

SIR DONALD (JAMES DUNDAS) MAITLAND

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British Diplomatic Oral History Project.
Interview with Sir Donald Maitland GCMG, OBE,
on 11th December 1997
Interviewed by Malcolm McBain.

M.M. Can we start with you telling us something of your early career as a Diplomat.

D.M. I joined the Service the day after I was demobilised; I was in the Army during the War and I extended my Army service for a year in order to learn Arabic. I immediately moved into the Egyptian Department of the Foreign Office which later became the African Department. I joined the Egypt and Sudan desk. I found that a fascinating introduction because I was given a good file to deal with - on Nile waters. After that I went out to Iraq. First of all as Consul in a place called Amara which actually does exist; I had to look it up on a map. It had been a Political Agent's post during the British mandate and I was the only British person there. The nearest other British person was 130 miles away. However, it certainly enabled me to polish up my Arabic. Then after some time I went to Baghdad and had three and a half years as oriental secretary there. So the Middle East was a major part of my background.

M.M. Before we leave there, can you tell me briefly what you actually did in Amara. A consul with no British subjects.

D.M. Being junior and somewhat nervous when Personnel Department told me that this was a very important listening post, I thought I might ask: "what shall I be listening for and what might I expect to hear?" They said: "you will be fully briefed by the Embassy in Baghdad on your way there". So I raised the same question when I got to the Embassy in Baghdad and they also said it was an important listening post. So I had to make up my own mission as it were. There was in fact no particular British interest to protect or further and the rather embarrassing thing was that, when I arrived to replace someone who had gone several months before, the tribespeople - it was largely a tribal area - thought that I was the new Political Agent and that I could fix Baghdad. They thought I could telephone to some ministry and get some money for a dam that they wanted to build or whatever it was. So I had to disabuse them. The provincial governor didn't particularly like my being there and I had to persuade him that I wasn't going to undermine his authority; on the contrary, I was bolstering it. Although I was succeeded when I

moved to Baghdad my recommendation was that the post be closed.

M.M. And then after that you went on to be private secretary to the Minister of State.

D.M. Yes, after my fairly long spell in Baghdad as oriental secretary I joined Lord Reading who was Minister of State at the Foreign Office. He answered for the Foreign Office in the Lords; he also had subject responsibilities - principally economic affairs and the developing world; he didn't touch Europe and so we tended to go out on Colombo Plan Conferences and things like that, Economic Commission for Europe meetings in Geneva. And of course, I was exposed for the first time to Parliament, though a very gentlemanly Parliament - the House of Lords; but the procedures were similar, preparing briefs and so on.

The highlight at that time was the Geneva Conference of 1954. This was the Conference designed to settle the Korean War and the Indo-China War. Anthony Eden was then Foreign Secretary and this was the first exposure that I had to him. This was rather interesting, particularly in the light of what happened two years later over Suez. Looking back on that period, I can see how a process had begun in his mind. Reading was the deputy to Eden. Eden, being Foreign Secretary but anxious to become Prime Minister, wanted to have a minister who would sit in for him. He didn't want to miss too many Cabinet Meetings in case Churchill forgot he was there. Anyhow, Eden had quite a list of successes behind him. He had settled the Trieste problem, he had settled the Austrian State treaty and he did a lot of very serious and successful negotiation at this Conference. I had the feeling that he had begun to regard himself as almost capable of walking on water. He was, after all, the person who had been right in the 1930's about Nazism and Fascism and he resented Dulles's appearance at the Geneva Conference. He thought that he had a talent for solving intransigent problems and that, I think, led him inadvisably to start to think in terms of settling the Middle East problem.

M.M. But he could not possibly have got any support for that idea from within the Foreign Office.

D.M. I think the idea of taking on the Middle East as the next great challenge, the next great problem to solve, was his. The Office as a whole thought that it was a most unwise thing to do and, partly because of that, a very small group of people was set up round Eden. Although Reading did get the papers from that little group, this was a secret society inside the

Foreign Office and when all the conspiring went on with the French and Israelis only very few people were informed. The lunch time canteen gossip at the time was that this was a very ill-advised thing to do.

M.M. Yes, indeed. It was a tragic end to what would have been a glorious career.

D.M. The thing about Suez, I think, is this. Outside observers and journalists are always looking for conspiracy theories; people inside know that for the most part when things go wrong it's a cock-up. But this, unique in our modern history, was both a conspiracy and a cock-up; and it certainly did tremendous damage to our interests in the Arab world, in the developing world generally and also to our self-confidence. Maybe it helped us to face up to Dean Acheson's famous statement that we had lost an Empire and not yet found a role - I am not sure. I think to some extent it is one of the causes of the chronic disunity in the Conservative Party. Maybe it is a manifestation of something that is already there, but I think in that case it exacerbated these divisions which have served the country ill ever since then.

M.M. Yes, I think that's right. When you were in MECAS, for instance, and had to evacuate the Centre, do you think that that was a direct outcome of the Suez debacle?

D.M. The Lebanese civil war in 1958 was the first of the tragic Middle East civil wars. I think that it can be attributed to the high prestige that Nasser enjoyed after the Suez debacle. He, after all, thought that he was going to be beaten and, in fact, he won a great victory. He then began to develop his three circles of influence in the Arab world, the Muslim world, Africa and so on. The nationalists in the Arab world resented the fact that Lebanon was still oriented towards Europe and, I am afraid that, to some extent, the president, Camille Chamoun, played into Nasser's hands. The Lebanese Government at that time was altogether too cosy with the West. If they had paid even lip service to Arab nationalism, I think, it might have been better. So, I think, in answer to your question, that the Lebanese civil war was an expression of dissatisfaction by the Arab nationalists and particularly the Muslims and the Druzes in Lebanon - dissatisfaction with the excessive, as they would say, alignment of Lebanon with the West and the failure to take full account of nationalist feelings. And so it all happened. Unfortunately the Druzes, who lived not very far away from where MECAS was, joined this movement and fighting broke out in our village, which was rather a pity. The villagers could easily have kept their

heads down but they brought in some people from the Parti Populaire Syrien who were extreme on the other side. The Druzes wouldn't tolerate that, so they came in and I felt we had to move everyone out.

M.M. Yes, a very sad development. And then, of course, possibly as another consequence of the Suez affair, the French vetoed our application to join the Common Market.

D.M. This veto is a very curious thing and needless to say I have thought a lot about it. We made the initial mistake in standing aside in the late '40's and early '50's. We should have taken part, when invited to do so, in the discussions about setting up a new European entity. Strangely, although Churchill had spoken a great deal about this when in Opposition, when taking office he didn't develop this theory at all. And meanwhile Eden, as I was saying earlier, was still obsessed with his international role as the great problem solver and he wasn't really very interested in what was going on in Europe. We made the first mistake and I suppose the advice being given to our Ministers, to Ernest Bevin and then later to Eden, was coming from people who had been very much involved during the War with the Anglo-American Alliance. Certainly at that time during my first spell in the Foreign Office '47 to '49 and then again from '54 to '56 working for Reading, as I look back on it now I am amazed at the extent to which we consulted the Americans on almost anything that was happening, and we seemed to be miffed if they didn't consult us about something. There certainly was a sense of a continuation of the wartime alliance. I think that one can attribute that attitude not simply to shortsightedness but maybe to the instinct of those who had been very heavily involved. Their wartime experiences were not the same as the younger generation's; their wartime experience had been this extraordinary alliance, a pooling of sovereignty unprecedented in history between two sovereign States. Of course, they had their friends there too; there were personal relationships that they attached importance to; and so it was only in the younger generation that reservations about this policy were being expressed and I couldn't really understand why we weren't responding to the Belgians and the Dutch.

M.M. It may well have been due to our colossal indebtedness to the United States.

D.M. Yes, we had spent our wealth during the war; I think this is quite true. But nonetheless, from the American point of view, even then I am quite sure that the

Americans would have wanted to see British influence being exerted in Europe; why should they carry the whole can for Europe? You are quite right in saying that the indebtedness problem was very serious, but that didn't mean to say that we had to roll over on our backs and get our tummies scratched by the Americans. I think that we could perfectly well have made out a case saying: "we believe that the greatest contribution that we can now make to the Western Alliance is the following ...". We made that mistake and then there was the European Defence Community - the whole idea was mishandled, not by us so much as by the others, so that I think was the next mistake.

M.M. By the others? by the French?

D.M. Particularly by the French, whose idea it was and who at the last moment did not argue for the European Defence Community in the National Assembly. The Bill, the draft legislation in the National Assembly, was withdrawn and that was the collapse of the European Defence Community. This was happening at a bad time for the French Government at the time of the fall of Dien Bien Phu and Bidault was a sick and demoralised man at that time. Then Mendès-France came along and tried to clear things up, but it was too late; and it all went down the plug-hole. I think this was a very serious setback for the whole European integration movement.

Then, late in the day, we eventually decided to apply. In 1960 Macmillan invited Ted Heath to set this in train and I joined Ted Heath's negotiating team. I was then Assistant in the Foreign Office News Department and was present at all the rounds of negotiations, all the visits to member States and so on. That was a very exciting time, because the Delegation was formed from different Departments and the Foreign Office people were well chosen too. In no time at all Ted Heath's personality and powers of leadership welded them into a team. I think that it was very well handled; we had to plough through all these unbelievably tedious briefs, because we were trying to find ways of dealing with Commonwealth trade and so on. The Common Agricultural Policy hadn't been formed; it was being worked on at that time. Sicco Mansholt used to appear before our negotiating sessions to give an explanation of what was in the wind. So agriculture was already on the agenda, but not in the form of the Common Agricultural Policy. There was a moment during these negotiations in July 1962 when we had made a great deal of progress and I am quite sure that Couve de Murville was reporting back to Paris, probably with some concern, that the British were being more forthcoming than they had expected, knowing that de Gaulle might

have serious reservations about all this. The British were agreeing; we were making concessions. Agricultural issues came onto the agenda during our last session before the summer break and Ted Heath had Christopher Soames, Agricultural Minister, and Duncan Sandys, Commonwealth Secretary, with him and they had rather agonising discussions late into the night. A number of us, Christopher Audland, John Robinson and I, all wanted us to say 'yes' to what was being proposed. This would have been hard to swallow, but our feeling was that we had gained so much momentum - and I am pretty sure that Roddy Barclay the Under Secretary at the Foreign Office was of this persuasion too - but we had to be rather discreet. We did argue the other view, but the Ministers had to take this decision. Ted Heath spoke to Macmillan and in the end they put this off.

