

BDOHP Biographical Details and Interview Index

**PALLISER, (Arthur) Michael, GCMG 1977 (KCMG 1973; CMG 1966); PC 1983.
(9 April 1922-19 June 2012)**

Career Details (with, on right, relevant pages in interview)

Army 1942

Entered FO 1947

Married Marie Marguerite Spaak 1948

3rd Secretary, Athens 1949

FO 1951

Private Secretary to Permanent Under-Secretary 1954 pp 2-4

1st Secretary, Paris 1956 pp 4-7

1st Secretary and Head of Chancery, Dakar 1960 pp 7-11

Counsellor, Imperial Defence College 1963 pp 11-12

Head, Policy Planning Staff 1964 pp 12-13

Private Secretary to the Prime Minister 1966 pp 14-24

(CMG 1966)

Minister, Paris 1969 pp 25-31

Head, UK delegation to EC, Brussels 1971 pp 31-36

UK Permanent Representative and Ambassador, EC, Brussels, 1973 pp 36-42

(KCMG 1973)

Permanent Under-Secretary and Head of Diplomatic Service 1975 pp 42-64

Retired 1982

The interview closes with some general reflections on Britain and the European Community and on Britain's changing role.

Interview with Sir Michael Palliser on 28 April 1999, by John Hutson.

JH Sir Michael, I'd like to begin this interview in a way I have not done before because you've had a rather unusual career. Fully half your time has been spent in jobs where you were, in one sense or another, very much at the centre of things. You were a Private Secretary, or, at the end of your career, you were the Permanent Under Secretary and of course, also in Brussels as our Ambassador to, and our Representative in, the European Community, you were also at the centre of a very large affair which touched on many different subjects. Could I ask you are there things in that range, pretty well from the Suez crisis to the Falklands crisis, are there things where you would particularly like to round out the record, things that should be on record but are perhaps not fully so?

MP Yes, that's a very interesting point you make and a valid question. I actually just missed Suez in London but I was for the previous two years the Private Secretary to the then Permanent Under Secretary, Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick, and I think that particular job is one that gives one an extraordinary insight into the Service and into relationships between the Service and the politicians and Ministers, and indeed, Prime Ministers.

Taking the first point first, the nature of the Service and the structure and so on which one observes from that vantage point, at that time, and I think it must still be true, anything of importance to the service came, in the last resort, to the Permanent Under Secretary and therefore was seen by his Private Secretary. During that period I got to know more about individual senior members of the service, both in terms of their background, their weaknesses, positive factors, than I probably would have done in any other job in London, except possibly on the personnel side with the Chief Clerk. It was an extraordinarily instructive period and I really did value subsequently that experience in terms of understanding the service, understanding peoples reactions, seeing how difficult posts affected their lives and so on. I think that's possibly worth recording and something which perhaps people don't realise: the importance in the formation of someone's career, at a relatively early stage, of really understanding what the service is like. I think it was certainly as good a preparation for eventually becoming Permanent Under Secretary as I could possibly have had and I greatly appreciated that.

Taking the second point, relationships between the service and Ministers and, indeed, Prime Ministers, here again the Permanent Under Secretary is at the centre of that particular nexus; again, in those days, there was less paper, we hadn't, fortunately for ourselves, really entered into the FAX, 'phone, the whole world of communications that we are in now; and on the whole papers didn't go to Ministers without first going through the Permanent Under Secretary which meant

being prepared for him by his Private Secretary, so one got a very clear picture of how Ministers reacted to advice and the best way of giving them that advice, particularly if one wanted to persuade them of the merit of a particular course. The other thing to me that was very interesting during that period, we had as Foreign Secretary, not throughout the whole period but after Eden, when at long last he became Prime Minister, we then had first of all Mr Harold Macmillan as Foreign Secretary; and this gave one a proper perception of the difficult relationships between very senior members of the cabinet, because Eden basically wanted to continue to be Foreign Secretary even though he now had the responsibilities of Prime Minister. Harold Macmillan, as one knows from both his past at that time but also his future as Prime Minister and so on, was a man of very decided views, very determined views, and with almost as profound a knowledge of foreign policy as Eden had. He had acquired it in different ways and at different times but he certainly saw himself as his own Foreign Secretary and the inevitability of a clash between those two men became very clear. I think both Sir Ivone and myself as his Private Secretary, quite early on, I personally, observing Macmillan from that particular point acquired a great respect, and indeed an affection for him. I was fortunate enough to be taken by Kirkpatrick, which was kind of him because normally speaking he didn't need a Private Secretary for that particular thing, but he took me to Geneva for the summit conference there in the mid-50's, 1954 I think, at which the Russians were represented by Bulganin and Krushchev, the Americans by Eisenhower and Dulles and the French by Edgar Faure and Pinay. At that point it was quite clear to me that Macmillan had very firm views. I also was able to observe Macmillan as Foreign Secretary in the Foreign Office and one of the things I liked about Macmillan which I think distinguished him from a number of Foreign Secretaries, not all, was that he thought very deeply about foreign policy, what our policy ought to be. He would go off for a weekend, probably shooting with some aristocratic family somewhere, which he enjoyed doing, but on the Monday morning a note would come down to the Permanent Under Secretary, which, again, passed through his Private Secretary, saying, 'I have been thinking about problem X and it seems to me there are three or four possibilities and here they are, 1, 2, 3, 4, and please reflect on this and let me know what you think', or words to that effect. I was both impressed by this as an indication of someone who really was interested in the conduct of our foreign policy but also by the fact that, lets say, of those 4 points possibly two or even three weren't really serious in terms of possibilities but there was nearly always a nugget in there which was worth pursuing and I found this very impressive. I was very sorry indeed when Macmillan, after, I think, less than a year, a very short period of time, moved from the Foreign Office to the Treasury and the much more pliable and, to my mind dull, Selwyn Lloyd was put in his place. I remember carrying a message from Kirkpatrick to Macmillan on some point when he was in the Treasury and I actually asked him what he felt about the change and he said to me 'Oh, I miss the Foreign Office dreadfully'.

JH Very interesting. If there are actual examples, actual problems, you want to expand on a little to illustrate that but only, as I say, if you do want to round out the record if it's important enough to do so. That is fascinating and one would almost like to continue with your next Private Secretary job right away but ought perhaps to think about your interim posts, as one might say. You went to Paris, in fact just before the actual Suez crisis I gather, and I wonder how the failure of the Suez escapade affected our relations with France which had been a co-conspirator, and our future membership of the EEC was also an actual subject at that time, but I don't know what your job in Paris was.

MP In Paris I was what I suppose one could call the embassy's political correspondent, in that I was the First Secretary in the chancery responsible for French politics and Algeria. The reason those two were linked was because Algeria was an absolutely crucial function of French domestic politics as well as, of course, in part French foreign policy. I always felt it was possibly the most interesting job in the entire embassy. That's possibly a little excessive but I did think it was an extraordinarily fortunate opportunity to learn about French politics, to learn about politics and how they operate in themselves. I think, again, the experience in France, although French politics are different in many ways from British politics, was a very valuable experience for the future. I also had the privilege, I'd like to say something that is worth saying for the record, of working for Gladwyn Jebb, as he then was. He was someone who had a glittering career, and has been often portrayed as a rather vainglorious, arrogant, difficult man and in some respects those adjectives are not undeserved; but the aspect of Gladwyn that I saw and enjoyed was his capacity, having established that whoever was working for him was serious and reasonably intelligent and not given to either responding to bullying, (and Gladwyn was a bit of a bully) but also was, so to speak, worth talking to, he became in fact an exceptionally agreeable colleague and we used to get together almost every day during the week, towards the end of the day, to compare notes. In my job I would, if I was in Paris, I was out of Paris quite a lot, I would nearly every afternoon, perhaps begin the afternoon after the morning's work in the office, with a lunch with a politician, a journalist, someone involved in the French political scene, and would go from that to the National Assembly. In those days this was still under the Fourth Republic and I saw the last two years of the Fourth Republic and the first two years of the Fifth Republic in that job which in itself was a fascinating transition. But at this time, this was the Fourth Republic and a diplomat, an accredited diplomat, like accredited journalists, could get a card which enabled one to go in behind the scenes in the National Assembly, not just in the diplomatic gallery, and I used to wander around in the corridors buttonholing politicians, talking to journalists. I made a number of good friends there over the years, picking up all the gossip about who was doing what and what was going on and so on: trying to get a general picture from that of what was happening politically in France. Gladwyn for his part almost certainly would have seen someone or other during the morning, some Cabinet

Minister or something, he would have had a lunch with perhaps a couple of Ministers, the head of a big industry, you can imagine the sort of top level lunch that he would have had, and we used to get together at the end of the day and compare notes and what was agreeable about working for Gladwyn was that we spoke to each other exactly as if we were fellow First Secretaries. Gladwyn wasn't in the least 'de haut en bas' from Ambassador to subordinate and it was an extraordinarily pleasant experience and in fact I don't think it's unfair to say that my wife and I over the years became good friends of the Jebbs' (and subsequently the Gladwyns'). I say that because as I say I think that there is a view of Gladwyn which is a shade unfair to him though not totally unfair as these views often are. The experience for me was absolutely invaluable. I said it covered Algeria and here again it enabled me to go several times to Algeria, once or twice in the company of the embassy's defence attache, once or twice on my own, but always in relationship with our Consul General in Algiers who was a very remarkable man called Roderick Sarell who subsequently finished his career as Ambassador in Turkey. I'm happy to say that although he is quite a bit older than me he is still very much alive and all-there. He had an extraordinary grasp of French policy in Algeria; of how difficult it was going to be for them to hang on and of some of the really rather reprehensible things that some of their people were doing. Of course Algeria was crucial to French domestic politics because it was because of Algeria that General De Gaulle was summoned back in May of 1958. I said to someone the other day that I think I'm probably one of the few, possibly the only living ex-diplomat who was present both at the General's famous press conference when he accepted that he would return and also when the General made his speech as Prime Minister, (or President of the Council) in the National Assembly for which I was in the diplomatic box. These were two very historic moments and one felt at the time that one was present at history. Then it was a very interesting period afterwards, those first two years, before I went off for my "spell of under-development", as it was put by personnel department, to Dakar in Senegal where we had two very pleasant years.

JH Before we leave Paris could I just ask what the transition to the Fifth Republic, ie. the return of General De Gaulle to power was thought to mean for us?

MP It's quite difficult to answer that question because I think it was seen so much in the context of preventing revolution in France itself and of pointing France in a slightly different direction, vis a vis both Algeria but also its territories, particularly in Africa, that what it meant for us was not so much of a question. Also at that time it became more of a question but possibly even more after I had left Paris, which I did in 1960, but even then it was clear, I remember for example in regard to the European Community and our potential membership of it, at that stage of course we were still thinking in terms of a free trade area and could we somehow or other divert the six from their integrationist tendencies. Well, to coin a frequently used phrase, we had already missed our boat.

