cyber-warfare. Delegations at NATO were still strictly divided into separate military and political structures which worked reasonably well on a practical basis but was not the right model for the future, and ours, I'm glad to say, is now fully integrated. France was still outside the military structure though she has since belatedly joined. The burdens were and still are not shared fairly with Germany, Italy and many other

smaller allies contributing too little. There's a growing gap between NATO and EU institutions despite a lot of rather ponderous joint meetings that go on. Most serious of all, we failed to deal with the problems presented by the three most problematic countries, none of which has yet found a reasonably comfortable place in the political structures of the 21st century. They are of course Russia, Ukraine and Turkey.

Despite this mixed legacy, I left NATO feeling fulfilled. It had been a very rewarding and exciting time. But I was determined not to become an armchair warrior, because I really don't think one can pontificate about foreign policy or defence issues if you haven't seen the telegrams or the intelligence which underpin these things. So I resolved to retire properly, to cut off contacts with the Office and to retrace my steps to academia where I did a PhD in my main passion which was music. So that took me into a happy retirement.

AW: And looking back ... I know you've said you don't want to pontificate, but general things that you think should be thought about now? The overall picture?

JG: Well I think it's very boring when old codgers start saying things aren't as good as they were in my day, and obviously there are some things which are much better than in my day. We have a lot more senior female diplomats for example and they make a massive contribution. I can't imagine how we managed without them before. There is more diversity. The Office is less conservative with a small 'c' than it was, but I think it's very tedious when old fogies complain about what's going on today. There are things going wrong, but they always have been. I do have some retrospective thoughts but they are more of interest to historians and journalists than to today's practitioners.

AW: Well that's what the BDOHP is all about ...

JG: I think there are two lessons which all analysts ought to keep in mind when they are looking at foreign policy. The first is that what happens is not what was inevitably going to happen. It's usually the product of a lot of accidents, a lot of coincidences and crucially a lot of things that didn't happen - which you don't even know about. All of these things added together could have produced a different outcome. Niall Ferguson wisely observed that historians need to remember that 'the familiar past that they study was once the uncertain future'. And the second lesson is that what Ministers decide is not considered in isolation,

in a nice quiet room, with all the facts and all the options in front of them. It usually happens at a very inconvenient moment, often in the middle of the night, often when Ministers are very tired, when many other apparently more important things are happening and when there is an inexorable pressure to decide now, for a press release or whatever, even though the sensible thing would be to find out a little bit more before taking a decision. This is true in the case of the arms for Iraq business in the 80s which we've already discussed. Senior Ministers at the time were rightly preoccupied by a myriad of far more important things. I'm not saying these weren't important but the others trumped them several times over. And that's one reason why junior Ministers dealing with arms for Iraq did not feel the need to take up the Prime Minister's or Foreign Secretary's or Defence Secretary's time on a minor reinterpretation of the guidelines.

There are two other things that I've come to realise in thinking about these interviews, things that I took for granted at the time. The first is how much I benefitted from many aspects of the Diplomatic Service ethos. It's one that encouraged, and I think still does, self-confidence, and critically, encourages the wide sharing of information. It has a strong legal and research backup. It has mainly good personnel management, reasonable pay and later on in the career gongs that can be very useful professionally. They're not much use afterwards, I find, but they were very useful professionally. The DS ethos contrasts with some other diplomatic services where information is seen as an asset to be hoarded rather than shared, and where one essential skill if you are going to get to the top is how to guard your back against colleagues. That's a very important thing which I realised, only in retrospect.

The second thing I've recognised in retrospect is how lucky I am to be the product of such a lucky generation. I grew up in the welfare state. I received my education free, at a good grammar school and university. Throughout my career Britain was still a key player in virtually every area of foreign policy. And critically my career began after Suez and before the second Iraq War, both of which would probably have been resigning issues for me. As it was, I didn't face any major crisis of conscience. There were inevitably some issues on which I was uncomfortable or which I found hard to digest, but nothing which was a break issue for me. I was lucky too in spending more than half of my career in London and in multilateral diplomacy, where I think the policy interest is the greatest. The variety and stimulus of my many different DS careers were certainly a lot greater than I would have

enjoyed if I'd stayed on in the academic world, as I discovered when I did my post-retirement PhD.

AW: Thank you John, that's wonderful, beautifully rounded off! Thank you so much for taking part.

JG: Thank you, Abbey. It's been enjoyable as well as instructive, nearly 20 years after leaving the DS, to look back and try to trace a pattern in my career. Though perhaps one of the features of a DS career is that there isn't a pattern.