M.M. Who was then the Foreign Secretary?

D.M. The Foreign Secretary was Douglas Home. Not that he played a role in this because Ted Heath, as Lord Privy Seal, was a member of the Cabinet and was dealing direct with the Prime Minister.

M.M. I am just wondering about your requirement to be discreet.

D.M. Maybe discreet is not the right word. We had to play to our strength; we were, the three of us, junior members; we therefore couldn't form up and say: all of you wise, experienced people have got it all wrong. We had to take our opportunities during the debates; Ted Heath had to put forward another point of view; the advantages of settling now. The advantages of not losing momentum were - how would I present this publicly? - I would have presented this concession by us as a major step forward in these negotiations and to show how serious it is. Of course, we knew we would have to make concessions, but the benefits are this and that and so on. I was confident that as his spokesman I could present this in such a way as would minimise adverse reaction. However that view was well contested. In the end we decided to put this off. And we didn't come back when we hoped we would, as Couve de Murville asked for a postponement.

Now during all this time, it was absolutely clear to us that the five were strongly in favour of enlarging. The only people who had reservations were the French. Couve de Murville used to say from time to time when we were just on the point of agreement, "Monsieur le President, je crains qu'il y a une petite équivoque". So this equivocation was the latest spanner in the works to be thrown by him and one had the feeling that he had the shadow of

Paris, of the Elysée, falling on him the whole time. He didn't make matters easier, he was an unsympathetic person anyway and had a very high opinion of himself. The German Ministers, Schroeder and Lahr, gave us tremendous support, as did the Benelux and the Italians to the extent that they were influential. So all of them were very helpful. So we knew that the people whom we really had to deal with, the difficult customers, were the French and, of course agriculture. When we came back we made very good progress on all the other issues.

M.M. Do you think that agriculture really was the reason - that they were concerned about their vast bulk of peasant farmers and the possibility of cheap grain and so on coming in from the Commonwealth countries?

D.M. They had a legitimate concern, that is quite true. Their case was not empty, they did have problems and the way to deal with those was the way in which we dealt with other things - talk them through and come to some sort of accommodation. The CAP was in the process of being formed; nothing was absolutely set. The French did have legitimate anxieties, of course, so did others; but our view, which was shared by the five and by the Commission - and there were good people in the Commission, including French people who were very much in favour of having us in - was that, by hard negotiation, we could come to an agreement on this point as we had done on all the other points. So I wouldn't say that agriculture was the cause of the breakdown, nor would I say that the trip to Nassau by Macmillan, Kennedy and Skybolt really justified what happened. We didn't get a very good account of what had happened at Rambouillet between de Gaulle and Macmillan. Philip de Zulueta was there and we didn't get a very good account early on. Only later Ted Heath was given in strict confidence a record of this meeting at which de Gaulle had expressed very serious doubts about our suitability to join. When we all left for the Christmas break, the general feeling, including in the French delegation, was that we would come back and with a great heave we would settle this thing early in the New Year. As has been well reported, late in January, Couve de Murville attended a lunch in the British Embassy in Paris where Pierson Dixon and Ted Heath were present. Ted Heath asked him specifically whether, if we settled these remaining problems, there would be any objections on political grounds to our joining. Couve said: 'if we settle these problems no power on earth can keep you out'. That was the weekend before the Press Conference so one must assume that Couve de Murville did not know on that day what was going to be said at that Press Conference. It is interesting that, recently, in a television programme called "The

Poisoned Chalice", when asked about this Couve said "yes, it was indeed an act of treachery".

M.M. By?

D.M. By de Gaulle - his President. So what is the explanation for it? In that same television programme there were quite long extracts from de Gaulle's press conference. None of us was there, we only read about it. But to see it now, one is left with the impression that this man had lost his balance. The language he was using about Britain was really fantastic and something may have snapped.

M.M. How long was that before he finally went back to Colombey les deux Eglises?

D.M. I think it was only a year or two. That was not our fault, it was a French error and what was so touching, moving indeed, was the reaction of the Five and the language they chose; "the members of the Community have sadly been prevented from concluding these negotiations", a marvellous euphemism. We were very upset about all this, Ted Heath also, but his upper lip was exceedingly stiff and Michael King, Foreign Editor of the Daily Mirror, a splendid British journalist, son of Cecil King, said that Ted Heath's reaction reminded him of Churchill's dictum: in defeat, defiance! Ted Heath in his statement said: "we are not going, we will be back". But it was a very sad moment. Although there has been speculation about this, I don't believe that any of the explanations given for de Gaulle's action is convincing. I don't think that there was an external event. I think that this was an outburst of prejudice which he must have had for a long time. I think it was a single man's judgement; and when I am asked about this I always refer to de Gaulle's veto not a French veto, because I think that this was personal. The way our French colleagues spoke to us afterwards showed that they were absolutely désolé - they couldn't understand it at all.

M.M. Well, it certainly did set back Europe, in this country anyway.

D.M. Well, I think it set back Europe, as the failure to do something about the EDC set back Europe, because during that ten year gap before we joined and the next enlargement took place, first of all the CAP was adopted in a form which would never have been accepted if we, the Danes and the Irish, had been there. Second was the own resources system; now that, so far as we were concerned was not rectified until Margaret Thatcher "got our money back" much later. And the third thing, very shortly before we eventually joined, was the Common Fisheries Policy, which was a Beta minus

effort of a fisheries policy. So these three things all happened because they were agreeable to the Six but not to an enlarged Community. So that was a bad period for Europe as a whole, not merely for us.

M.M. I was going to ask you later on perhaps, but I may as well ask now, when we did finally join, when you were in Brussels, were there discussions about Common Fisheries Policy? I seem to recall that in your book you suggested that we had made progress in these discussions. This would have been in about 1976. Do you think that we then achieved a satisfactory deal? Is there any substance in the often repeated criticism by Christopher Booker in the Sunday Telegraph that Common Fisheries Policy was a really bad deal?

D.M. I think that that is wisdom after the event. In 1976, although there had been problems with Iceland over the Cod War, the extent of the need to conserve fish stocks globally was not as well understood as it is today. So I think that that is an unfair judgement with the benefit of hindsight. If everyone had known then about the way new fishing methods were depleting stocks and that some fish species were actually in danger, it would have been different. I don't think that in 1976 circumstances it was a bad deal.

M.M. That's very interesting, because one forgets now that a shortage of stocks was not seen as a problem, nor were the wall of death fishing nets.

D.M. Or indeed that we had just emerged from the Cod War with the Icelanders. Factory fishing and all these technological developments which we are familiar with now, which were responsible for the depletion, these things were not in the public domain.

M.M. Thank you very much indeed for that - that's a wonderful discussion on the start of our negotiations with Europe. I am sorry that I have got you a bit out of sequence there, Sir Donald. Could we go back in your career to when you were Head of News Department and, of course, Principal Private Secretary to George Brown and Michael Stewart, both Secretaries of State in the mid 1960's. Now as Head of News Department, what were your principal functions there?

D.M. The Head of News Department is in a special relationship with the Secretary of State for the time being and of course, with the Principal Private Secretary. He has access at all times to the Secretary of State as he is the Secretary of State's spokesman and offers advice in that

capacity as well. At the same time, he or she has to run a Department which is unlike any other Press Office in Whitehall in that it is staffed by diplomats, not by professional information officers. When I was there, one member of the Department had been there a long time and he knew all the traditions, knew all the journalists and so on. But otherwise the staff consisted of diplomats who were in News Department as a posting; and a very good posting it was too because they were exposed to a different kind of life. Maybe they hadn't had any experience of dealing with the Press before and it would help them in the future, particularly if they went on in the Service and eventually became a head of mission.

So the way in which we organised this work was dictated to some extent by press deadlines. We managed to improve somewhat on the methods which had been used in the past. The first event of the day, as far as our relations with the Press were concerned, was the 12.30 News conference. We had to get ready for that. That meant going through all the cuttings and getting briefs on what to say from Departments in the Foreign Office and maybe other Departments in Whitehall such as the Treasury or Ministry of Defence. That was done by those members of the Department who had territorial or subject responsibility and we all met well in advance of the 12.30 News conference to go through what we should say, to make sure it was sound, what questions would be raised if we said that, what questions would be asked and so on. I thought that we should commit some of this to paper, and so we invented a system of white briefs and green briefs. The white briefs were releases which we could give to the Press; they were rather like press releases and the green briefs were ones from which we spoke non-attributably. That system worked reasonably well and we were also able to share these briefs with other Government Departments.

The 12.30 Conference was conducted not necessarily by the Head or Assistant but by a senior member of the department. The journalists who were there tended to be from the broadcast systems, the agencies and the evening newspapers. In the afternoon a succession of groups of journalists came to the department; they formed their own groups from amongst those whose interests were similar, so there would be a group from the provincial papers, another from the serious papers. *The Times* traditionally had a slot of its own; *The Telegraph* also had a slot of its own. So most of the afternoon from 3pm to about 6pm was taken up with a whole lot of briefings with journalists; these were daily newspaper journalists, as well as agencies and broadcasters. All that went on during the afternoon. And, of course, other events went on during the day; we had to get briefs on other subjects. We eventually wound up our work quite late and every night a duty Officer would go off home, his brief case full of briefs and telegrams from posts where something was going to happen, which might arise during the night, and he dealt with

these issues during the night.

Now I must say I found that relations between News Department and other Departments within the Office were exceptionally good. I think that this was for two reasons; first of all, the rest of the Office had confidence in the way News Department had behaved over the years; it was especially satisfactory that they too were diplomats, the same genus of person, not to be too offensive about it. Then News Department consisted of people who had worked in Departments in the Office, so they knew what was going on there. I think that this is a far superior system to those in other Departments; and eventually the Treasury and the Ministry of Defence began to imitate this. But I had no problems that I can remember during that time. I had access to under secretaries, deputy under secretaries, the PUS and ministers at all times because they knew everything was urgent and they understood that they wouldn't have been bothered unless it mattered. The results, in terms of the Press coverage and so on, on the whole justified this mutual confidence. The great thing from a career point of view was that one got to know everyone in the Office - all the senior people. One got to know ministers, one was dealing with the whole range of foreign policy issues. So it was a tremendous education, and a tremendous experience, probably unrivalled. There is no job inside the Office at counsellor level that is so rewarding in that respect.