And that became very clear to us in Paris when Mr Maudling came over to try to sell his ideas for a free trade area and was really completely rebuffed. I think perhaps for us the interesting point at that stage was not so much the attitude towards Britain as the fact that General De Gaulle, if he had been able to get back into office say two years earlier, would probably have vetoed the construction that was being developed for the European Community itself because he didn't like it at all and we certainly believed that a lot of French people in the know believed that his first instinct on coming back to power, so far as Europe was concerned, was to see whether the process of integration could be halted. This isn't to say that he was against a European Organisation but he was against the organisation that had been devised at Messina, and so on. I think it is also fair to say that all his advisers said to him that it is too late to do that, we can't, we are committed, the thing is going to come into force, which of course it did very shortly after he came into power. He then turned his efforts to ensuring that so far as possible it developed in the best possible way for France. Of course that led, three years later in 1963, to his first veto. At the point in time when he came back into power, and for the first year or two of that, which pretty well saw me out from Paris, the focus was much more on, 'would he be able to change the French constitution', restore order in France in the relationship between the armed forces and the government rather than what's his attitude going to be towards us over membership of the European Community, which, as I say, only developed at the point in time when I left Paris and went off to West Africa where our thoughts were on quite different things.

JH Thank you, yes, I fear I may have rather jumped the gun with that question but there are one or two points of great interest in your response. I'm sure Dakar was agreeable but unless there is something there in particular that you would like to say I would like to pass on to your next 'everything' job, that of being Private Secretary to the Prime Minister, which is where you went after Dakar.

MP Well, can I interject one point on the Dakar appointment which has interested me subsequently and that is the question in my mind whether we, or the French, had a better system of colonial administration. The French system was very different from ours. They thought in terms of black Frenchmen, they had, if you like, the Roman concept of empire that the ideal would be for Africans, or others from elsewhere in other parts of the French empire, to see themselves as Frenchmen and to be - as they were - members of the French parliament and, indeed, members of the French government. I was very struck by this, looking at it at that stage, because we were in Dakar at the beginning of independence for former French colonies, we were there initially in something called the Federation of Mali, which was actually a federation between Senegal and Mali which was a huge area inland around the Niger river but without any access to the sea, whereas Senegal had the large harbour at Dakar; Dakar being the headquarters of the Federation of

French West Africa. It was very interesting in that immediate post-independence period to see how the French operated and to compare it with how we were operating in rather similar circumstances. It was something of a paradox, this is a bit disjointed I'm afraid, we were not only accredited, our Embassy, the first Embassy ever in Senegal obviously, it had been a Consulate-General, it became an Embassy. We were accredited to Mauritania, which was the country to the north, we were also for some strange reason accredited to Togo, which of course is a small country sandwiched between Ghana and, what in those days was called Dahomey, also a former French colony. We were also Consul-General in Portuguese Guinea as Guinea-Bissau was known in those days and which, of course, was still part of Portugal. This gave the Ambassador and me a great opportunity to travel which I'm happy to say we seized with both hands and it enabled me, not only to go up frequently to Mauritania which was interesting if only in terms of contrast between the Moors in Mauritania and the Senegalese in Dakar, but to go to Bamako, the capital of Mali, to go to the capital of Togo, but also to call in at Nigeria and Ghana on the way and indeed to call in at the Ivory Coast. I think it was inevitable that one was struck by the difference in the nature of the independent countries in the independence that we had bequeathed to them, if you like, we the French and we the British. Of course at that time we felt self satisfied because we felt the we had given a democratic system of government to our colonies, Ghana, Nigeria and so on, and the French on the whole had retained a tremendous degree of control and indeed this was demonstrated when the Federation of Mali broke up. It was basically the French officials, even though ostensibly working for the Senegalese government, who sustained order, and indeed in my view had probably organised the breakup of the Federation because they distrusted the then president of Mali. Again, the same point that I made earlier is interesting in that President Senghor of Senegal had been a member of the French parliament for many years, was a very distinguished French poet and a member of all the French academic bodies that there were. Even President Sekou Toure of Guinea who was cast into outer darkness by the French because he refused to let Guinea be anything other than totally independent and not a member of the French union and so on, had been a member of the French government. Houphouet Boigny, who was the President of the Ivory Coast, had been in every French government during the four year period that I was there and I think that one thing that is worth recording is something he said to my then Ambassador, Adam Watson, when Watson called on him, it must have been in 1961 or thereabouts, about the attitude of his Party and his people to French politics, Watson taxed him with the fact that some of his supporters had been communists and Houphouet Boigny himself was anything but and indeed had been in conservative governments both before and in General De Gaulle's cabinet. The answer was interesting because it revealed a kind of different African approach to politics, he said, 'Well, we observed that French politics consisted of coalitions of various parties and we decided that we wanted to be in any French government there was, and, in order to do that we had to have people in all French parties, so I had supporters of mine who were members of the Communist Party, the Socialist Party, the

MRP, etc, etc, and this ensured that one way or another we would always have influence in French governments.' I thought this was an entertaining but also a revealing indication of the way that someone like that, a highly intelligent, very sophisticated, well educated African, looked at the French, and indeed possibly European, political scene. For the rest, no. I think that, coming back to my point about the difference in regimes, I'm by no means convinced that in the long run the French system was inferior to the British. If you look at the trouble that there has been in the former British colonies in Africa; and I wouldn't say the lack of trouble, because there has also been trouble, in some Francophone countries, but, on the whole, I think they have had a less troubled time. Possibly because they were less prosperous, but possibly also because Paris kept a very tight control for many years, and still does in some degree, over the purse strings; they were not able to spend money too extravagantly without authority from France. This produced a degree of corruption in the French system which has been much analysed but, fundamentally, I'm not convinced that the French system was inferior to ours. In some respects I think there was a degree of superiority which one admits perhaps with reluctance but which I think one has to recognise.

JH Could one say that the big exceptions to French success were Algeria and Vietnam which were probably the biggest single colonies, protectorates or whatever, and the size and importance somehow had something to do with it?

MP I think one has to look at them separately. Indo-China basically was the result of the war and the fact that, as we saw in our colonies out there, as the Dutch saw in the Dutch East Indies and the French experienced in Indo-China, independence parties emerged after the defeat of the western powers by the Japanese, and in many cases, particularly in the case of Indonesia of course, encouraged by the Japanese and fostered by them as a way of removing western influence. So that probably the mistake the French made in Indo-China was to try to hang on rather than gracefully conceding, but again, if one puts oneself in the circumstances of 1945, it's not so easy really to sustain that. It was understandable they wanted to recover what had been a jewel in the French crown, and where, there are still of course, for example, if you go to Hanoi, you will still see a French Mediterranean town, and where the French influence is still quite strong in spite of an all pervasive American and independent outlook. So, yes, Indo-China was a failure and it was probably the result of a mistake but the real key, I think, in the case of Indo-China, moving on to Algeria, was that the French army felt that it had been betrayed by the politicians and there is, if you like, enough truth in that to explain why the French army in Algeria was determined not to give up Algeria. But Algeria was a very different sort of territory, Algeria was constitutionally part of France. It had French Colons, a very high proportion of French Colons, though again, one tends to forget that a lot of those were from Alsace, going back to the end of the first world war, and there was a distinctly Germanic thrust to a number of the French Colons. A great many of them

were from Spain. For example, in the Oran, the town to the west, I think the second largest town in Algeria, a very large part of the white population, or the European population, were Spaniards. So it was an extraordinary territory, Algeria. There were profound divisions in France over it, between those who thought that it had to be held at all costs and those who talked of some degree of autonomy. To me the most interesting feature of the four years I was in Paris, or certainly the first two under the Fourth Republic and for quite a while afterwards, was a resolute refusal by any Frenchman to use the word 'independence', even those like Mendes-France, who I think knew that it had to come, were not courageous enough (or whatever the right adjective is), to admit it. This was an enormous handicap really to France, it had become something which simply couldn't be lost. It had to be lost, as General De Gaulle himself, who certainly in the first instance wasn't thinking of independence for Algeria, came quite quickly to realise, possibly with help from Monsieur Pompidou who was negotiating for him, that this had to be conceded. But of course there are a lot of Frenchmen now who will say to you, 'Well, look at what Algeria is like now'. So it was an exceptionally difficult one and it was made all the more difficult by the attitude of the French army, which I have described. First, anecdotally, when I went there on one of my quite frequent visits I was given lunch very kindly, very pleasantly, by the colonel commanding a regiment based in Algiers, and they had an officers mess at the top of the hill that surmounts Algiers, or near the top, and after lunch, which was certainly a better lunch than I fear I might get in some British army officers' mess, after an extremely good lunch I was taken out on a terrace which commanded an unbelievably beautiful view of the bay of Algiers and looking down at this, it was bright sunshine, a beautiful day, sea blue, you can picture the scene, looking down at this the colonel said to me, 'Vous voyez ca Monsieur? C'est ca qu'on nous demande d'abandonner! Jamais, Monsieur, jamais!' Well, that was perhaps five years before they had to; but it brought out the attitude which was by no means unique to that particular colonel.

JH Yes, I can well understand that and I think that is a very interesting quick survey of our colonial and post-colonial transition. Should we then perhaps come to the next job which was that of being Private Secretary to the Prime Minister...

MP Can I just interrupt because the two next jobs were very important introductions to the post at No. 10. One likes to hope that this was conscious planning by the Foreign Office personnel people, and maybe it was but I'm not sure it was, anyway after Dakar my next year was spent as a student at what was still called the Imperial Defence College. I think it was the last year before it became the Royal College of Defence Studies because 'Imperial' was thought to be an anachronism, and rightly, but that was an extraordinary and very valuable experience. It was basically a sabbatical year. In those days, I don't know what the position is now, we were not worked particularly hard, we had usually a very interesting lecture in the morning and then a question

period. One of the great pluses of the Imperial Defence College was the people who were at it. I made friends at that time in all the armed forces, of people who subsequently went on to become chiefs of the Air Force, the Defence Staff, whatever. I also made a number of friends, or at any rate acquaintances, in other countries, in non-British countries, Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth. My first visit to America took place under the aegis of the Imperial Defence College when I went with the North American tour during the summer break. They took groups off to various parts of the world. I'd never been to America so I asked to go with that group and went to the United States and to Canada for a five week visit which really covered the waterfront in both countries and gave one remarkable insights into both those countries. The lectures were a skilful blend of international and domestic, and again one of my recollections of that time just illustrates the point in a way as an introduction to a subsequent primarily political job. We were given a lecture by Enoch Powell, who at that time was Minister for Health, and he came and lectured to us and he answered questions. He was brilliant in a way; yet one of my clearest memories of that morning was turning to my colleague sitting near the back with me who was a brigadier in the army and saying to him, 'John, that man's mad.' There was a lunatic quality to Enoch Powell which I believe continued throughout his career and which just struck me between the eyes. It was interesting; here was this brilliant thinker of the Conservative Party and so on, at that time really one of the leading figures in the government. I've never forgotten that. I record that, I don't know if that's regarded as too indiscreet for this series but I was sustained in that belief by his subsequent performances; it was very remarkable to get that impression. I tell the story largely, not so much for the interest of Powellists, but for the insights it gave one into the lecturers who came, and into the nature of the topics they were discussing. I found that year at the IDC an extraordinarily valuable year and I think there was a degree of planning in that appointment, and in my next one in the Foreign Office which was as Head of Planning Staff. Paul Gore-Booth was the Permanent Under Secretary and he summoned me when I was due to return, I think before I left the IDC, and said that he wanted me to take planning and make more of it. At that time it was part of a department which was called the Western Organisations Department run by a very determined, exceptionally able and fairly astringent character called John Barnes. John was absolutely furious at having this, what he regarded as the most interesting part of his empire, taken away from him and the person who was responsible for it in his department, Crispin Tickell, taken and transferred to me. There was an extremely frosty period in our relationship for the first three or four months of my setting up this very small unit. It was Crispin Tickell and initially John Thomson, and when Crispin left, I forget at what point he left but he was succeeded by Robert Wade-Gery. There were just the three of us basically. Indeed, one of the things that I still feel about planning, and felt and expressed very strongly at that time, was the need to make a success of it. I was able to achieve this because Paul Gore-Booth wanted this to succeed and saw himself as responsible for doing it. I said I wanted an office, I wanted to be involved in all the Secretary of State's policy meetings, I

wanted our offices to be in the same area of the Foreign Office as the Foreign Secretary and I was determined that we should not be too large. Inevitably difficulties were made over the first two of those requirements in that the then Private Secretaries, I can't remember now who they were, were a little bit resistant to the idea of this sort of outside figure being there all the time and needless to say the accommodation people wanted to put us up on the third floor somewhere. I achieved both purposes; I got two offices and a small cubbyhole for our secretary in the first floor corridor. As you go out of the Foreign Secretary's office and walk along the famous corridor they were the first two offices on the left.

JH Rabbit hutches in the Locarno Suite?

MP No, no. These were offices that looked out over Downing Street. They had been converted from one big one into two smaller ones and therefore had immensely high ceilings as you can imagine, but I remember when someone came round saying, 'Don't you need more space?', I said well it's quite all right, we'll just put in an artificial ceiling and have an office above us. That was not a serious proposition, but we had those two offices and it meant that we were always available for the Foreign Secretary's office and also, incidentally, for the Permanent Under Secretaries, which, as you know, is immediately below, on the floor below. It gave us an access which I consider to be indispensable for planning. The other reason why, and here again I am saying all this because I don't know how planning is run now but I don't think the principles that were being developed then were wrong. The other reason I wanted to be small was because I was quite convinced that the only way you could get planning ideas, or, if you like, new ideas, slightly radical ideas, effectively injected into the system was if you could persuade the department responsible for the work that you were on their side and trying to make life easier for them. Therefore when we wrote papers, although probably most of the drafting was done by the exceptionally hard-working people who were working with me, Crispin, John Thomson and Robert Wade-Gery, all outstanding men, not just intellectually but in terms of the amount of work they put in, and although most of the initial drafting would be done by one or other of us, the principle on which we worked was that we should do it in concert with the operational department, we shouldn't conceal anything from them of what we were doing and we should try to work with them to convince them. If we couldn't we reserved the right to put in our separate thought; but we didn't do it behind their backs. Some people said the trouble with this is you will never really strike out and get something radical, to which the answer has to be that if you throw a totally radical paper into a bureaucracy even with top level support you're not going to get anywhere with that paper. The really busy people haven't got time to read it and the people who do the work down the line will find all sorts of arguments why you are wrong. If you've got radical thoughts you've got to persuade the people responsible for the operations that there is something in those thoughts and that they should be prepared to

analyse them and put them forward.

JH Yes, thank you. Perhaps with my excuses for jumping the gun before, we should now move to the job for which these were a kind of preparation, planned or otherwise, namely that of Private Secretary to the Prime Minister which must have given you the same sort of insider's view but from the opposite side of Downing Street. You were seeing the Foreign Office, dealing with the Foreign Office from the outside in a way, or from above. Could you perhaps speak about that including, again, anything specific which you feel should be more fully on the record?

MP Yes, I think perhaps the first thing by way of introduction is just to describe the basis on which I went to that job. I was summoned one afternoon out of the blue, I wasn't expecting it, by (Sir Saville) Garner who was the Permanent Under Secretary in the Commonwealth Office, or Commonwealth Relations Office as it still was. At that time, if you remember, the offices had been merged but the services were separate and therefore Paul Gore-Booth was still responsible for the organisation of the Foreign Office and Sir Saville Garner was responsible likewise for the Commonwealth Office but also, as the senior of the two, had overall responsibility for the two offices vis-a-vis Whitehall; so it was Garner who summoned me and said 'we are proposing to put your name forward to No 10 as the Foreign Office Private Secretary to succeed Oliver Wright.' Wright had been taken there by Sir Alec Home when he became Prime Minister, having been Foreign Secretary and having had Oliver as his Private Secretary in the Foreign Office. I said, 'fine', this thought hadn't occurred to me before but I could see that this was a fascinating job, I had seen Oliver occasionally as we had known each other for a long time and I was perfectly willing for my name to go forward. So it did. I was telephoned a few days later by Oliver in fact to say that on behalf of himself and Derek Mitchell, who was the number one Private Secretary in No 10 at the time they were pleased at the news of my possible appointment and the Prime Minister wanted to see me before deciding. I went over and had a conversation with Harold Wilson in the cabinet room where he always worked, at that time anyway, I believe later he may have moved upstairs but in those days he did all his work in the cabinet room, and it was a perfectly pleasant conversation. He puffed away at his pipe and said, 'probably you must be all right because anyway you are the only candidate the Foreign Office have put to me and you come with a perfectly respectable chit from the Foreign Office and also I have asked George Thomson,' (who you may remember at that time was the No 2 Minister in the Foreign Office) 'I've asked him about you and he also gives you a good chit so I can't see there are any problems and you had better come and start.' So I said, 'Thank you very much, I'd enjoy the job, I think, very much but there's one thing I must say to you which is that I'm a very convinced believer in British membership of the European Community and I wouldn't want you to take me under false pretences in a situation where you and I might find each other in disagreement over Europe and I wouldn't feel I was working honestly for you if that

situation arose and I thought I had to dissent.' 'Ah', he said, taking another puff, 'You'll see', he said. 'Everyone in the Foreign Office is in favour of Europe', he said, 'You'll see we shan't have any problems over Europe', and nor did we, because at that time - this is one of the things we might talk about later - he was quite determined to try to get us into the European Community although he was doing it in his usual devious crab-like fashion so it was almost impossible to know what his views were. This was the first inkling I had of what became very clear to me subsequently when I came to work for him which I then did shortly afterwards, almost immediately after the 1966 election. You will remember he initially had a tiny majority in parliament and then went to the country in March of 1966 and came back with a 100 seat majority and he often used to say to me in moments of irritation subsequently, 'I wish to God we were back to the majority of 3, it's much easier to run the Party with a majority of 3 than with a majority of 100.' I sometimes wonder whether Tony Blair has the same problem now, but I doubt it, at any rate, not yet. I describe that because it was interesting as background to the subsequent development of our European policy. On the point you made about the relationship between No. 10 and the Foreign Office; that's a very valid point and it's a constant problem because first of all I think all Prime Ministers and even Prime Ministers who have themselves been Foreign Secretaries, and in my experience, there were Anthony Eden, Harold Macmillan, Alec Home, Jim Callaghan, even they at No. 10, it's not that they disconnect from the Foreign Office but they have a slight suspicion of the Foreign Office. And of course in the case of a Prime Minister who hadn't had that experience, Harold Wilson, a number of them, Margaret Thatcher perhaps even more, the suspicion tends to be deeper rooted. In the case of Old Labour, which perhaps is the word one should use nowadays, it is linked with a feeling that the Foreign Office was a bit too gentryfied and one of the most difficult things ever, even now, is to convince people that actually within the Foreign Office we don't pay too much attention to where people were educated, where they came from; but we're seen as basically Oxbridge and therefore there is a difficult relationship to be nurtured and I think that one of the problems for a Foreign Office Private Secretary in No. 10 is precisely how to reconcile being totally loyal to the Prime Minister, who is your boss and who you are there to serve, while at the same time preserving a relationship with the Foreign Secretary in the Foreign Office which is actually crucial to the national interest. People always say that the relationship between a Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister is the crucial relationship in any government and I believe that to be true as long as the Treasury has the power that it has, (and God knows whether that will ever change, though it should do, and interestingly Wilson tried to change it,) as long as that is the case that relationship is the key relationship within any government, but the relationship between Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary is also extremely important. I've long believed that if Eden had kept Harold Macmillan in the Foreign Office instead of replacing him with the pliant, flexible friend, Selwyn Lloyd, the Suez adventure might not have happened. It is perfectly true that in the initial stages Harold Macmillan at the Treasury supported the Suez

adventure but he very quickly came to see that it was a mistake. Whether he would have supported it at the Foreign Office I think is much more doubtful because apart from anything else one of the reasons why Eden was so determined on Suez, (perhaps it's evident from what I have been saying, that I regard it as an absolutely major mistake in British foreign policy of the time; I regarded it so at the time and I continue to regard it as so. There was much controversy, much disagreement, and lots of people who don't agree with that.) One of the reasons that impelled Eden to do it was his deep distrust, not to say great dislike, for Foster Dulles, the American Secretary of State. It wasn't by any manner of means the only reason and it is arguable that an even more powerful reason was a sort of throwback to history which was certainly shared with Ivone Kirkpatrick, of seeing Nasser as a kind of latter-day Hitler. Nasser had written his book, like *Mein Kampf*, I forget what it was called, saying all the things that he thought needed to be done and Nasser was to them a sort of Hitler-like figure. I think that was a total misconception but there's no doubt that it weighed very heavily with Eden and indeed, as I said, with Kirkpatrick. I think that the dislike and distrust, not wholly unjustified one has to say, the distrust anyway, of Dulles was a very powerful factor and led Eden to totally disregard what, in his right mind, so to speak, he would realise would be the American reaction. I don't believe that Macmillan would have made that mistake. I may be quite wrong but I've long felt that if there had not been that change at the Foreign Office Suez might not have happened or the developments might have been different. Of course I can't prove that and I may well be wrong but it's something that illustrates, if you like, the point of the importance of the relationship between the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary. You need an understanding between them but you don't want your Foreign Secretary to be simply a 'yes' man to the Prime Minister and this is the position that Selwyn Lloyd was in with Eden. It would not have been the position with Harold Macmillan. Interestingly it was not, I think, although I wasn't in No. 10 at the time, it was not the position between Ted Heath and Alec Home, which in some respects, particularly if Home had not been such a splendidly loyal man, could have been very difficult. Home had been Prime Minister, he had accepted to be Foreign Secretary under Heath, and the relationship could have been very tricky, but in fact I don't think it was. Coming back to my own time there, there was a very real problem with George Brown when he became Foreign Secretary. Much less of a problem with Michael Stewart who was not compliant, who had his own mind, but who was a calmer, more emollient (emollient always has a slightly pejorative ring to it and I don't mean that) but was a more emollient personality in terms of relationships and when George Brown was Foreign Secretary Murray Macle hose, subsequently to become Governor of Hong Kong, was his principal Private Secretary. Macle hose was a great man in my view. (We had known each other, fortunately, in the Embassy in Paris where he had been on the commercial side of the Embassy when I was on the political side in Chancery). He and I used to meet for lunch once a week and, so to speak, try to repair such bits of china as had been broken during the week in the relationship between George Brown and Harold Wilson, or indeed in the general sort of situation