M.M. And you went on from that to be a Principal Private Secretary to two Secretaries of State.

D.M. Yes, that is quite true. First Michael Stewart; and then George Brown replaced him and then George Brown resigned and was replaced by Michael Stewart. So curiously enough I worked for both of them; both as Head of News Department and as private secretary. So I had a familiarity with them but, of course, being private secretary was different;

I became George Brown's private secretary first. There was a small beauty parade; Teddy Youde was the other candidate. George Brown, the message came out, would like me to join him. Teddy Youde congratulated me and I said "I should be congratulating you" because, of course, we both knew George Brown's personality!

M.M. And then, I think, George Brown's personality has been gone over quite a lot.

D.M. Yes, I think that the press wrote a lot about George Brown at the time and to some extent he courted that deliberately; otherwise he had that coverage inadvertently because of his eccentric behaviour. Of course, the press like to have a flamboyant, colourful character and the British tend to regard people who have some personality, some curiosity, as good old so-and-so, good old George. The benevolence with which his affairs were covered in the Press, I can only say, very frankly, was not justified by his behaviour behind the scenes.

M.M. Which was less than benevolent.

D.M. At times his behaviour was absolutely unacceptable, for example to be woken up in the middle of the night, night after night, just because he had got back from the House of Commons where he had been with his cronies in Annie's Bar. He would open his red box which we had dutifully sent to Carlton Gardens, when he got home; he then wanted the author of some submission rung up at 2.30-3am because he was dissatisfied with something or other or he didn't agree this or that. When I declined to do this on the grounds that I would do it as soon as I got in in the morning, he would say: "do it now" and I would say: "I'm sorry, I am not going to do that". So there was a great explosion. Then in the morning I would go into his Office and here would be an entirely different George Brown. I didn't know if there was only one Jekyll and one Hyde or whether there was more than one personality. I never discovered; I think there was something in between. But I would find somebody who was in a state of great shame at his behaviour during the night and would rather sheepishly ask whether he was pardoned. So one had various techniques; "Oh that. I have forgotten all about that". One dismissed it, knowing full well that a few hours later Mr. Hyde would take over again and somebody else would be being bawled out. I must say that I formed the impression that this volatility, to put it no higher, raised a serious question as to whether he was fit for high office and I am rather surprised that Harold Wilson put up with him for so long. Whether he thought George Brown had influence with the Unions, I don't know. But if one looks back at his achievements, I think that in the field of foreign policy, laying the foundation of a UN Resolution on the Middle East and the land for peace idea, which has been the basis of everything that has been done since then, - I think, that laying the basis for that was a great achievement - George Brown absolutely at his best. He went out to New York, to the Security Council, and I attended all his meetings with, I don't know how many other

foreign ministers in a day; but he just hammered home with them the same message - here is a chance: the Israelis must give up territory and the Arabs must make peace with Israel. This simple message was hammered home. No one demurred. After George Brown returned home Lord Caradon, who was then the U.K. representative in New York, took over the negotiations and eventually this Resolution was passed by the Security Council.

Otherwise, I would say, that George Brown didn't make any particular contribution to East/West relations. During the tour of the Six with Harold Wilson, George Brown was a Euro enthusiast, but he didn't change his brief throughout that tour; it was Wilson who was listening to what the others were saying and responding to them; it was Wilson's sharp wit which enabled him to see something we could build on, something we could exploit; 'the Germans have said that and we can try it with somebody else' and so on. It was Wilson whose mind was working, whereas George Brown was just the great Euro enthusiast. His view was: let's just go ahead; he wasn't doing very much thinking there. But I would say that his proposal that Christopher Soames become ambassador in Paris and his nomination of Denis Greenhill to succeed Paul Gore Booth, whom he had treated quite shamefully both in public and in Office meetings and so on - those were two very good moves. But I am hard pressed to think of any other major contribution that he made. He had a curious delusion, I think it can only have been a delusion, that he had a special relationship with Nasser and a special relationship with de Gaulle. But I can't think of anything in the policies of either Nasser or de Gaulle towards Britain which reflected any special regard for George Brown.

Michael Stewart was an entirely different character. He was very businesslike and Michael and Mary Stewart were a tremendous team. She was a personality in her own right with her own public service role. He was a dedicated, most conscientious Secretary of State. He held strong views, expressed them with great lucidity; a very patient, considerate man. He was really a very good person and I don't know of anyone who would not say the same about him and the way he dealt with us all. He had a very hard hand to play on Vietnam. I don't think that we were on a winner there but he probably did all that could be done.

M.M. In what particular direction?

D.M. By supporting the Americans up to a point but not going too far. Rusk was always

wanting to have even a platoon of the Black Watch; the Americans wanted us to be heavily engaged, but he kept on saying: no, we would forfeit our role, the role which we inherited from the Geneva Conference. We would forfeit our superior neutral role if we did that, but at the same time, I think, he gave adequate political support to the Americans despite misgivings beforehand about French and American policy. That was a very difficult hand for him to play.

M.M. Well, thank you, that was most interesting and revealing. You went from there to be Ambassador in Libya and had negotiations with the infamous Qaddafi for a time.

D.M. He wasn't infamous then. He was a nervous young captain in the Libyan Army - a recently promoted Captain. Twenty-seven years old and suddenly he was Head of State and Government. He and his colleagues of the Revolution Command Council confessed after two or three long sessions when, I think, a degree of mutual confidence had been established, that they had fully expected the British to invade and to restore the monarchy. They found it very difficult to believe that the thought had never crossed our minds. Their problem was their age Qaddafi was 27, he was born in 1942, while the Desert War was on, to a Bedouin family. When he was ten years old Nasser overthrew the monarchy in Egypt and Nasser's propaganda was beamed to the Arab world. So Qaddafi's world, and that of his colleagues, was the view of the world conveyed by the Voice of the Arabs broadcasting from Cairo. I became immediately aware of these basic misconceptions about the world and tried patiently to remove some of them. This explains why they were perfectly convinced that we would invade and when we didn't they were nonplussed. But Qaddafi was exceedingly courteous to me. First of all he said how very satisfactory it was that we could conduct all this business in his language - Arabic. That was helpful to me. Arabs attach a lot of importance to their language and think that anyone who has learnt their language must understand their point of view.

M.M. Civilisation.

D.M. Yes, indeed. That is true, that is a true assessment. Mig Goulding, my Head of Chancery who had been a student of mine at MECAS, always came with me to the meetings I had with Qaddafi and his team from the Revolution Command Council. We did all this in Arabic and Qaddafi very much appreciated that and when confidence had been established, he said "if you ever need to see me, just let me know and I will see you because I know that you will not worry me unnecessarily; if it is serious and you wish to

speak to me let me know". Now, he was as good as his word; if I was seriously worried about something I would ring up and ask for an appointment. Normally it was arranged for 9pm or so; he was busy during the day but I would see him and he would deal with the question and would then give me a good answer and I would thank him for seeing me. He would say: "if you think it is important you come to me; we don't want to have misunderstandings" etc., etc. So I appreciated that very much. Having said all of that I have to add that there was an occasional look in his eye, which reminded me somewhat of the look that comes into Enoch Powell's eyes when he is making a speech about immigrants in this country. There are other politicians who have a look that comes into their eye. I was interested that Humphrey Trevelyan, talking in his memoirs about the period after the Iraqi Revolution in 1958, said that Kassim who led the Revolution and had the King murdered had this look from time to time. When this happened he knew that the fanatic had taken over. So I thought there might be something there - seeds of fanaticism. Qaddafi was strongly Islamic and, most curious, he had strong views about the Palestinians; he regarded this as a tremendous injustice and as Libya is a long, long way from Palestine, I was impressed by this and couldn't quite understand why he should take such a forward view about it. I think the explanation was that he was nervous about Western influence generally and wanted to weaken Western influence, certainly have a different relationship with the West. He regarded Israel as a Western outpost and therefore something foreign in the Muslim Arab world. So on that point I felt one could make no headway. But, as regards his subsequent behaviour, I can't say that I was aware, by the time I left, of the seeds that were there. I knew that we had a man with very decided views but I would not have said that he was as unbalanced as he subsequently proved to be.

M.M. Was the oil industry functioning in Libya at that time? It had started, hadn't it?

D.M. Yes, the oil industry was one cause of the Revolution because it brought in wealth and it brought in a lot of Westerners. Some well disposed Libyans who were able to get to see me - they had to be rather discreet with their contacts with Western ambassadors - said that they thought the West, and Britain in particular, had rushed in to get all the goodies out of this new evolving oil economy on the basis of diplomatic or political pressure. One of them said: you have been treating Libya like a prostitute. That was an extreme remark, but I think that there was resentment at the extent to which British influence, having been military at one time, was now becoming commercial. So that was a new form of colonialism and was strongly resented by the young officers. The oil companies there were

doing very well. Now, there occurred an event during my time in Libya which was to some extent a precursor of the oil crisis. One of the ambitions of the Revolution Command Council was to recover the oil wealth and have it used for the benefit of the people of Libya. So they said that from now on we will set the price - why should you? This happened in the last few weeks I was in Libya before I was summoned back to London. I discussed this burgeoning crisis with my American colleague and I said I think that unless the oil companies can see what is happening and concert their response to this, they are going to be picked off one by one. If they didn't accept the price they were given their operations would be suspended. My American colleague said that anti trust legislation in the States probably ruled this out. I said to him "why can't we all happen to be staying in the Carlyle Hotel in New York, happen to meet there in the Bar, happen to have a meal there together and see how they would respond?" He said even that would become known and, because of that, they would not agree. I said I was afraid that they would be picked off one by one; he said: "so be it, they will have to deal with it as best they can". Now that, I think, gave the Shah of Iran the idea and led eventually to the oil crisis in 1973, and soon afterwards, the embargo and one thing and another. This was the breakthrough, because what Qadaffi was insisting on was not unfair; why should the oil companies set the price of somebody else's product? Why shouldn't the oil states play the market as it were? I think this was a very good move on Qaddafi's part; it clarified the situation and removed an anomaly.