within the government and I have always felt that this kind of close relationship between Private Secretaries at No 10 and the FO is important in avoiding misunderstandings between the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister. I had been conscious all along of the need to be loyal to Wilson and there was a particularly rumbustious meeting at one point between Wilson and Brown at which I was initially present and at which Brown in effect accused me of being a traitor to the Foreign Office, all sorts of very rude things were said; then Wilson told me to leave the room and then, I think, had a row with Brown. Interestingly again it was typical of Brown, for whom I had both affection and respect, that the following morning he rang me up and said, 'look, I behaved outrageously yesterday, come round and have a drink and a chat.' I went round and of course, the poor man couldn't get his drinks cupboard open because his Private Secretary had taken the key, because that was the root of his problems, some of his problems. Again, it illustrates the point that I was making that the relationship between him and Wilson was a crucial relationship and when it worked well, this is particularly true in the case of our European policy, it had very healthy consequences. George Brown always claimed the credit, I think, for appointing Christopher Soames as Ambassador to Paris. In fact that credit really belongs to Wilson, and it was much more typical of Wilson. Wilson was crafty, he saw Soames as someone who had been in the Heath negotiations, who was beyond doubt committed to our membership of the Community but here was also a bit of an opportunity to drive a little wedge within the Tory Party by appointing this very determined Tory, not of the right-wing particularly, but a very Conservative with a capital C figure, to a key job under a Labour government. Wilson thought that this was a clever idea and a good idea. He had no difficulty at all in selling it to George Brown when George came over and they talked about it; I was a fly on the wall at that meeting. Interestingly I had, I think, more reservations about it initially, than George because I thought that this was liable to cause Wilson problems with his own Party, and I put that point to him. I didn't say I was against it because I wasn't; I thought it was a clever idea. And he said, 'No, no, that's alright, I can handle that.' Indeed of course he could. It was an interesting example of the fact that, when a Foreign Secretary and a Prime Minister agree on a policy - and then they did the tour of the capitals together - things work very well. When they don't agree you get into real difficulties and to my mind the job at No. 10 was not to dominate the Foreign Office or to run other Departments, it was to ensure the smooth liaison between the two while preserving the loyalty to the Prime Minister who is your boss. This really was the problem with George. George saw me as his agent in No. 10 and I made it clear to him that I didn't see myself in that way and certainly the Prime Minister didn't see it in that way. You are not the Foreign Office's agent but you have a responsibility for ensuring that relationships across Downing Street are preserved and sustained. I think I was lucky to have Murray Macle hose there; George called him 'my gloomy Scot' and, my goodness me, he often had reasons for looking gloomy. But we had a very good relationship and it worked very well. I don't think I was ever disloyal to the Prime Minister but at the same time I don't think that there were any occasions when

I really felt that I was frustrating or complicating life for the Foreign Office, - though perhaps I was on occasions, I just don't know. It's something where one has seen subsequent problems partly I think flowing now from the change in the way our foreign relations are conducted at the top. Even in those days the role of the Prime Minister was increasingly important, in fact since World War Two, the role of the Foreign Secretary and the role of the Prime Minister in the conduct of our foreign policy have fluctuated depending on the nature of the Foreign Secretary but also on the nature of the business and now of course particularly as part of the European Union the role of the Prime Minister is much more important, - important is the wrong word, much more evident and much more publicity-related than was the case, so that a Foreign Secretary has to be prepared to be slightly sort of number two in the conduct of foreign policy, but nonetheless to preserve the degree of his own independence of thought and advice and so on. It's not an easy role and I don't think it's ever been easy since the end of World War Two but it's certainly more difficult now.

JH Thank you. Yes, well that could give rise to many questions but before we leave No. 10, so to speak, should I ask if there are any other specific examples, possibly an example of where, because of disagreements, something did go awry, again, subject to what I've already said, if it's worth recording? But, otherwise let us pass on because you then went to be Minister in Paris with Christopher Soames I believe, so the same subject, among others, virtually continues.

MP Well, I think there is a point. As far as failures, failures caused by dissent, off the cuff, I can't think of any. There was often disagreement, particularly with George, but one of the major problems Wilson had to deal with in my period was Vietnam. But there, there was no dissent between him and Michael Stewart. There had been dissent between him and George Brown because George Brown was more, anti-American is the wrong way of putting it, but was more concerned about Vietnam and more worried of the American role and I think felt more a sort of spiritual disassociation from it than Wilson. Wilson had terrible problems with his Party over supporting the Americans. On the other hand we needed the Americans because the economy was really in a terrible state and we couldn't afford to disassociate too much in terms of realpolitik without getting into real financial trouble. I think perhaps George tended a little bit to disregard that and to see it purely in terms of foreign policy; foreign policy in a rather narrow sense, whereas in fact one had to see it across the board. I think Wilson saw that probably more clearly than Brown. Michael Stewart was different, he supported the policy because he was absolutely convinced that it was right, it was right to support the South Vietnamese regime against the sinister Communists in the North. He saw it much more perhaps in black and white terms than Wilson and of course he was an extremely articulate and effective speaker. He had no hesitation in speaking up very firmly in favour of the broad thrust of American policy although this was not at all popular with large chunks of the Labour Party so Vietnam was an interesting example of the need, if you

like, for a Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister to be on the same wavelength. Of course Wilson played a bigger part in that probably than Stewart simply because of the relationship with Lyndon Johnson, which was a Prime Minister to President relationship and the fact that he had to lead the Labour Party, had to convince the Labour Party that in supporting the Americans he had a better chance of working for peace. Michael Stewart was even more suspect, if I can put it that way, to the left-wing of the Labour Party than Wilson himself, because Wilson always had this advantage of having come from the left and although a lot of people in the Labour Party thought he was betraying them there was still a lot of support for him in the grass roots of the Labour Party because that was where he had come from. There are quite interesting lessons there in terms of the relationship between domestic policy and foreign policy of which I think the Vietnam experience was a particularly good illustration. There is also a point I want to make which relates to my going to Paris. I hadn't thought initially of going to Paris when, as I said, I was there when they decided to send Christopher Soames to Paris and I was actually there when he and Wilson talked about it. It didn't occur to me at that point, though it did quite quickly afterwards, that to go to Paris as number two was something I wanted to do. What did occur to me was that by then I had been roughly three years with Wilson, it was quite clear to me that we were going to have to have a general election fairly soon, and what I felt was, and I think there is a lesson here for this particular job in No. 10, what I felt was that if I stayed with Wilson until the general election; if he won it he would want me to stay on for a while afterwards to ensure continuity, I could have been wrong but I think that would have been the case; if he had lost it whoever came into office would also want me to stay on for a while to ensure continuity, and one has seen that actually in subsequent elections. I said to myself, if I don't get out before the election I am going to be another year in this job and that is probably more than I want to do, or more than I should do. At that point I thought to myself, where would I like to go. Then I thought, well the number two to Soames at this particular time would be very interesting, I liked him and we knew each other well, we got on well so I marched into Wilson and said, 'look I've been with you now just over three years, I think that's probably about the right amount of time, and I would like to go to somewhere else, but obviously this depends on what you feel,' Whether because he shared my view that I had been long enough with him or whatever, he said, 'fine, I understand that, which Embassy would you like to have?' I think, to his surprise, I said, 'Well, as a matter of fact I don't want an Embassy'. He said, 'Surely after this I can get you any Embassy you want.' I said, 'No, I am not particularly interested in being an Ambassador, I'm interested in the interests of the job and I think the most interesting job to go to at the moment would actually be to be number two in Paris, I think I'm qualified, I have spent 4 years there, my wife and I are both bi-lingual, I think this would make sense, assuming that Christopher is going to have me.' 'OK,' he said, 'If that's what you want, go and talk to the Foreign Office about it.' I went to talk to the Foreign Office and they said, 'As a matter of fact Christopher Soames has already expressed an interest and wondered what you were going to do.' I said, 'That

sounds alright,' and that led into my appointment there. I tell the story more to illustrate that I don't think that one ought to be too long in the Private Secretary job in No. 10 and I think that people who have been there a very long time have not necessarily been serving either their own interests or the public interest. I think that, again, it illustrates a point which has perhaps been true in my case perhaps throughout my career, that I am more interested in the nature of the job than in the status or whatever that it carries with it. I think that there is a sort of lesson there of a kind. Just interestingly to complete that kind of anecdote, two years later, after I had been in Paris for a couple of years with Soames, he came back from one of his frequent visits to London, we talked about it and he said, 'By the way, the Foreign Office told me that they were thinking of making you Ambassador to the EC, and I told them that's a frightfully boring job really, there's not much to do and I didn't think you would want it for a moment.' I said to him, 'Christopher, you must be mad. If we get into the Community which is what you and I are doing our best to ensure here, that's going to be by far the most interesting not to say possibly the most important job in the entire service, of course I would like to do it.' 'Oh Christ,' he said, 'Well you'd better ring them up.' I went back to my office and got on the telephone to the Chief Clerk and said, 'Look, I think Christopher Soames has given you a misleading impression,' and corrected it very quickly. Fortunately that produced the right result. It was an interesting example of the point about the interest of a job which I think is crucial, it's not just whether you are an Ambassador somewhere but that what you are doing is interesting and worthwhile. I have been extraordinarily lucky, I've had a career of tremendously interesting jobs, which was only partly planning.

JH You missed out at least one adjective in describing some of these jobs, certainly the one in Brussels, certainly the PUS job, namely that, and indeed most Private Secretary jobs, namely that it entails some long hours worked at high pressure. In other words it is arduous and demands energy. I am allowing myself to make a little speech about this because our image in the public mind is of laid-back diplomats drinking cocktails whereas in fact what strikes me more and more as I interview people is the amount of sheer energy and long hours with full alertness if possible that particularly the top people, but many others as well, have to put in to do the job.

MP No, you are absolutely right, and it's no good, perhaps the No. 10 job is the most demanding in that respect, but all those jobs that you refer to were demanding. I don't know whether No. 10 or Brussels or indeed the PUS were the most in terms of effort, energy, time and so on. I think it is best illustrated when I took over from Oliver Wright in No. 10 and we had lunch together and I have a very clear recollection that he said to me, 'Michael, basically this is a very easy job and an interesting one. There are only two qualifications for it, an iron constitution and an understanding wife.' He was quite right and I think the only time when the iron constitution let me down was when Kosygin was on a visit to London and I was laid low for 24 hours with an appalling cough

and cold. The understanding wife never abandoned me and the number of times I got home at some ghastly hour and she was already in bed.., this was true in Brussels as well, and she said, 'You'll find something hot in the oven.' That was very, very regular. The iron constitution, the only time that broke down was, as I say, when I got 'flu in the middle of the Soviet visit in whatever year it was, when they were talking about Vietnam, and that I'm happy to say, Joe Stone, my doctor who was also the Prime Minister's doctor who lived just up the road here, got me back on my feet within slightly over 24 hours, a powerful dose of I don't know what. So these things can be resolved but you are absolutely right, these are jobs that require a willingness to work almost any hours. I said I wasn't sure whether the Brussels job wasn't even more demanding. The Brussels job does illustrate a point you made right at the outset, the universality of the work. We had, and I think this is still absolutely true of the permanent representatives, we had a weekly meeting of the permanent representatives at which we would deal with perhaps 15 different subjects, perhaps that's a bit much, say 6 or 7 different subjects ranging across all sorts of economic issues. I always had an adviser from whichever section in the Mission it was who dealt with this, it might be Treasury, it might be Labour. Agriculture was always dealt with separately but it could be the Environment, it could be Transport, you name it. There were people, very good people from Whitehall departments in my team who were responsible for those various things and they would brief me beforehand. That brings up a point; I also had a weekly meeting in London because despite all the communications facilities and everything else I found that if you didn't get back to London at least once a week you were out of touch with thinking in Whitehall. I think one of the great problems for the service is how to keep in touch with thinking in Whitehall because of distance and even, as I say, with daily telegrams, telephones, all the rest of it, unless you actually sit down in someone's office and talk to them you lose touch. We had a weekly meeting of the committee under the Cabinet Office which superintended, monitored our European policies which I attended but I combined it with seeing 2 or 3 other people. That required going over the night before, probably, I would go and stay with my mother who was alive then and had a house in London, or I would stay at my Club; I'd come over for the night and spend from very early in the morning the next day seeing people, going to meetings and then catch the last 'plane that night back to Brussels and arrive to find the box with all the briefs for the following morning's meeting waiting for me on my desk. That would keep me up until 2 o'clock in the morning. The meeting would be at 9 o'clock the following morning, preceded probably by a meeting in the Delegation for an hour. If you keep that up for 4 years it's a strain, it's a physical strain and an intellectual strain but you're sustained by the interest of it which is extraordinary. These are very tough jobs, you are absolutely right, and one's got to be prepared to put your all into them; and indeed do silly things. Again this is purely anecdotal but it's one which has always entertained me, Harold Wilson would go off, he was a great one for the smoking room, keeping touch with his backbenchers, he was actually a very remarkable man in spite of all the things that are said about him. The more one saw of him, I don't