M.M. That is most interesting. You were called back from Tripoli to be Mr. Heath's Chief Press Secretary. What is the difference between the Chief Press Secretary and the PM's Press Officer?

D.M. There isn't a difference really. The reason I came to be called Chief Press Secretary was because Ted Heath knew how I would deal with the Press and be his spokesman. He wanted me back there because, first of all, I was not an Information Officer, secondly, I had more prestige as an ambassador and I was always introduced when we had visits from other Heads of State - "have you met the ambassador, this is Donald Maitland" and so on. The message that I had from Sir Denis Greenhill, then Permanent Under Secretary, asking me to come back said the Prime Minister wanted me to join his staff as spokesman on a par with Brandt's Ahlers; he was the German Chancellor's Press Secretary and a senior person in the German hierarchy. He was not just a Press Officer; he was a person of substance. Conrad Ahlers had been noticed by

Ted Heath and he thought: I want to have a Conrad Ahlers. So I was brought back to be a more prestigious person than my predecessor. However the role I was going to play required there to be somebody else to be my deputy and a man called Henry James was offered this job; and he said I'll come in if I can be called Press Secretary. So it was decided that I would be Chief Press Secretary and he would be Press Secretary. That was the origin of it. I didn't invent the term; it was invented for me by Henry James, who wanted to be called the Press Secretary; it would look good in his CV.

M.M. And then he went on to be head of the COI.

Resuming after lunch.

M.M. Could I ask you about the main events that took place while you were Chief Press Secretary at No.10?

D.M. Of course, many of the main events were related to domestic affairs, particularly the fight against inflation, the Industrial Relations Act, the trouble with the Unions, the tripartite talks which were an attempt, not to create a corporate State but to create a new relationship, a new understanding between the two sides of industry and government. I attended all those talks. Some of them were in Chequers and some in Downing Street. I thought that that was a brave attempt to break with the past and when I left in the summer of 1973, after three years precisely at No.10, I thought that that might provide a solution to that long problem. But then it began to go wrong later with the miners strike and so on - all that is History.

In the field of international affairs, I suppose, the first event of importance was what came to be known as the Leila Khalid affair. An Israeli aircraft was hijacked on its way to Britain by some Arab terrorists. Some of them were killed by Israeli security guards and when the aircraft landed the woman terrorist, Leila Khalid, was arrested. This led to the hijacking of other aircraft in the Jordan desert. In fact there were scores of hostages of different nationalities in the Jordan desert; it became an international incident because other governments wanted Leila Khalid to be released. This was really a dreadful dilemma, a real no-win situation; if you had tried to invent one you couldn't have done better!

There was one problem, which we didn't reveal. Parliament was not in session and so I was the main channel between Government and public. So it fell to me to brief the Press

regularly on this. One thing which I did not reveal, because it could have had a very serious bearing on the case, was that we didn't know for certain at what precise point the terrorists took over the aircraft; was it in British air space or was it over international waters? This was first and foremost a legal problem and I was very interested to see the way the Attorney General, although a member of the Government, behaved throughout all the agonising discussions which we had amongst the ministers concerned in the Cabinet, all of which I attended. He insisted that he was acting not as a minister, a member of the Government, but as Attorney General. So in the end the decision that we had no adequate grounds for detaining her or charging her was based as much, or more, on legal advice than other considerations. Meanwhile, the situation in Jordan and the Lebanon was getting more and more difficult and co-ordination amongst the governments of all the nationals being held hostage was not always easy. We had hoped that the International Red Cross might play a bigger role, but either they found this too complex or they didn't have quite the determination that we hoped they would have. In the end an understanding was reached with Nasser that the hostages would be released if Leila Khalid was released, as it were, into his custody. I said earlier that this was a no-win situation. I think probably that that was the least bad solution to this problem, but I must say that this was a very trying experience. Ted Heath kept his cool throughout, but I am quite sure that he was as angry as any of us about the attitude of the terrorists. I thought then that there can be no cause that justifies this sort of action, putting scores and scores of people and their dependants in misery. I just felt that I wanted to have a hot bath to rid myself of the coating of evil that dealing with this problem had left me with.

M.M. Before we leave that, who was applying the pressure? The Palestinians?

D.M. The Palestinians wanted her to be released. They were saying that they would blow up the aircraft in the Jordan desert and start killing the hostages unless she was released. So we were being blackmailed by them and, of course, public opinion at home and Israel were all for trying this woman. So one way or another we would have given in to some kind of pressure and the lesser evil was the one we opted for in the end. It was the threat of these terrorists.

M.M. How many people stood to lose their lives?

D.M. I think it ran into hundreds because there was more than one aircraft and I think they

were full.

M.M. And a variety of nationalities.

D.M. Yes, a variety of nationalities and this was one of the great problems. We had to try and keep them all on board and their processes of decision taking weren't as swift as ours. They were looking to us, as we were the Government which held the key. This was very disagreeable and, of course, all that trauma was brought back at the Munich Olympics. The Prime Minister was invited to attend and I was invited by my German opposite number Conrad Ahlers to go to Munich with my wife as his guests. We attended the Games; Willy Brandt was there and we were all to lunch with him. We did indeed lunch with him on the very day of the massacre. I could see in his face the same agony as I saw in Ted Heath's face when he was trying to deal with this awful problem as well. So it brought all that back. Otherwise Anglo-American relations didn't figure very largely. Ted Heath took pains from time to time to explain to the Americans that things were changing because we were hoping to join the European Community. So there was nothing in particular to report there but we were taken aback when the Americans changed the status of the Dollar.

M.M. Changed the status of the Dollar?

D.M. They ended the Bretton Woods arrangement. The Dollar floated freely. Connally was at that time U.S. Treasury Secretary and in August, without any warning, this was announced. We were taken by surprise, no special relationship had worked there.

On taking office Ted Heath set in train steps to get negotiations going again to join the European Community. He was in defeat, defiant, as Michael King said, and he was going to fulfil his undertaking to the press and the public following the de Gaulle veto that he would not give up. He drew the clear lesson from the events of 1962/63 that the French held the key. Fortunately Soames was there as Ambassador in Paris, and he had established an exceedingly good relationship with the Elysée. This was exploited to the full and at the critical moment in 1971 we had reached a point where there were only two or three things which remained to be agreed informally between us and the French. Pompidou invited the Prime Minister to go to the Elysée for talks. One of the main items was the role of sterling; the French had genuine concerns about it. We were still a Sterling area and the question was: how would this fit in? Interestingly, if one knows the French one can understand that another item was a matter of some importance: what sort of people would the British be

sending to the Institutions of the Community, as it then was? Ted Heath assured them that they would be people with knowledge of Europe. What about language? We will not send anyone, from whatever Department he comes, Treasury, Trade, whatever it may be, who does not have a working knowledge of French. Ted Heath was able to say this as we had arrangements in hand whereby people being posted to our Mission underwent training at Tours and they would arrive with a decent working knowledge of French. Pompidou did attach importance to this.

So we had this meeting at the Elysée and I went over as Chief Press Secretary. I was met by a man called Denis Baudouin, who was my opposite number. He knew that I had been present at Ted Heath's side throughout the abortive negotiations. He made it fairly clear to me that this was a different situation. He said that he thought that he and I were going to be present at an important moment in history. He didn't expand on this but on the second day, the talks went on rather longer than expected over lunch. Then Baudouin and I received a message that we were ready for the press conference. He said: "follow me". I didn't know where this was going to be, but it was actually in the same Salon des Fetes in the Elysée where de Gaulle had held his Press Conference and pronounced the Veto. Baudouin led me to a chair where we could see both Pompidou and Ted Heath and the audience. I looked at the audience and recognised many of the people as they were journalists whom I had briefed in the past. I also realised that many of them had been there ten years previously. Denis Baudouin's remark about living a moment of history together was absolutely true. We were there when Pompidou made his now famous statement to the effect that there were those who thought Britain did not have any European vocation, there were those who thought France was determined permanently to exclude Britain, but here you see in front of you two men who are convinced of the contrary. That was, of course, one of the most wonderful moments in any diplomatic life and I could see that there were few dry eyes in the Salon; they all knew that history was being made in front of our eyes. That was a great moment.

I was subsequently involved with Anthony Royle, who was the Parliamentary Under Secretary in the Foreign Office at the time, in the coordination of information about our membership with a view to getting the majority of people in favour. This was quite separate to the work at political level being undertaken by Francis Pym, who was the Chief Whip. This culminated in the very substantial vote in the House of Commons in favour of our accession. That was an event of especial importance and, I think, the way Ted Heath kept this going

and kept his calm and made sure that all those concerned knew what they had to do and were doing it without any interference from him, that was typical of his method of government. He was indeed the ideal chief. His technique was to select people to form his crew - he was a great sailor - having selected the crew or team and given them very simple general instructions he left people to get on with things and, when they felt the need for further guidance, he was always available. He would give his guidance in a matter of minutes; there wasn't any fuss about this and so the relationship with those of us who were on his intimate staff at that time was a very close one. It may be a surprise to some that, not only did he command our respect and, of course, our loyalty, but also our affection. Outside business, as it were, when we were metaphorically letting our hair down, we did have quite a lot of very amusing exchanges; there could be a great deal of laughter and those were also enjoyable moments when relationships were further cemented.

M.M. What part did you actually play in the renewed negotiations?

D.M. I did not play any part in the negotiations that were conducted by Geoffrey Rippon, for that was a Foreign Office operation and that was being conducted by the News Department. The role I played in front of the Press covered all the activities of Ted Heath himself. For example, the briefing on the Paris meeting, I did that; and the other thing I did was to support Anthony Royle in devising the information campaign to explain to the public what this meant. That was a behind-the-scenes co-ordinating job.

One of the things I did at No.10, which I think had not been done before, was to establish groups of people from different Departments to co-ordinate the presentation of policy on particular subjects, rather than having it all controlled from No.10, or having people behaving like loose cannons, as it were, in their own Departments. This was very well received by those concerned. For example, on the industrial policy question there was a team there - Treasury, Trade and Industry, Department of Employment and I brought in an Under Secretary from a Home Department to help co-ordinate this. That worked very well; those concerned got the hang of it and if something happened on their front they would consult the others in the group before making their press statement. So I think we were able to present a more coherent point of view to the public than had been the case in the past. Certainly we avoided conflicting briefings coming out of different Departments.

M.M. Behind the scenes there. Then you became UK Permanent Representative to the

United Nations. Anything but behind the scenes!

D.M. Jean and I would say that was the most enjoyable Post we had; it was a pity that it was for such a short time. I was required to leave after the election in the Spring of 1974 to be replaced by Ivor Richard. That was a very busy time, because we arrived in New York just after the Israelis had diverted a Lebanese aircraft; this went to the Security Council within a couple of days of my arriving and hardly having met my colleagues on the Security Council, I had introduced a Resolution that was passed unanimously. All my colleagues said this must surely be a record! You arrive one day and two days later you get 100% in favour of your Resolution. Then the Yom Kippur war began, the oil crisis, and that led to the demand by developing countries for a New International Economic Order. Well, the fact that I had served in the Middle East, including most recently in Libya, and had experience of the developing world was very fortunate because I had a better understanding than some other people of the motivation of the developing countries at that time.

M.M. You mention the oil crisis. I presume this was the period when oil prices rocketed in a serious way and caused enormous consternation in the industrialised world.

D.M. Oil prices rose and rose. In fact, the Netherlands were boycotted by some oil producers because of the attitude they adopted and, for the first time, I think, in history, Americans were forming 'lines' - queues as we say in England - at the filling stations; and indeed it was sometimes difficult to get more than one gallon when you eventually got to the head of the queue. It was being rationed by the petrol stations, so this was a major crisis. Coincidentally, there was trouble with the miners in Britain who, it was being argued, were a special case. I think it could have been argued, given that there was an oil crisis, that the miners were a special case and maybe a different attitude to them could have been adopted; but that's now one of the 'ifs' of history.

The main thing that we were concerned with in New York, while the industrial countries were thinking how they could react to this, - and that eventually led to the establishment of the International Energy Agency - was what sort of demands of the oil producers in the developing world were reasonable? Meanwhile there was a war to deal with - the Yom Kippur War - and on the day that we first heard the news, I had hardly got to the office before Henry Kissinger rang. He was United States Secretary of State, and he wanted me to join with the Americans in calling for a cease-fire and withdrawal to original positions. I

said I would report this and I got on to London. Anthony Parsons who was the Under Secretary looking after the Middle East and other areas was the person handling this. When I got through to him, he said that he had just come from a meeting with the Foreign Secretary, Sir Alec Douglas Home, and I had authority to work for a cease-fire. I thought that that was the ideal instruction. One thing relevant to the Kissinger statement was that the Egyptians had been re-occupying their own territory, crossing the Canal and going into Sinai.

But from that moment on it was clear that there was very little common ground between the American attitude and ours. By ours, I mean, not only the British and the French but the European. Louis de Guiringaud, my French opposite number, and I worked in very close harmony; we compared notes, we shared with each other instructions we had had from our capitals, we shared with each other the recommendations that we would be making to our capitals; we could hardly have had more close collaboration. We also made a point of briefing and consulting the representatives of our Community partners. They were able to supplement their reports on the actual proceedings in the Council with reports on what we had said and what we were up to. We were making common cause, at this stage, with developing countries, members of the Security Council, as well as the Egyptians. The Egyptian Foreign Minister came out to New York and almost immediately wanted to talk to the Europeans, so Louis and I were there speaking as members of the Security Council with our colleagues. This, I think, was the beginning of what eventually became the Euro / Arab dialogue. That again was a major step forward. It was understood perfectly well that the Americans would be sympathetic, to put it no higher, to the Israeli point of view, whereas the rest of us thought that the Israelis must give up the territory that they had occupied. I also found that the Secretary General - it was Waldheim at that time, - thought it in his interest to keep me and Louis de Guiringaud well informed of the reports that he was getting from his people on the spot. We were aiming for a cease-fire. When eventually we got that, talks were initiated at a post in the desert. The Israeli general and the Egyptian general would meet there under UN auspices. I thought that what would happen then was something that I had experienced before when combatants cease fighting and they meet. They see in each other a general commanding an army who has been waging a battle on the other side and he is full of that experience, the good bits and the bad bits. He also sees in the person on the other side of the table, a fellow professional, in a way a colleague, so the interested third party would do well in those situations to get out maps. Generals like nothing better, with their staff, than looking at maps, seeing where

people are and seeing how they can move and so on. This brings out their professional skills; this, of course, was exactly what was happening. An Israeli and an Egyptian general were making very good progress planning withdrawal, leaving a gap and so on. A marvellous Staff College exercise as it were, and you could see how they could well have been warming to each other as this was going on. Waldheim called me up one afternoon and said: would I come round, please? He said, when I got there: "I have bad news for you; the Israeli general has just told the Egyptian that this is the last meeting; he has been instructed not to come again!" Waldheim was comparatively discreet about this in talking to me. I smelt a rat, I am sorry to say, and some of Waldheim's staff intercepted me as I was leaving and said; "you no doubt think that there is more to this than the Secretary General told you; we have good grounds for thinking that there is". Not long after that Henry Kissinger began his shuttle diplomacy. I was left with the impression that the Americans were nervous at the pace of progress being made here and wanted to take control of this themselves. I have no confirmation of that, but the coincidence is significant.

M.M. Well, Sir Donald, I think that probably concludes your period at the United Nations. You returned from there, in 1974, to become Economic Deputy Under Secretary of State in the FCO and deal with problems from the London end. Now how did that period of your life go?

D.M. My departure from New York was precipitated by the General Election results. The Labour Party had said in their Manifesto that they would appoint a minister to the United Nations. Indeed, when the election campaign was going on Hugh Caradon was sighted lurking in the precincts of the United Nations. Anyhow, when Labour won the election Ivor Richard was appointed to replace me and I was asked to return home, which I did. I went to see the Foreign Secretary who was very sympathetic; he spoke about the turn of the wheel of fortune. I must say that he was a good deal more sympathetic than was the Permanent Under Secretary of the day.

M.M. Michael Palliser?

D.M. No, Tom Brimelow. I had expected that he might commiserate a bit with me but he began by asking would I like to be Ambassador in Baghdad? It didn't take me very long to say no. The reason he may have asked this is that on the ship on my way back from New

York, I received a message asking if I would be prepared to go to Baghdad immediately as the Iraqis wanted to restore relations which had been broken off for some frivolous reason, some dispute over the Tunb Islands in the Persian Gulf. So I was flown out there and went through the ritual of enabling the Iraqis to get out of the corner they had got into. That only lasted a few days. Baghdad looked very different from the Baghdad I had left many years before. Anyhow I didn't think very much of that suggestion. Brimelow then asked me what would I like to do? I refrained from saying that I would like to get my job back in New York! I said I would be very happy to consider any reasonable proposal he put to me. In the end this post was offered, to be the Economic Deputy Under Secretary. I was very glad to do that as it meant in a way I was continuing the work I had been doing in New York with the developing countries. Also it involved setting up the International Energy Agency and that was relevant to the work I had done at the end of my time in Libya.

I heard from No.10 that the Prime Minister still had some resentment; I had worked for Edward Heath as his Press Secretary and Harold Wilson seemed still to be suspecting me of having less than full loyalty to his Government which, of course, was quite untrue. Things began to change. A meeting in Washington was planned and after some hesitation I was included in that meeting because we were going to discuss economic issues. Harold Wilson was already focusing on a Commonwealth Conference due to take place in Kingston, Jamaica. He had been President of the Board of Trade in the first Labour government after the War and had been concerned with the Havana Charter and indeed had advocated the extension of trade agreements to include raw materials at that time and that had failed. It seemed that he was still nourishing an ambition to do something about trade, not only in manufactured goods but also in raw materials. I was then invited to prepare a paper on trade and commodities to be presented to the Commonwealth Conference, in as much as many Commonwealth countries depended very seriously for their income on such trade. I had the assistance of John Cloake, who was head of Trade Relations and Export Department in the FCO, - a very good department. Having that department there facilitated my not very easy relationships with the Department of Trade and the Treasury. My good fortune was that the Deputy Secretary in the Cabinet Office, James Hamilton, understood exactly what was in mind, namely that Harold Wilson wished to have a proposition to put to the Commonwealth which would respond to their needs; and if we got the Commonwealth behind us we might be able to push this further, maybe to the European Community. So we got to work.

James Hamilton and John Cloake and his team managed to collect a lot of information about trade in commodities and we gradually selected those which we thought were suitable for regulation or co-ordination under some international agreement; not all could be treated in that way. We prepared quite an extensive paper with lots of annexes showing the fluctuations in trade in commodities and percentage importance in terms of gross domestic product and of export earnings of these countries and produced a very good table by careful research. We drafted what I thought was quite a convincing case for remedying the defects of the Havana agreements after the War. This paper was sent over to No.10. Harold Wilson had been through it over the weekend. I understood from friends in No.10 that he was more than impressed. He said that we had produced more than he had expected. I think he began to change his view of the FCO, certainly his view of me. We went to Jamaica and he presented his proposal and quite conspicuously at a press conference afterwards motioned that I come and sit beside him. On the aircraft coming back he sent his Private Secretary to sit beside me and say: "I have a message from the Prime Minister: Donald can have his medals back".

I thought that it was a pity that it took him rather a long time to realise that some public servants are capable of serving Prime Ministers of different parties with equal loyalty and devotion. That was a very interesting experience, a new one, and did, of course, draw on some of the experience I had had at the UN and elsewhere. Jamaica decided to set a Commonwealth committee to pursue this issue with a view to the Commonwealth presenting a paper internationally. I was nominated to be the UK member of that and not long after that Harold Wilson told me he was going to send me to Brussels.

M.M. Before we get onto that particular stage, have you got any observations to make about the appointment of Tom Brimelow to be Permanent Under Secretary? This may be a bit too personal for this. He is dead now.