say one came to respect him because of his extraordinarily devious mind, but certainly came to admire the way he juggled all the balls. He would come back, possibly a tiny bit tight, from the smoking room at the House of Commons, or taking part in a vote or whatever, at about 10.30 in the evening. Although he never said it, we knew that he expected someone to be there and, depending on the sort of topic of the day, or following day was, there would be one or other of us around and I was often there for various things and I remember I was there doing the 'placement' for a huge dinner the following evening for the President of Pakistan who was on a, not a State visit I think but an Official visit, and I had this huge table plan and was juggling with people. Wilson came in slightly the worse for wear, not terribly, but in a jovial mood I'd say, and he said, 'What are you doing.' My heart sank and I said, 'You don't want to bother with this, it's just the 'placement' for tomorrow's dinner and when I've done this I'm going to go home.' He came round and said, 'Let's have a look.' Then, 'You can't possibly sit him next to her, they haven't been on speaking terms for.... Oh, no, that won't do.....' Anyway he completely destroyed my table plan and left me to put the pieces together again, which I did and I supposed I finished it about midnight, got the Clerk on duty, because again No. 10 is an extraordinary machine and there are people on duty 24 hours a day, you could do anything you want to at any time, day or night; the switchboard is extraordinary too, they've still got this great tradition, they were far better than the White House switchboard. I finished the thing, sent it down and it went off to the printers and was printed first thing in the morning. After the dinner, walking out because I was at the bottom of the table, ushering guests out I found myself walking alongside the wife of the Pakistani High Commissioner, who was a very nice lady, and I made to her the sort of remark one always makes, I said, 'Well, Begum, I hope you enjoyed your dinner?' 'Oh, yes,' she said, 'And you know, it's the first time I have been sitting next to my husband.' So I knew I had got one thing wrong in the 'placement'. But when you are doing seating for 65 people, or whatever, it's never easy. That's a silly story, but that's the lighter side, but also quite time-consuming side, of No. 10 life.

JH Indeed, and the idea that someone has got to be there at 10.30 at night or whenever the Prime Minister returns speaks for itself.

MP It illustrates your point.

Second interview with Sir Michael Palliser on 27 May 1999, by John Hutson.

JH Sir Michael, I'd like to start this second part of our interview by asking about what we might call your last normal posting, or work in a normal post, namely your period as Minister in Paris in 1969 to 1971, with, I believe, Christopher Soames as Ambassador.

MP Yes, that's quite right. That was indeed as you say my last posting in, what one might call, a conventional bilateral Embassy. Christopher I had met before and he, of course, had been appointed by Harold Wilson and George Brown and I had actually been present at the discussion that he had had with them in No. 10. I liked him, I admired him and he had gone to Paris basically with one purpose; to do what he could to get us into, or help get us into, the European Community, as it then was. This meant that once the Heath government had won the election in 1970, he saw his prospects greatly enhanced of achieving this because Heath had a conviction about it, had been the negotiator at the previous attempt and he had been working with Heath at that time. They understood each other very well, they got on very well. From my point of view the interesting feature of this was that not only was I very concerned to get us into the European Community and therefore very concerned to help Christopher Soames in any way that I could with this purpose but also it meant that I had much more responsibility within the Embassy than possibly a number 2 normally would. When you are working for a professional career Ambassador, he knows the ropes, if you like, and he will want to do a very large part of the work of the Embassy, the diplomatic work as a whole, which of course nowadays, and indeed in those days, comprises foreign policy, reporting on domestic affairs and also commercial, economic and a whole raft of other business. Christopher Soames I won't say was not interested, but did not see his purpose as Ambassador as being to deal with really any of these topics. That's not to say he wasn't perfectly prepared to handle them with the Prime Minister or with other Ministers if that became essential and we would then brief him, usually briefed him orally because he was not a very enthusiastic reader; and he usually performed brilliantly because he was an extremely able politician, a very articulate one and highly intelligent. For day to day business, and indeed for more than day to day business, for the general diplomatic business of the Embassy, he was very content to leave that largely to me so that I had, I think as a result of this, a more interesting and certainly a wider range of tasks in the Embassy that I might have done under a senior colleague from the diplomatic service.

JH Yes, that is interesting. How successful can we say that Christopher Soames and yourself were in getting the French to take more account of our interests, especially as regards the EU because this was after De Gaulle's two successive vetos, I believe, and after he had also withdrawn from the military structure of NATO. Was he still the President of France?

MP No, this, of course, was the direct answer to your opening question there is that I think we between us, very largely Christopher Soames himself, helped considerably in getting the right sort of climate in Paris for a successful negotiation. But the fact of the matter is that the real heart of that was the change of President. General De Gaulle, if you will remember, had resigned as a result of, from his point of view, a very unsatisfactory result in a referendum on the organisation of the parliament, the Senate and the Assembly, and he saw this as a direct rebuff and resigned. His successor, elected successor, was President Pompidou who had been De Gaulle's Prime Minister and one of his main advisers, particularly in economic affairs. Pompidou took a totally different view of British accession to the European Community from that of De Gaulle and he did it in a characteristically well organised and disciplined fashion. At the summit meeting, the meeting of Heads of Government, of the then six in the Community in, I think it was December of 1969, achieved agreement on the future financing of the Community. For Pompidou this was an essential pre-condition for entering any negotiations with Britain because he wanted to ensure that systems were in place which could not be affected by those negotiations and which we would have to accept. I think if I had been him that would have been what I would have tried to do as well because it was obviously in the interests of France, and he would have argued, of the six as a whole, that they should very clearly agree where they were going on finance and how the Community budget was to be put together and in particular of course financing of the common agricultural policy which was very important at that time for France, still is. He saw this as priority number one. But having done that, at the same summit meeting, once it had been achieved, he, in the communique issued at the end of the summit, indicated his readiness to see a negotiation begin with the United Kingdom. At the same time, of course, that brought Denmark, Ireland and at that time Norway into the process. Without Pompidou I think that Christopher Soames and I would have been wasting our time trying to get General De Gaulle to change his mind. He was not a man to change his mind. Given that Pompidou was there, a key necessity, obviously, was to establish a relationship with him and with his personal staff. That was something that Christopher in particular, but I too, set out to achieve. We got, between us, into a really close relationship with Monsieur Jobert who some years later was to become a rather difficult French Foreign Minister, but who at that time was Secretary General of the Elysee and undoubtedly Pompidou's closest confidant. History played an interesting part in this in that Jobert had met Edward Heath sometime before on holiday in Spain and they got to know each other and talked to each other, this is recorded in Heath's memoirs and in Jobert's so I don't need to dilate on it, but it did mean that Jobert knew Heath and was able to tell Pompidou, in answer to a question from Pompidou, that Heath was a man to be trusted, a man who could be relied upon, in terms of negotiation and so on. Again, this was immensely helpful, obviously, in the Embassy in Paris. To cut a long story short, the outcome of all that was that Christopher did indeed concentrate essentially on that relationship, on spreading the word elsewhere, of course, in senior French circles but the prime purpose as he

saw it was to persuade Pompidou to negotiate with us and to negotiate on terms which would make it possible for us to join, and of course he had a considerable knowledge of what those terms would be, partly from his past experience and partly from the very regular contact that he maintained with London, he went back regularly and saw everybody from the Prime Minister downwards that he needed to see. That was priority number one for the Embassy, but as I said earlier for me there was also an extraordinarily interesting range of foreign policy work, of economic affairs, social affairs, French domestic policy and so on, which I was able, so to speak, to manage on the Ambassador's behalf.

JH Yes, I see. Could I ask, how far were the entry negotiations advanced before you left Paris and went to Brussels?

MP I think the back was broken by the visit that Ted Heath paid to Pompidou in 1971, I forget the precise date but it must have been in the spring of '71, and that visit had been very largely organised and orchestrated by Christopher Soames with Jobert, and in London by Robert Armstrong, who was Cabinet Secretary, and the Prime Minister. In some degree, I won't say it bypassed the Foreign Office because the Foreign Office were kept in permanent knowledge of it, but it certainly bypassed the Quai d'Orsay, the French Foreign Ministry, because Jobert in particular was very determined that people in the Quai d'Orsay, whom he knew to be very hostile, (or who he believed to be very hostile, I don't think wholly wrongly,) should not, so to speak, somehow or other succeed in spoiling it, whether by leaks or by other means. We had a rather difficult situation, in that he, saying this was Pompidou's wish, and I expect that was correct, really forbade us from talking to anybody in the French Foreign Ministry about what was going on which did make, in my case in particular, the very frequent visits I paid to senior people in the Quai simply as part of my daily work a little bit embarrassing because this was something that was both crucial to our relationship but also something we couldn't discuss with them, that was tiresome but there it was. I think that, in fact, the French were probably better informed, I mean the Quai d'Orsay, possibly, the senior people better informed than perhaps either Jobert or indeed we thought, through another one of Pompidou's advisers, Jean-Rene Bernard. Bernard was the economic adviser in the Elysee and he was also chairman of the French co-ordinating committee, I forget what they called it, but they had a committee for co-ordinating all French policy within the European Community, and very effective it was. It was one of the reasons why, when we did join the Community, we set up a similar committee in the Cabinet Office because we had been very impressed by the extent to which French policy was pulled together, managed and organised in a central way, very characteristically French but very efficient. I think that Bernard without revealing secrets that he was under firm instructions not to reveal probably did both help and also ensure that there weren't too many surprises for the French administrative machine. That's more

guesswork than knowledge but it's something I have suspected for a long time. He and I became very good friends because he became one of my principal points of contact in the Elysee, we saw a lot of each other then and we have seen a lot of each other since, and remain very good friends.

JH Thank you. Leaving the entry negotiations for a moment then, is there anything that you would particularly like to record about your time in Paris, some other important event perhaps, affecting our interests before we go back inevitably to the Community with your move to Brussels?