D.M. I think that this appointment took some of us by surprise. He had come to attention, of course, because of his knowledge of Russian. He had been one of the leading interpreters during the Krushchev/Bulganin visit in 1956 and was really rather a good interpreter of the Soviet point of view. Some of us wondered if he had the depth of experience, but following Denis Greenhill was an impossible task. To my mind Denis Greenhill was the ideal Permanent Under Secretary. I can support that judgement with

one reason, he has a sense of humour, a sense of proportion. Greenhill is a very human person and I found he was capable of a personal comment, a personal touch. He understood - he seemed to have an instinctive feeling about how people were feeling in posts abroad if they were dealing with an awkward situation. Denis Greenhill was a person who thought about them - what can be going through their minds at this stage? I found him an absolutely first class chief and I think that Tom Brimelow came from another league.

M.M. Another personal question; John Cloake who, I think, at least from my point of view had a very high reputation in the Office but I don't recollect what happened to him after he was Head of Trade Relations and Export Department, I think he went off to some overseas Post but that was the end of him.

D.M. I think he perhaps went to Sofia, I am not quite sure. I agree with you that John Cloake was an underestimated person. I came across him first when he was the Ambassador's private secretary in Baghdad. The ambassador was a very curious man called Henry Bradshaw Mack. He was a rather a pompous old-style ambassador and John Cloake's irreverence behind the scenes and his sense of humour did us all in the Embassy a lot of good. I thought John was a good judge of people and a wise person. Certainly in my experience and during my time as Deputy Under Secretary for Economic Affairs, he ran a very good department. The work they produced was up to the very highest standards even though it was rather an unusual department for us to have. It was a good invention.

M.M. Anyway we had better move on after that intervention. While you were Deputy Under Secretary there was a continuing oil crisis as well as continuing problems with the miners. How was that oil crisis contained?

D.M. It was contained because the industrial countries rather painfully set up an International Energy Agency. The industrial countries also made some gestures towards the developing world in the UN. More important, the market began to influence the oil producers; that in the end was the decisive factor. OPEC were in a very self confident mood at one time but they then began to realise that there was rather a lot of oil around and they had to be careful about the laws of supply and demand.

M.M. Especially growing production in the West.

D.M. Yes, especially growing production in the West; I think that the discoveries in the West caused the producers to think and amend their behaviour. That was handled, from the Foreign Office point of view, most skilfully by John Wilton who was my Assistant Under Secretary. He did that very well, he represented us at the IEA meetings and so on. I didn't go to those.

M.M. Your next move was as UK Permanent Representative to the EEC as it then was.

D.M. Yes, that was in the autumn of 1975. I was there for four years; that was my last overseas post in the Service.

M.M. Possibly one of the most important posts in the entire range of jobs available to career civil servants.

D.M. I think that is true. Prestige is attached to our major embassies in say Washington and Paris. From the professional point of view multi-lateral diplomacy is really the most rewarding, the most exacting, the most stretching work. I am pleased to have had the opportunity although it was very brief, to have held such a post in New York and at greater length to have done the same job in Brussels. It is rewarding in that the range of subjects which you are dealing with is very large in the nature of the job. The range of people you are dealing with is far greater than in a bilateral post. Maybe more important, of necessity the Head of Mission both in New York and in Brussels is heavily involved in negotiation, the kind of negotiation that otherwise Ministers would do. Ministers can't do it, they haven't got the time nor have they got the time to acquire the detailed knowledge. And if you are working in an environment such as the European Community - it was Nine when I went there - or in the UN, there is a circle of people whom you get to know, who are your opposite numbers. You begin to understand each other, so it becomes easier to understand their point of view. It may not be any easier to persuade them to your own point of view, but you acquire instincts and knowledge about the subjects, about the people you have to deal with, which no Minister can acquire however often he visits. So the influence which you are called upon in each of these posts to bring to bear is very serious. They are indeed most responsible jobs; your advice has to be sound, it has to be well researched, it has to be well thought out. I think that multilateral diplomacy of this kind really stretches the professional diplomat to the extreme. You call on all your experience, the knowledge you have acquired wherever you have served; you have to bring all this to

bear on that work. You get new ministers coming out; ministers keep on changing, so you get to know the Chancellor of the Exchequer one day - there may be another one later on. You get a minister coming out for the first time, maybe a Minister for Energy. I am exaggerating slightly, but they hardly know one end of the European Community from the other. You really have to nurse them for their first few visits. That again is a rewarding experience, it is a fine form of public service.

M.M. Drawing on your experience of it, what would you say was the essential thing to know and understand about the EU as it now is? What is it that gives it its special importance and us a part in it?

D.M. The essential element in this whole European venture, despite the mistakes which have been made from the beginning - from 1945/6 onwards really - the essential element is this: we have had two absolutely disastrous Wars - 1914/18, 1939/45 - which were ended only after American intervention. This is a disgrace to the people of Europe. So this experiment is about finding another way of containing the size and strength of Germany at the heart of Europe. When I arrived in Brussels and made my calls on my colleagues, my fellow members of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, in one way or another wanted to assure themselves, on first meeting me, that I understood this. My French colleague said - 'you understand that this is our purpose here and you understand that France and Britain have a very important part to play in this process'. My German colleague said - 'you will understand the success of this is vital to my country and you will understand how much we rely on our colleagues in the other member states'. No one understands this better than the Germans do. Everyone who works in the institutions of the Community, of the EU as it is now, knows this. It is accepted; they don't have to keep on reminding each other that this is the case. If one understands that, one will understand why the Germans are so keen on deepening the Community - that is integrating things more and more. Sometimes they carry this to excess, to the point where they are not quite mindful enough of the interests of other member States. The French support them, because France has suffered more than any other country from German misbehaviour, to put it no higher, twice this century. So it is a powerful French interest to help create the kind of entity in which German strength and power can be contained. Now, for reasons which are quite complex, to my mind there is an influential body of opinion in this country which does not understand this; nor does it wish to understand this. Even worse, influential people in our society actually believe that the

whole process of European integration is a device to enable Germany to dominate the Continent; that is a serious mistake. Even if there were any truth in that, those who hold these opinions -

M.M. Like Mrs. Thatcher.

D.M. Like Mrs. Thatcher, - are unmindful of our history. Ever since Mary Tudor ceded Calais to the French it has been a cardinal principle of English and then British foreign policy to prevent the domination of the Continent by any one power. We did this successfully through our military leaders - Drake, Marlborough, Wellington. We did it with American help in 1914/18 and again in 1945. There is a new way of doing this, not going to War, no more 60,000 casualties in one summer day in 1916 on the Somme, no more destruction of cities and innocent victims being murdered etc. We are trying to do this in a different way and it is really difficult to understand how some of our politicians do not understand this and actually misrepresent this process which is understood by everyone else. From the moment that I arrived there, my colleagues in Brussels made sure that I understood that. Of course I did, but it was interesting to hear their version of this truth. Each one would draw on his own experience as a young boy or a student or even, as with my German colleague, as a prisoner of war in a Russian prisoner of war camp. They all had their own personal reason for wishing this process to succeed. Now how it succeeds is quite a different question; but that it should succeed, and that we should be playing a full part in it, seems to me to go without saying.

The other strong impression that I got from the beginning was that we, the British, were very welcome and they wanted us to play a more prominent role; particularly the smaller countries, because they thought that we could leaven the loaf. The British would be a useful counterweight in the intimate discussions between the French and the Germans. Apart from that, they thought that we had a benevolent attitude to historical links with some of the smaller countries. They felt that instinctively we would be proposing policies which were similar to what they would be proposing. I formed the impression quite soon that, although they would object to the creation of an overt triumvirate, they certainly wanted the British, the French and the Germans to do their best to concert their approaches to the issues facing the Community. Sadly, that has not happened so far and I think that many of the obstacles which have been created on the way as the Community has become a Union, might not have arisen, or could have been removed more easily, if we

had been playing that kind of role.

Of course, I did not agree with everything that was being proposed by the Commission in those years from 1975/79. I thought that the pressure for a European monetary system was premature and that to some extent there was a bit of cart before the horse there. I thought that more attention should be paid to convergence with a view to economic and monetary union, rather than economic and monetary union and then convergence. I think that those two aims might have been reversed.

The other principal observation that I had concerned the notion of subsidiarity, though it wasn't called by that name. This was first put forward at the time of my arrival by Francois-Xavier Ortoli who was then the President of the Commission - a much under-rated man, charming, civilised, brave. As a young man he had walked out of Indo-China to avoid the Japanese and walked back again to find the girl he loved and later married. He was preparing a draft for an eventual European Union in 1975. He wrote that European Union is not to create a federal super-state; it is to do only at the level of the Union those things which member states cannot do and to leave other things to be done by member states. Roy Jenkins two years later gave a lecture in Turin in which he repeated this language. His private secretary was Crispin Tickell, and he came over to my Office and said: "Roy wants to make a speech about monetary union, I want him to broaden it out a bit, can you think of anything to say?" He and I, there and then, drafted a passage for Roy Jenkins speech which I keep on quoting; it really rehearsed what Ortoli had said, namely that the Community should do at Community level only those things which cannot be done as well or better at national level or even below national level; those things should be left there. That was in 1977. It was not until 1991 at Maastricht - all those years later - that Jacques Delors, of all Margaret Thatcher's unfavourite Europeans, insisted that this principle be written into the Treaty. Only lip service has been paid to this principle since then. I think that the European Union will be more acceptable to its citizens if that principle is strictly applied. And if many of the powers given to the Union are actually repatriated; that would be a major operation. As the Union gets larger and larger, this will have to happen. You cannot govern a Union of 21-25 in the same way as a European Community of Six; it has to be changed. It is interesting that during my time there subsidiarity, though not known by that name, was the aim advocated by two Presidents of the Commission whose duty is to propose policies.