MP Well, I think that one of the things that has always struck me is how frequently people in rather more junior positions in posts get more enjoyment out of them than people in more senior positions, which seems paradoxical. We were in Paris for 4 years in the '50's when I was a 1st Secretary dealing with French domestic policy and we had an absolutely marvellous time. We enjoyed it enormously, travelled about all over France, met a very large number of French politicians, journalists and others, and had a, I won't say position free of responsibility because it wasn't, but a carefree existence. As Minister, and I think in a way this would have been even more the case again if I had had a career boss rather than Christopher Soames, as Minister there were far more, perhaps what one ought not to call chores but which were chores. One example, indeed perhaps one engaging anecdote, Christopher was, like most people, perfectly aware of the Commonwealth but not particularly excited by it, and certainly not excited by the thought of attending the monthly lunches of Commonwealth Heads of Mission in Paris which had become a kind of tradition and at which the Ambassadors alternated in being host. When it was the turn of the British Embassy Christopher hosted the lunch and did it with great elegance and courtesy as he always did, while at the same time shouting furiously if the chef had got some particular sauce wrong, as he was a great stickler for the proper kind of food and so on. On other occasions he delegated this task to me as indeed he did to go to National days and he was not a great National day goer and I became the Embassy's representative at most of the National days, whereas a career Ambassador would have thought it his duty to do a lot of that. There were a number of chores which fell on me which might not have fallen on me if I'd had a different Ambassador. On the other hand they had their engaging side, there was one anecdote which I can perhaps tell, when the Ceylonese, as he still was, (now Sri Lanka) the Ceylonese Ambassador was presiding at the Commonwealth lunch and it was in honour of the departing Malaysian Ambassador who was retiring, nice speeches were made, we were given the most delicious curry lunch and at the end of it, after everybody had said how marvellous the lunch was, the Ceylonese Ambassador got up to make a nice little speech about his Malaysian colleague, and then he said, 'Of course, gentlemen, it has been a great opportunity for me to allow you to taste Ceylonese cuisine, in Ceylon we pride ourselves on our cuisine but, of course, we have a long and interesting history in cuisine: you see first we had the Portuguese and they brought us Portuguese cuisine, and then we had the Dutch and

they brought us Dutch cuisine, and then came the French and they brought us French cuisine, and then came the British and they brought us law and order.' I have always treasured that particular lunch in my memory. Coming back to the point I was making, being a Minister, or in a senior as opposed to a less senior job, you had more responsibilities, you are perhaps more conscious of them and you certainly have more chores, so that there is a mix there; in many ways the work obviously is more interesting and because it's more responsible it is of a different calibre, if you like. In terms of pure enjoyment I suspect that the younger you are the more you actually, you and your family, enjoy the thing.

JH Yes, I quite see that. So unless there is some particular question you had to pursue in Paris that you wish to record, short of that perhaps we should pass on to Brussels?

MP Yes, by all means. I think the only thing I would say before we leave Paris is that there were a number of foreign policy issues, diplomatic issues, where we and the French often didn't see eye to eye and I found myself going really quite frequently to the Quai d'Orsay on Middle Eastern matters. Particularly in regard to the Arab-Israel problem which was with us then as it is with us now. I think there, there was a real role for diplomacy in the sense that we had to persuade the French of our view as they were trying to persuade us of their view and if one could achieve at least a greater degree of comprehension, of mutual comprehension, that was, in a modest way, a diplomatic achievement and one we constantly strove to achieve. I actually at that time found myself much more involved in Middle Eastern affairs than I ever had before because I simply had to learn about it, I had to brief myself, I had to make sure that I was not talking nonsense in dealing with senior Quai d'Orsay officials, some of whom were their equivalent of what we call our Arabists in the service. So that was one thing, I think there is one other possibly almost anecdotal experience which is worth mentioning. When the late Lord Brimelow, Sir Thomas Brimelow as he was then, came over to Paris, this was when he was Deputy Under Secretary, he came over for talks with the Quai d'Orsay and two things I remember in particular. One was the absolute perfection of Brimelow's French, he was of course a marvellous linguist, and he spoke French of an almost Proustian quality with a very faint Yorkshire accent and I have never forgotten the....

JH But he was a Lancashire man....

MP Well, a Lancashire accent, I'm not too good at.... it was a North Country accent, lets say, which he had, but this French clearly almost bewildered his French opposite numbers because they had rather been expecting to conduct affairs with them speaking French and us speaking English and Brimelow soon put a stop to that. There was a quality, a perfection, a literary quality to his French which impressed us all. The other episode that arose out of that, which I think is also

symptomatic of some of the difficulties in our relationships. With some difficulty I persuaded Christopher Soames that this was an opportunity for him to meet some senior people from the Quai d'Orsay whom he didn't often meet, let's put it that way, and he kindly agreed to give a dinner for Brimelow and the two people who had come with him from the Foreign Office, myself and the senior people at the Quai d'Orsay. No names no packdrill, but they all turned up and what seemed like an agreeable dinner was progressing when the French equivalent of Under Secretary, in charge of the UK amongst other European countries, after the second course I think, struck up a cigarette. Christopher Soames, as I said earlier, was something of a stickler in these matters and he looked savagely at this hapless man and said, 'I wonder if you'd mind putting out that cigarette, I don't know if you have noticed but you are about to drink some Haut-Brion '45,' Christopher had a marvellous cellar, for this occasion he thought he would bewilder the French with the quality of his cellar, 'I think it would be a pity to spoil it,' he said, 'by smoking.' Well, this really was collapse of stout party. I have never seen so much virtual desolation around a table: here was a senior French official being rebuked by the British Ambassador for an appalling gaffe, as they all saw it, in a dinner involving some exquisite French wine. All I can say is I made a mental resolution not to try to organise Soames dinners for people from the Quai d'Orsay after that. Obviously it didn't matter too much but you could see that everyone of the Frenchmen around the table was mortified, indignant with their colleague for letting the side down, but also indignant with the British Ambassador for drawing so much attention to it; so that one way or another it slightly marred the on the whole very favourable impact of the Brimelow visit, which is really the reason I told the story, because small things, or apparently small things, can have quite a significant effect on human relationships, I'm not talking about relationships between the two countries.

JH Indeed they can and one of the advantages we perhaps do have is that we are mostly, perhaps the English rather than the Scots, able to take these things relatively lightly with a bit of humour whereas other people get seriously mortified by what we think are very minor affairs.

MP You're quite right, I don't think the French present at the dinner took it lightly at all.

JH Anyway, so we move on then to Brussels where you went, still in 1971, and remained there until 1975, thus, I imagine, straddling the latter part of the entry negotiations and the first years of membership; from being Ambassador you became Permanent Representative. Could I ask you about the entry negotiations with which you must have been constantly involved, was Mr Heath rather desperate to enter at any price? One had the feeling that Mr Rippon's reports to Parliament were rather succinct, possibly even seemed a little superficial and rather brief; it seemed almost to be a case of 'we've got the votes, let's not make long, or detailed, speeches,' and some people were, I think, quite upset by this.

MP I think there is a mixture of truth but also a fallacy in that argument. I think it is true that Heath and Geoffrey Rippon, and indeed, I would say, probably half the then Cabinet were convinced that we needed to be in the European Community for the future good of the country. I think this was a perfectly sincere and genuine belief and coupled with it was a feeling that once we're in we can put things right if we're not too happy with what has been negotiated. Now this doesn't mean there wasn't a great deal of attention paid to the detail of the negotiations because there was. As you rightly said I came in towards the tail end of the negotiations, obviously Paris had been following what was going on but in terms of detailed participation it wasn't until I got to Brussels that I was really in the picture. But that was the Autumn of 1971 by which time the bulk of the negotiations had been completed and this formidable team under Con O'Neill had really done remarkable things. I think, coming back to your point, I think there was, as I say, a feeling that if we hadn't achieved all our objectives, and we couldn't expect to achieve them all, we would attempt, over time within the Community, to change things in a way that suited us better. There is one interesting example of that which I mention because I think it's often forgotten, and that was our budgetary contribution which of course led to tremendous subsequent battles both under the Labour Government and then under Margaret Thatcher, but it was quite clear to us, negotiating, that the budgetary arrangements which had been worked out, as I said earlier, by the Community under Pompidou's pressure, but in general agreement amongst the Six were liable to be disadvantageous to us. We argued this in the negotiations, the Six said, 'No, that wasn't the case as we would find, that it was all perfectly fine from our point of view.' So we said, 'Well, we hope you're right, but just in case you're not we would like to insert a precautionary wording that will enable us to re-open this matter if in fact you're proved to be wrong and we are proved to be right.' I forget the precise form of words, but a form of words was devised and agreed which was really the basis for our subsequent attempts at various times to change the terms of the budget agreement, and which finally led to Margaret Thatcher's budget rebate. All that being said, It is perfectly true that we had to accept quite a lot of things that were not perfect from our point of view. I think this was inherent in the fact, as so many of us have said so often over the years, that we had not been in at the beginning, and if we had things would undoubtedly have been different. But in fact not having been in at the beginning and having been kept waiting, as a result of General De Gaulle's two vetoes, for the best part of a decade, it was hardly surprising that if we were to get in we had to accept compromises on a whole raft of issues. One particular one where, I remember very well, the consternation, in not just our negotiating team but in particular the Norwegians and the Danes, (less the Irish,) was the Community's really sort of patched up at the last minute fisheries policy. There is no doubt in my mind that it was that, that resulted, in very large measure, in Norway deciding, by referendum, not to join the Community because at that time the oil wealth, which subsequently enabled Norway to coast along very comfortably, though at very high cost, without being in the

Community, was hardly visible on the horizon. I well remember sitting late one night in the negotiations in a room in the Council building with Geoffrey Rippon looking at a map of the United Kingdom and working out how many Conservative MP's were likely to be affected, or indeed worse, by agreement on fisheries, and there were quite a number.

JH Because we must have been bringing to the Community about half of its total fishing area.

MP Yes, I think we were and, of course, at that time you've got to add in Denmark and Norway, so I mean the contribution of those who were negotiating entry was potentially very large indeed.

JH So that was a pretty, shall we say, ungentlemanly thing to do because they did it virtually in parallel with our entry negotiations, didn't they?

MP Yes they did. It was done during the summer of 1971. In a sense I think it was a very serious mistake on the part of the Six because they wanted to gain an economic advantage, or, putting it another way round, to oblige us to accept a policy which was not designed to be to our advantage whereas if we had to negotiate that when we were in the Community, as one of the large Community, it would certainly have been different. I say it was a mistake because it alienated a lot of people in this country, and continues to alienate, and I believe it was, as I said, largely responsible for Norway deciding not to join the Community, which, again, I think was disadvantageous to the Community. It was a shortsighted approach by the Six for which I think they have paid a political and psychological price, if not an economic one. But, of course, one's got to remember the complications of the fisheries policy were enormously compounded by the accession of Spain and Portugal some years later. Again, this is a policy which, like the common agricultural policy, manifestly requires change to take account of changed circumstances, and although big efforts are being made to change the common agricultural policy and I think over time will be successful, that's not the case, to any substantial degree, with the fisheries policy.

JH Because, of course, the new entrants, Spain and Portugal, their interests were really the contrary of ours; Spain was being pushed out of her waters gradually and therefore wanted to come and fish in what our fishermen call 'our' water. So that they were not on our side, as new entrants...