The main impression that I came away with was that the work of the Community, as it then was, is very detailed, it's called the brick-upon-brick construction of Europe; it is a fairly good metaphor to use. But, first of all, it is very difficult to enable the citizens of the Union to realise that that is what is going on; all they are interested in is the latest proposal; why? what is the relevance of that? what is going on? - they don't understand it. Partly it has been a failure to tackle the whole issue of explaining what this is about and then you get preoccupied with the detail and you cannot see the wood for the trees. Even having said that, I came away from Brussels wondering whether the basis on which the new Europe was being constructed was in fact an adequate basis. I recommended in my valedictory despatch that we should look at political co-operation and defence co-operation - perhaps beginning defence cooperation in the field of procurement. I thought this would be more easily perceived by the citizens as being something meaningful. I had at the back of my mind the original mistake and failure of the European Defence Community. It is only now in 1997 that serious co-ordination of defence procurement is taking place. There is a very long time lag, I am afraid, between an idea becoming current and its being implemented.

M.M. Would you care to say something about the distinction between what is said in private and what is said in public? Particularly with regard to the French whose position, as far as we are concerned, has been and probably remains pretty well key.

D.M. That is quite true. During my first two years in Brussels a wonderful man called Jean-Marie Soutou was my French opposite number. He was beloved by all his colleagues around the table - a wise man, moderate in tone. He was everyone's idea of how loveable the French can be. Of course he defended his country's interests and was very frank with us about what his instructions were, what his difficulties were. Sometimes he would confess to us over the Coreper lunch on Thursday - the Permanent Representatives would meet for an informal, not to be recorded lunch. He would say: 'I am afraid that I have to be on to my President again because my instructions have not been changed as I had hoped they would be!' So he took us into his confidence. He was replaced by a man called Luc de Nanteuil who, I think, became a great sparring partner of my successor Michael Butler. Luc de Nanteuil was the opposite of Jean-Marie. He was the rough aspect of French diplomacy, uncompromising, rather scornful of everyone else.

To answer your question, in public all ministers, when they are talking about what

happened in a Council meeting, are, of course, addressing their own public. Some of them have to go back and make a report to their own Parliament. Inside the Chamber the atmosphere is rather different; everyone there has two motives; first of all they are there to try and create a stable, prosperous, safe Europe containing the might and size of Germany, a Europe which will serve and protect the interests of its inhabitants. At the same time they are making sure that this occurs in a fashion which does not damage the interests of their own people. So one is talking about reconciling one thing with another all the time. The more people there are around that room, the more reconciliation has to take place. It is this which binds people together; they all have this motive; everyone knows, if you look across the table and you see the Finnish minister there, you think ah! he has a problem with this; let's hear what it is. We listen to what it is. Now how can we accommodate that without damaging what we are trying to do collectively? It may be your turn in that position next time round.

Occasionally the meeting will break up and there will be a recess; people will go round and speak to each other privately in corners of the room here and there, then they will come back to their places. So one has an extraordinary sense of the collegiate feeling in that room. When they leave, of course, they then have to address their own audiences; so if they are British ministers, they use a phrase which they seem to find very difficult to leave out of any statement - "I have been defending British interests!" - Is the British public so stupid that they don't understand that every minister there is defending his own national interests? If he weren't doing that he wouldn't last very long! That is a superfluous statement and to make it is to mislead - as though I am defending us against the forces of evil; it is not like that in that room.

Of course, at the Permanent Representatives level, we are the body at senior responsible, professional, neutral level preparing for the meetings of ministers. This collegiate sense is even stronger and we are constantly helping each other, first of all, to act in accordance with the instructions they have had from their capital or to find a way of meeting their point of view while having our eyes on the main over-riding objective. This is something which unfortunately cannot be conveyed day by day, week by week to the public outside. I can understand why people today complain about the lack of transparency of the proceedings of the Council of Ministers. It is quite true, and a way must be found of somehow getting the public in there. It is not too difficult to devise; when the meeting is over you bring the Press and the TV cameras in, and the President will give a resume of what has

been happening, and he will ask this or that minister to speak so that people get a feeling of what has been going on. The President could say; "you, my dear French colleague, my dear British colleague, you have made a notable contribution to this; maybe you could tell us ...". There are ways of opening this up, there are ways of improving the democratic accountability through parliamentary committees, maybe joining up with committees from national Parliaments. There are all sorts of things that can be done if the will is there to pay heed to the desires of the citizens of the Union and, as Robin Cook has been saying recently, to return it to the people - make this a more open, more transparent, democratically controlled, accountable organisation.

But we have a problem at home. I hope that we will come to our senses and realise that, historically, we have no choice. In terms of national interest we cannot afford to do other than play an effective, full-hearted role in this process, this journey to an unknown destination. I think that we could bring to the next stage, the enlargement and the changes to institutions and policies which enlargement will require - we could bring a lot of wisdom to that. I am sure that the new countries of Central and Eastern Europe emerging from communist domination and aspiring to join in this will hope that we and some of our patriotism and our lesser level of idealism would help them.

M.M. And the stability we bring.

D.M. Yes. Of course, we are fortunate right now as we speak, 1997, with the Presidency coming up in January (1998). For the first time there is going to be a country holding the Presidency with a substantial Parliamentary majority behind the government with many years to run before an election. Too often the Presidency has been held on the eve of an election so it has been very difficult for the Presidency of that time to avoid a bit of electioneering; the temptation has been too great.

M.M. Well, thank you very much indeed for that wonderful insight. I hope that it gets spread more broadly. Before we finish though I would like to ask you about your period as Deputy to the Permanent Under Secretary at the Foreign Office and perhaps finally your spell as Permanent Under Secretary at the Department of Energy.

D.M. The first of these was, quite frankly, a non-job. There is a bit of history here. I had formed a very good working relationship with David Owen when he stepped into

Anthony Crosland's shoes, took over when Anthony Crosland died tragically, far too young, in 1977. David Owen and I got onto terms very quickly. When I was in my fourth year in Brussels he said he was planning my next posting and I was looking forward to that. Then he told me with many apologies that he couldn't proceed with this because there was going to be an election and I would have to stay there to see in whoever wins the election. He hoped I would not mind staying on. So that did not come about, I stayed on and saw Margaret Thatcher and Carrington in, as it were. By then my time in Brussels was up but meanwhile the post I was going to had been occupied so that was not open. So there wasn't really anywhere for me to go. This suggestion - Deputy to the Permanent Under Secretary was made. So *faute de mieux* I accepted. But it seemed to me from very early on that there was no real job here. I don't think that the Permanent Under Secretary can have a deputy. But fortunately the Russians invaded Afghanistan, I was not responsible for that at all!

M.M. Fortunately in a manner of speaking!

D.M. In a manner of speaking. It created a crisis and somebody had to manage it. There I was. I had a knowledge of India. So I worked with Peter Carrington managing that crisis and there again I was very well supported by SE Asian Department and I think we did get that crisis under our control reasonably quickly to the best of our ability. We managed to concert our European attitude towards it. The best part of that was when Peter Carrington understood that our friends and allies in that region needed to be reassured and so we proposed that he visit them. We did that. We went first to Turkey and then to the Gulf, to Bahrain, Saudi, Oman, to Pakistan and, finally, to India. There was a memorable meeting with Indira Gandhi who was quite obviously shattered by this event, given the special relationship which they thought they had.

M.M. With the Russians?

D.M. Yes, with the Russians. She was afraid that this would bring the Americans into the area and upset the balance again, and so on. Peter Carrington did his best to reassure her and we, of course, were wanting to get out of her some condemnation, even though it might be difficult to get her to say anything too publicly. That tour was very timely; it did steady nerves and it then prepared the ground for our next initiative which was to get a declaration from the European Union, with American support, that Afghanistan should be non-aligned and neutral and that the Russians should evacuate. That got us in rather well with

the developing world; it would be difficult for them to object to any such proposal.

Not long after that was over I was invited to go across to the Department of Energy to be Permanent Under Secretary. It was an unusual move. I think that Roger Makins went to the Treasury as one of the Permanent Secretaries. Since then no member of the Service has gone as Permanent Under Secretary to another Department. It made sense because in the European Community, and earlier than that, I had been dealing with energy questions and I knew the Middle East; so there was some sense in it.

It was quite a small Department and I was able to meet everyone by walking round the offices in a couple of days. It was overstaffed and the Thatcher reforms were being put into place then; some were more sensible than others. I did cut in half the number of Deputy Secretaries reducing from four to two, and we actually saved more money through some shrewd measures by the establishment officer. Through his own efforts he was able to cut our budget by a larger amount than the Rayner review. What was of most interest during that time was seeing, at close quarters, the relationship with the nationalised industries. The Department of Energy was the unfortunate creature in the middle between the Treasury, which set the external financial limits, and the nationalised industries. My Secretary of State - it was David Howell to begin with and then Nigel Lawson - answered for the Government in the House of Commons, about our relations with the gas, electricity and coal industries, but in fact our discretion was severely limited because the Treasury determined the financing of these industries. So we received the complaints rather than the Treasury, because we were in the middle and the extent to which we could influence the policies of these industries was strictly limited. I could see why there were highly unsatisfactory characteristics in this relationship. I felt that the original Morrisonian concept, going right back to the first post-war government, had flaws in it.

When Nigel Lawson became Secretary of State, coming with a good reputation from the Treasury, he asked me to set in hand studies of how these industries could be reorganised. We didn't use the word privatisation. He asked if I could let him have some papers on how these industries otherwise might be organised or run. It was a fairly open brief. Arriving in the Department of Energy I found that there was no particular structure for concerting policy advice so I had immediately set up a Permanent Under Secretary's committee and I invited to serve on this the Deputy and Assistant Secretaries mainly concerned, the scientific adviser, the economic adviser, the establishment officer and one or two

others. There was in the Department a young man from Conservative Central Office who was political adviser to the Secretary of State called Michael Portillo. I invited him, against the wishes of my Deputy Secretaries, to join. He, of course, became a fully effective member; he understood exactly what his role was. If he agreed with the recommendations we were working on he would be advocating them to the Secretary of State which seemed to me to be a win-win situation, not the opposite. Anyhow this committee, my Permanent Under Secretary's committee, was, as it were, a senior coordinating committee; any serious advice going to the Secretary of State came to this committee, even if it had been drafted by an Assistant Secretary or even a Principal. We would amend it, comment on it, then it would go forward. Then there would probably be a meeting with the Secretary of State.