MP No, no, that's absolutely true, their fishing interests do not coincide with ours. Anyway, as you said a few moments ago I went to Brussels, initially as Ambassador to the Community and as a member of the negotiating team. I sat in on all the final stages of negotiations, they really were only the final stages because I suppose I went there in the early Autumn and by that time, I don't say things were completely concluded but in a way the key decision was the one when, after the

Heath-Pompidou talks in the Spring, Pompidou instructed Giscard to withdraw his financial objections, which took all the Five by surprise. From then on in effect I don't say the negotiations were trouble free, they weren't, and we have talked about fishing in particular but they were relatively trouble free and at the turn of the year we signed the treaties; in early January there was the famous episode of the ink-throwing at Heath which delayed proceedings a bit, and I became.. I can't remember whether I, at that point... you see we didn't formally join until January 1, 1973 and we had what (I don't think has been the case subsequently but for the three of us who joined, sadly Norway having dropped out,) was an interim year during which we were not formally members but during which we participated in all the activities and I went to meetings of COREPER. I think probably I was not formally a Permanent Representative until we were formally members of the Community, but to all intents and purposes whether I was an Ambassador or a Permanent Representative is immaterial, I was taking part as if we were full members and this had been the subject of a certain amount of discussion and debate, but finally everybody agreed that this was what made sense, so I learnt the ropes in the Committee of Permanent Representatives and the transition to full membership at the end of the year, beginning of 1973, was really hardly noticeable, we were so much in the machine by then. And of course, as you will remember, we took part completely as an ordinary participant in the summit meeting, the Heads of State and Government meeting in Paris in, was it, November of that year, anyway in the late Autumn of 1972 which, amongst other things, decided that we could have economic and monetary union by 1980! So we were, to all intents and purposes, proper members from the beginning of 1972.

JH You mentioned Con O'Neill. I believe he was the official leader of the team of officials in the negotiations and I believe that he wrote a kind of history of the negotiations; it seems somehow terribly hard to put salt on the tail of this history, I've never seen it, is it in the Public Records Office?

MP I have. It's not in the Public Records Office, I think, yet. I don't quite know why. It is an absolutely brilliant document; characteristic of Con. I'd known Con for a long time because, when I was a young man in the Central Department dealing with Germany in the '50's, Con was Head of Chancery in Bonn and I got to know him then and saw him at various points down the years subsequently. I had enormous respect and admiration for him. After he had retired, and I was Permanent Under Secretary, we used to lunch together, not on a regular basis but I suppose we used to lunch together two or three times a year, mainly, I'm afraid, to reminisce. Con was a wonderful companion; apart from anything else, he had, as you know, an extraordinary career, he had been a young man in the diplomatic service in Berlin in the '30's, he resigned from the service in disgust at our reactions to Hitler, he went off to be a leader writer in the Times, he worked for them for quite a long time, came back to the service, negotiated our entry to the EEC and all that,

then resigned again because George Brown wouldn't send him as Ambassador to Bonn. That was the kind of man Con O'Neil was; a man of iron will and resolution and, I suppose in a sense, very difficult. But I found him immensely engaging and always worth talking to. Coming back to where this started he, after the negotiations were completed, he was sent away with a towel round his head to write a report on the negotiations and it is a very full, comprehensive report which I have seen and read, which is there somewhere in the Foreign Office archives. It is interesting that I think Hugo Young, in writing his book 'This Blessed Plot', which came out a little earlier this year, it is a very remarkable book, he clearly had a sight of the report; who got it for him and how he did it I don't know and I haven't asked him. But it is as you say, it's elusive, and I'm not clear why, whether it is that at various points there are those slightly disobliging comments about some of our partners and so on, but I mean that's, you know, this is a long time ago. Of course it is true that I think the report was probably written in 1973 or 1975, possibly even 1975 so that under the 30 year rule it's not due to appear until two thousand and something and I very much hope that at that point it will appear. It certainly should in my view. I'm a little sorry that it hasn't appeared beforehand because it was such a self-contained opus that it could almost, I think, have been published or whatever as a but anyway, there it is. But he was an extraordinarily successful and skilful negotiator and one of his great qualities was in holding together the senior negotiating team which consisted of Raymond Bell from the Treasury, Freddie Kearns, subsequently Sir Fredrick Kearns, sadly dead now, from Agriculture and Roy Denman, now Sir Roy, from the Department of Trade and Industry and John Robinson, also now sadly dead, from the Foreign Office. Now of those four, possibly Bell was the most, if I say emollient it sounds rather pejorative, it's not meant to be, the least awkward though a very determined man, but the iron hand was well concealed in Bell's glove; whereas in the case of Robinson in particular there wasn't any sign of the velvet glove, it was all iron hand.

JH Well, Sir Michael, having dealt with the entry negotiations, we are now in the Community, you were in Brussels and we arrive almost immediately, I suppose, at the Labour government's quote 're-negotiation' of the conditions of entry. What's the key thing that you would want to record about that?

MP I think possibly the surprise and the rather disconcerted way in which our partners received the demand for re-negotiation. I can't say that the election result filled me with enthusiasm, sitting in Brussels, but it was quite clear to me that we were going to have a government with a different approach and their approach had been very clearly set out in the Labour Party's manifesto for the election. It had been made clear in that, that there was to be a re-negotiation of the terms of entry. The day after the election I called an informal meeting of my Permanent Representative colleagues and I said to them I'm calling this meeting without instructions as yet from the new government in

London but I think I know what I shall be instructed to convey to you before very long. The best thing I think I can do is to give you copies of the relevant extract from the Labour Party's election manifesto, which you may not all have had a chance to read; I then handed round copies of that chunk in the manifesto. Certainly the reaction of my colleagues was a kind of combination of mirth, disbelief and I think a degree of indignation, I mean, was I really telling them that barely three years after we had become members we were once again going to put the whole thing back into re-negotiation and what on earth did that mean and so on, and finally this can't really be the case, election manifestos, people write manifestos but once they are elected they don't carry them out. I said, look, quite frankly I think you are wrong. I think that the Labour government has a big problem with its own Party, of deep scepticism about the whole process of membership of the Community and they have to demonstrate that they are taking steps to protect British interests which they argue were not protected in the entry negotiations. But I said all I'm trying to tell you is what I think you are going to have to deal with, so go away and we'll see when I get my instructions. I think the next thing that happened was that I was summoned back to London by Jim Callaghan who was the new Foreign Secretary and we had a really rather unpleasant interview or discussion. Callaghan is now a very avuncular and very pleasant old man and indeed our subsequent relationships when I was to become Permanent Under Secretary and then served under him for a while as Permanent Under Secretary were very friendly and very cordial, but there is a degree of the bully to Callaghan and he certainly showed it when we met on that occasion. He said quite bluntly that he would have moved me elsewhere, because he thought I was too committed to the European policy and of course it was true, I had worked very closely with Heath, I had been Heath's interpreter and all the rest of it, but interestingly, he said, the only reason I'm not doing that is because the Prime Minister has told me I ought to keep you there, which was also quite revealing and I think was based on my past relationship with Wilson. But he said, I warn you that we are going to be difficult and you ought to do what I tell you to do. I said, well frankly, that's what I regard my job as being, if I find that you are asking me to do things which I profoundly believe to be wrong I will resign but unless that happens of course I'll do what you tell me to do. We parted on that, not particularly cordial, note. The next thing that happened, of course, was that... the election was I suppose, I'm trying to think, must have been in March..... at the beginning of whichever month it was, if you remember there were certain months in the year when Community procedure is conducted in Luxembourg, for all sorts of rather unsatisfactory historical reasons, and an awful lot of unsatisfactory things have been done in Luxembourg including the so-called Luxembourg compromise which again was agreed during one of the months when everybody met in Luxembourg. We were due to meet in Luxembourg at the beginning of, it must have been April, and the Foreign Secretary was due to come and make a statement about the new government's policy. Jim Callaghan showed up in Luxembourg the night before the Council meeting, we had an appointment for him to see Monsieur Ortoli, who was the President of the Commission, early the

following morning before the meeting began; I accompanied him to that and that was a fairly unpleasant meeting because he was, not to put too fine a point on it, he was extremely discourteous with Ortolini which seemed to me to be quite unnecessary and really more or less treated him as someone, you know, as a rather unsatisfactory senior official, whereas Ortolini of course had been Finance Minister in the French government and I think indeed had been a colleague of British Ministers in the Finance Ministers' Council. There it was, it seemed to me to be a rather unhappy way to start the day. We then moved to the Council meeting itself in the Council building in Luxembourg and Callaghan made the statement, which is on the record, of the British government's desire to see a re-negotiation. He then, having made his statement and heard a variety of comments, I think all of them courteous but most of them disobliging about this, left and went back to London. I was left in charge of the remainder of the meeting as very often happened as Ministers came for a while and then left their Permanent Representatives to finish the Council meeting. On the same day that this had happened, late in the day my French colleague Burin des Rozières was handed a slip of paper and he asked the chairman, who I think was the Irish Foreign Minister of that time, for the floor, and he said I think my colleagues will wish to know that I've had very sad news: the death of President Pompidou. I drove back to Brussels late that night in the enormous Daimler which was my official car listening to the radio, switching alternately from the BBC World service to French radio and hearing all the tributes to Pompidou and so on. I was deeply depressed because I'd formed a very favourable view of Pompidou, got to like him the more I knew him in Paris, and I was very sad that he had died and obviously his death cast something of a blight on the meeting of the Council; but also of course I was pretty depressed by the British government statement. In some ways I think the coincidence of that statement and Pompidou's death, looking back on it now, was probably helpful to us because it meant that the British statement was virtually blanketed throughout the continental media by the death of the French President, not of course in Britain. We gave a lot of publicity to it, but certainly elsewhere, and to that extent I think it slightly mitigated the sort of PR impact that our statement would have had otherwise. I was asking myself whether I really could carry on with this or whether I shouldn't in fact resign. I didn't think of being asked to move to somewhere else, certainly that seemed to me a rather cowardly way of dealing with things; but anyway I waited and I took the earliest opportunity to go back to London and to talk to people there. Although I don't think I saw the Prime Minister at that point I certainly went into No. 10 and saw the No. 10 staff and one way or another it became quite clear to me after a relatively short while that certainly the Prime Minister's purpose, and because Callaghan and the Prime Minister were close, although they didn't like each other very much. I think probably also Callaghan's purpose, with rather more reluctance than Wilson's, was to use re-negotiation as a means of keeping us within the Community. That became increasingly clear to me as the negotiations wore on, and the whole re-negotiation process was really a blind to satisfy the Labour Party and anti opinion in Britain while at the same time enabling the government to say

we had tried to achieve re-negotiation so we should stay in and of course this resulted in the 1975 referendum where the government was divided, I mean the government didn't actually declare 'for' because members of the Cabinet were allowed to go off and do their thing, and some of them did indeed go off and do their thing against, but the fact was that it could be represented as a successful re-negotiation; and again, I forget the wording of the question, but the question itself was cast in terms which made it, if you like, easier to vote yes than no. I think it did reflect a genuine feeling in the country that we had gone into this and we would look rather silly and it was not at all clear that it was in our interest to go out. There was a very substantial majority for the referendum and most of us in Brussels welcomed that very warmly and indeed the following day my colleagues all said how marvellous it was and so on. The end result, while damaging to the sort of general image of the UK in the Community, was nevertheless reassuring to the other members because they saw that British opinion as expressed in the referendum favoured continuing in membership and they also of course, the logical ones, saw that in fact re-negotiation hadn't really been a reality, nothing much had changed, we got a few changes in the budget.

JH I was going to ask if we did in fact achieve any concrete improvements for our terms and conditions of membership through this re-negotiation or not?