Nigel Lawson was good at conducting meetings with staff. He insisted that everyone take part, everyone express a view. We began submitting papers to him about new structures. For example, in the gas industry there is a gas pipeline, a national pipeline; some industries produce gas which they would like to feed into this grid, so maybe that could be done, maybe that could be separately owned or controlled. Likewise with the electricity grid; some industries produce electricity which could be fed into the grid, other industries want to take electricity out so there could be an arrangement whereby the grid was separated. We put forward proposals for all these industries. The coal industry was a rather special case because we were doubtful about the future of the market for coal. The oil industry was more or less running itself satisfactorily; we had few problems with that. The problem with the coal industry was that both the Unions and the Coal Board had ideas above their station. They thought this industry had more of a future than we believed.

The papers which we prepared for Nigel Lawson were, as it were, first steps towards what eventually happened under Peter Walker. I enjoyed working with Nigel Lawson. I had known him when he was a correspondent and I had briefed him when I was in News Department and at No.10, so we had a good relationship. I had to be kept on a little longer at the Department. They couldn't find a replacement for me immediately. Then I retired a few months after my 60th birthday.

M.M. And went on to numerous further appointments. Many in the public sector.

D.M. Many of them were very rewarding.

M.M. I think before we finally conclude I wonder if I may trouble you to go back over one of the earlier portions of this interview when we were talking about Libya and I think came to the end of the tape and before you had developed your thoughts about the supply to Colonel Qaddafi of tanks and the problems you had negotiating with London.

D.M. The situation when I arrived in Libya was very interesting. All the known personalities were either abroad, because the revolution took place on the 1st September 1969. This date was chosen because that was the time the King was in Egypt in his summer holiday place. There was no blood bath; this was a peaceful revolution; all the political figures of significance bar one were abroad. There was a curfew, needless to say. Foreign embassies had a problem; they didn't know anyone. Indeed the identity of the leader of the revolution and the members of the Revolutionary Command Council were not known and we had to press to get Qaddafi's name so that my credentials, which had been made out to the King, could be changed before I arrived. So we did get Qaddafi's name.

My first task when I arrived was to try and find out who these people were, what their ambitions were, and what the implications were for us, so as to recommend what policies we should adopt. The first 10 days after my arrival I and my staff did nothing other than try and collect material to convey our view on these issues to London. My staff responded wonderfully; we consulted other embassies, we shared views. We found a few friendly Libyans who told us this and that. My Jordanian colleague was very helpful to me. Not very long after arriving, I sent off a set of telegrams which were repeated to New York, because Michael Stewart, the Secretary of State, was at the UN at that time. I got a personal letter a few days later from Denis Greenhill saying the Secretary of State has read the telegrams with great interest and would be paying close attention to the situation and discussing it with his colleagues on his return. Denis said: "your telegram is exactly what Ambassadors are for; you have set out very clearly an assessment of who these people are. It is all very concise and I think that the Secretary of State is rather pleased to have got such a clear vision of what is going to happen!"

Now, I was quite sure that the Libyans wanted to reduce our influence; they wanted to get rid of our bases at El Adem and Tobruk. They would want us to evacuate those and would want the Americans to leave Wheelus Base outside Tripoli. And that they

would want to get many of the things that were being done by others into their own hands. I thought that they would also be interested to build up their armed forces. The Ministry of Defence and the Commander of British Forces in Cyprus were rather alarmed by this assessment by this young whippersnapper of an ambassador who didn't know what he was talking about. When I had my first conversation with Qadaffi and he had made it quite clear that he did want us to evacuate and I had submitted my recommendation, my first thoughts were that to refuse would mean going to war. We didn't want to have another Suez business; we wanted this to be done peacefully and we also wanted to try and change the relationship from the existing one to a new one. So I was regarded, by the Ministry of Defence and Headquarters in Cyprus, as having gone native quicker than ever before. My problem quickly became not negotiating terms with the Libyans but negotiating with London! I went to London and met the Chiefs of Staff. They heard what I had to say in stony silence. Then out of this came a fortunate development; they obviously thought I needed to have my hand held! So when the formal negotiations were to begin a Major General from the Ministry of Defence and an Air Commodore from Cyprus were sent out to join my delegation. Of course, the Libyans were very pleased to see them. All this was conducted in Arabic, David Gore Booth, the junior Secretary in the Embassy was the interpreter. I spoke in Arabic so did Jallud, the Libyan No 2, who was the leader of the delegation on their side. Qadaffi opened the negotiations with a formal statement. The Libyans put forward their demands and I said we would consider all of these and would try to get an answer as soon as possible.

This all went on for quite a long time. We were served coffee and afterwards we had a bit of a chat. So when we went back to the Embassy to discuss all of this Major General Goddard and this Air Commodore were completely persuaded; having seen these people they realised that the name of the game was quite simple; we evacuate in good order. Training, could we have training? There were one or two things we might add on, but as regards evacuation of the bases, no question. So when they went back respectively to London and Cyprus I ceased to be negotiating with London.

My hand was greatly strengthened when I got the right answer from London; namely, we will evacuate by the 31st March 1970. When I gave this news to the Libyans there was great whispering on the other side of the table:- which year? I said next year. But that is only four months, they said. Yes, provided there is no interference from your people, we will be out in four months!

After that the Commander in Chief in Cyprus became my great friend and when it was all over he sent one of his aircraft to pick me and Jean up and we spent a lovely weekend with them. He was testing out the Libyans' willingness to receive Royal Air Force aircraft. He said: "I will combine two things with it; I will send an aircraft in; I want to bring you and Jean back"; so we had a very nice weekend as his guest and then we were flown back again to Tripoli. Air Chief Marshal Smallwood who died quite recently, was called Splinters. He accepted my suggestion that, although the 31st March was our deadline, if possible we should get out two days beforehand to avoid exultation, triumphalism. Peter Terry was the Group Captain commanding the Base; he subsequently became Governor of Gibraltar and was later attacked by the IRA in his own home, a very nice man, a charming man. We had a great final dinner at the base before the evacuation; they brought out the last of their good claret. We managed to get our people out in good order. We also managed to sell quite a lot of installations to the Libyans, who were quite prepared to take them over.

There remained the question of their other demand, arms supplies. They still wanted to have some contracts which had been negotiated with the King's government fulfilled. This included a large quantity of Chieftain tanks and London were not happy about this; what were they going to do with them? I said that we were prepared to supply them to the previous regime and they want them for their army. Anyhow there was hesitation in London and then the Israelis put in a demand for Chieftain tanks and we began to get rumours that, I think, Crossman was pressing in Cabinet that the tanks earmarked for Libya should be diverted to Israel. This caused me very serious concern; not only me; we began getting telephone calls and messages from our people. We had 5,000 British citizens all over Libya in the outposts of the oil business. What's all this? Do you want to evacuate all of us? I reported to London that these rumours had been picked up in Libya and many British subjects were in touch with us concerned about their safety; should they evacuate their wives and families, and so on? I said that if there were to be such an announcement I could not rule out that there would be serious trouble and this could put some British lives at risk.

I received a letter a few days later from the Under Secretary looking after my affairs in the Foreign Office - a rebuke saying this warning had been ill-received by ministers and that I should not repeat anything of this kind. I thought this was absolutely extraordinary. I

didn't reply; I didn't show this to any of my staff; it was a personal letter to me. I really could not understand what was in the mind of the colleague who sent me that letter, how he did he not understand the position I was in.

I had an opportunity some years later when I was in Brussels and Denis Healey was Chancellor of the Exchequer and used to come out to visit us. One day he was talking about how ambassadors often tried to put the wind up people and I quoted that case to him and said: "you were in government then; do you remember this? Supposing the Cabinet had decided to go ahead with this deal and then British subjects had been molested and maybe even murdered. (In Libya at the time of the Six Day War there were very serious attacks etc. etc.) and I had not sent any warning, you would have been the first to criticise me for not warning you. Questions would be raised in Parliament; did the ambassador not alert you to this? You can imagine, so what was I to do?" Denis Healey, for once, shut up at that point! That was about the only time I silenced him, I had the last word! To this day I can't understand how anyone could have put their signature to a letter like that to an ambassador who was kneeling in prayer, along with many others, asking that wisdom prevail in London and that this decision not be taken.

M.M. Astonishing! A sad note to end on in a way. I thank you very much for a most remarkable interview and I am sure it does give some flavour of your very very responsible career. Thank you very much indeed.

D.M. I am very glad you came. (end of interview)

C O M M E N T O N I R A Q

My wife, Jean, and I much enjoyed the years we spent in Baghdad. This was our first posting together; our son was born at the RAF Station at Habbaniya.

During those years we made many friends, not only among Iraqis but also among our colleagues in the other embassies. Air-conditioning in those days was in its infancy and the long, hot summers, and especially the weeks of high humidity in September when the wind came from the Gulf, were an ordeal for all of us. Many Iraqis escaped to Europe or Lebanon; half

of the diplomatic corps took biennial leave. Those who had to remain worked early in the morning, rested in their cellars in the afternoon and emerged into their gardens or on to the river bank to enjoy the fragrant balmy evenings. Facing the challenge of the Iraqi summer created a strong community spirit.

Jean and I travelled a lot. Our purpose was to deepen our knowledge of the country and to learn at first hand about the aspirations and preoccupations of the people. By the time we left Iraq at the end of 1953 we had visited every district of every province. We had met in their own environment provincial governors, district commissioners, business men, professionals and tribal chiefs - from the Shia south to the Sunni north and the mountains of Kurdistan. Meeting these good people confirmed the impression we had formed in Baghdad that, unless power and responsibility were more widely shared, popular discontent could undermine the fabric of the state the British had created in the 1920s. We felt that these people deserved better of their rulers. But London was deeply concerned about the Soviet threat to the Middle East and took the view that a friendly, if authoritarian, regime in Baghdad, even though it might be insensitive to public opinion, was the surest guarantee of Iraq's security. So Jean and I left Baghdad uneasy about the prospects for the country's future.

Four and a half years later - in 1958 - the regime was overthrown in a bloody revolution. The King and other members of the royal family, including the womenfolk, were murdered. Leading members of the government and the administration were either murdered or tried and then executed. Since then the people of Iraq have lived under a ruthless tyranny which has led them into two disastrous wars and inflicted on them great hardship. The country that was once a source of stability in the region is now a menace to its neighbours.