MP I think we achieved some modest improvements in the budgetary arrangements. We achieved, as far as I can recall, a recognition that the common agricultural policy needed change, I'm not sure we needed a re-negotiation to get that, but basically things were very much as they were before. It had been an operation which enabled Wilson in particular to present this as an achievement and of course to be fair to him it was consistent with his attempt to negotiate us in, in the late '60's and at that point he was saying already we think that what the government was prepared to agree to in 1962 and 1963 was inadequate and we will do better. His consistent line had been we should negotiate ourselves in but on more favourable terms and there was enough in it for him to be able to say this is what we've done so now people can vote in the knowledge that there has been a satisfactory re-negotiation.

JH But going back to what you said before re-negotiation didn't cover the fisheries policy, which was very unsatisfactory.

MP No, I don't think it did. I don't recall anything on fisheries, I may be wrong on that but I just don't recollect.

JH I see, well I think from other interviews I think that's right, although that tends to confirm what I've heard, it was just in case what I had heard had been inaccurate.

MP No, I don't think so.

JH No, right. Well, we can move on....

MP Just to interject, I think one can exaggerate the fisheries problem, this is one of those issues which is as much psychological as real, I forget the precise proportion of our economy that fishing represents but it's very small.

JH But that is the point, very little now but before the cod war it was considerable.

MP Well, the cod war of course was with a non EEC country and one of the interesting things about the cod war is the extraordinary skill and courage shown by Anthony Crosland who at that time was Foreign Secretary, Member of Parliament for Grimsby, and he had great difficulty persuading his constituents that to go to war with Iceland didn't make Britain look a very satisfactory country, it was not a very good way of running fisheries. I think that one of the criticisms I would make of the British industry is a failure to go elsewhere. The Japanese have fishing fleets all over the world, the Spaniards fish elsewhere than in our waters, which is not realised. I think there was for many years a lack of adequate investment and a lack of adequate enterprise and I think our fisheries, our fishermen, had it too easy and they have not responded to the crisis at all well, even now, all this business about the Spaniards taking over our fisheries, part of this is because British fishermen have been willing to sell their licences to Spaniards. What kind of hardship is that? My sympathy with our fishing industry is mitigated, I have to tell you.

JH Thank you, it's again, one could go on but it's perhaps not our main thing.

MP This is anecdotal but one of the problems is the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. In the case of Agriculture, they undoubtedly saw themselves as the 'farmers' ministry, in the case of fisheries I think rather less so, or possibly they had less effective performers in that section of the ministry, I don't know, in the case of food hardly at all, certainly at that time. But I well remember being amazed to find that, again, the details escape me, but we were discussing, or the agricultural council was discussing wine and the question of wine production and there was a particularly outrageous demand being made by, I think the French and the Italians, for some protection of wine growers and in discussing this with my colleagues in Brussels from the Ministry of Agriculture I discovered to my amazement that we were going to support this. I said, but how on earth can we justify this, they said, ah well we have to support the English wine growing industry. I thought, I mean to be prepared to countenance the expenditure of, I don't know about millions, but many,

many hundreds of thousands of tax-payers money, which is what this entailed, in order to protect an industry which in this country would never be more than marginally viable seemed to me to be outrageous, but that is what the Ministry of Agriculture were instructing them to do. I think this to me has always been an illustration of one of our problems in dealing with the common agriculture policy. It's been for years under governments of the two main persuasions, a kind of mantra, under which the agricultural policy is condemned as being inefficient and needing reform and all the rest of it; but when you get to an actual meeting of agricultural Ministers, consistently British Ministers, again of whatever political complexion, have gone along with what always seemed to me, or often seemed to me, to be very ill-judged decisions, and they have done it for narrow farming interests of one kind or another in this country. Again, to my mind, this gives a totally disproportionate importance to the contributions to the economy made by British farming, which is not to denigrate British farming; we have never been willing, as the French have been, and as Pompidou was, to stand up and say the countryside and the farmer are worthy of protection for a whole variety of reasons quite apart from food. We've been equivocal about that in a rather characteristic British way. We've been hypocritical about it. If we believe that farmers and what they do in the countryside is valuable from the national point of view why have we never been prepared to say this? If we believe it for Britain why shouldn't it be true in France, Germany or elsewhere? Again, I'm, as you can see, I was the only Permanent Representative to go to meetings of the agricultural council which always seemed to me to be rather strange, everybody left it to their deputy. Our deputy, a delightful man, Bob Goldsmith from the DTI, I think was possibly a shade resentful of my doing this because it slightly put his nose out of joint with his colleagues. I just felt that this was such an important part of Community business that it was ludicrous for the Permanent Representative not to be personally involved in it, and I used to go to meetings of the Council and I was frankly, as I've said, very often shocked by what I saw and to that extent I felt I learnt a lot about the farming community of the Community which I wouldn't have done if I hadn't attended those meetings. Sorry, that's rather anecdotal.

JH No, it's all very relevant, however, we've spent a lot of time on that and I do hope you've got some more time, for we ought, probably, to use it on the last seven years, no less, of your foreign service career in the PUS's chair, the Permanent Secretary's chair it would be in any other Department: the head of the diplomatic service and, of course, the nexus between the Cabinet and the Foreign Office. This is a job where you have to deal with everything important, I hope not too much that is unimportant, and you worked directly to a number of Secretaries of State. Mr Callaghan you have mentioned, Mr Crosland, not very long, unfortunately, Mr Owen and then Messrs Carrington and Pym even, I imagine. But in all that time I suppose really only, almost only two Prime Ministers, well three, Mr Wilson briefly and then Mr Callaghan and then Mrs Thatcher. Again, I would like to ask you what are the peaks that you regard as important to say something

about? I could ask various questions but may I start that way?

MP Yes, by all means. You described very accurately the background. I think perhaps just a couple of words about how I saw the role of Permanent Secretary, and indeed how I got there. Tom Brimelow, who was my predecessor warned me, I suppose some six months before he was due to retire, that the intention was to appoint me. There were really two of us in competition for the job, Oliver Wright and myself. We were fortunately very good friends and I think Oliver genuinely preferred the post abroad to the post in London, he certainly told me that and I believe it to be true because I think he enormously enjoyed Bonn and particularly travelling around Germany and getting to know Germany. We both of us knew that we were the two in competition and when I was told I was going to get it Oliver was also told that this was so and he and I talked about it and he said what I've just told you. It certainly had not the slightest impact on our friendship or relationship. To that extent I think it's probably true that he was not too disappointed. I was inevitably pleased, who wouldn't be, although it is probably one of the most difficult and also one of the most demanding jobs but that's part of it.

JH I read long ago in Lord Strang's brief memoir, Home and Abroad, that his predecessors told him, and it was true, that there was no way you could avoid taking work home, no matter how late you worked in the office or indeed in social events you had to attend.

MP That was certainly true in my case. William Strang was my boss briefly in 1949 when he, before becoming Permanent Under Secretary, decided he needed to go and visit Asia, he had never been East of Suez in his career. He needed someone to carry his bag and he didn't have his own Private Secretary because he'd been in Germany and Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick took over his Private Secretary, and he didn't have a Private Secretary from the PUS's office because his predecessor was still there so they plucked me out of South East Asia Department and I had an absolutely fascinating six weeks travelling all over Asia with him. In those days, of course, it was rather more leisurely. We went out by flying boat. As a result we became in a way rather good friends to the extent that one very junior boy can with a very senior man. He was a delightful man, a very kind man, a very nice person to work for. I remember on the flight home he sat in the seat in front of me in the various aircraft we travelled in writing out his report and then he would hand the pages back to me to see what I thought. I remember being amazed at the skill with which this professional condensed it all and it was a wonderful education actually for me. Afterwards when he wrote his memoirs, by that time I was Private Secretary to the then Permanent Under Secretary, to his successor, Ivone Kirkpatrick and he showed me the manuscript and asked for any comments I had. I remember saying to him, the only thing I think where perhaps you need to see whether you might perhaps make a change is in this sense you have of how immensely tedious calls from foreign

Ambassadors were and what an appalling sort of interruption in your work they represented, I said I wonder if that doesn't need some amendment. He said, well, I'll think about that, but he didn't change it. In a sense this is relevant to the job, that one of the things you do have to do as Permanent Under Secretary is be prepared to see foreign Ambassadors, in particular to take some of the load off the Secretary of State, because they all regard themselves as having right of access to the Secretary of State. In many cases that's not something that a Secretary of State will readily contemplate and I think the Permanent Under Secretary has to accept that it is his duty to receive them. Ivone Kirkpatrick worked an interesting system, he had about 5 Ambassadors who, whenever they asked to see him, I could let them in and make an appointment without reference to him. The French, the German, the American, the Yugoslav interestingly, I forget now but there were as I say about 5 altogether who he regarded as such good value that a conversation with them was always worthwhile whatever their reason for coming. Occasionally they would be summoned but that's rather different. And then all others I had to refer to him, except that there were about a dozen that I could turn down without consulting him and send off to see someone else. This was before we had whatever it is, 160 Ambassadors, and in a way that reflected something which I myself, I didn't have exactly the same system with John Kerr and Andrew Burns when they were my Private Secretaries, but they soon got to know; a person I would always see, just anecdotally, was the Japanese Ambassador who was a very fascinating man, who is sadly dead now, the then Japanese Ambassador, less true of his successor at that time. The French in the case of Beaumarchais was a personal friend and the door was always open, the German ditto, the Italian, I mean the members of the Community always had access. That is one of the roles. Coming back to what I saw the task of the Permanent Under Secretary... The Permanent Under Secretary is the principal official adviser on all aspects of foreign policy to the Foreign Secretary. As head of the diplomatic service he's also the adviser to the Foreign Secretary on the running of the service and the appointments and everything else. To my mind that required two things, it meant that I had to read a mass of paper in order to be sure that I was up to date on policy whether political, economic or whatever, it also meant, and this was more, if you like, time-consuming obviously, but I had to travel around and visit as many posts as possible because the only way that you can lead a service, I think, is by making yourself known to its members. One of the disadvantages in that sense of the Foreign Office as opposed to the Department of Trade or the Treasury or whatever, is that the bulk of its members are abroad. You can't just sit in that big office on the ground floor of the Foreign Office and run the diplomatic service without actually going out into the field and seeing what conditions are like. During my seven years, or six and a half years, or whatever it was, I think I visited every, certainly every capital city with the exception of the ones where they wouldn't let me go, like Cuba, Vietnam and... there were a few, I never got to Outer Mongolia, I regret, but I certainly visited, in some cases more than once, all the main capitals and a lot of the subsidiary posts. I always used to see the people in the post, wherever it was, have a talk with the wives, there

was a sort of routine almost and I always took a Private Secretary with me because, with one or two exceptions, I don't believe in one's sole judgement you know, you need someone, who is not the local man, to strike sparks off. One of the things I have found, I think some of this goes back to army days when I was only a very modest troop commander, platoon commander if you like, but the same principles actually apply. You've got to know people, you've got to know their family life, you've got to know a lot about them and the other thing, which is certainly true in the army, I found that you could almost tell when you walked through the door of an Embassy whether this place was being well run or not. Of course that's an exaggeration but you develop a kind of instinct for what is happening and one of the reasons why it is important, I believe, to do this, I think my successors in most cases have agreed with this and done it, is because, who is to report on an Ambassador? Unless you go and see how the post is being run and what the relationship is between him, or her nowadays, and the staff it's very difficult. Of course you get the personnel people who, as you know very well John, have their own means of discovering these things and they do it pretty effectively, but I think it's quite important for the head of the service to see the heads of mission on the spot and know what's going on, and I found this both enormously informative and very important from the point of view of advising Ministers and others on the running of the service, on what people's morale was like and so on. Those are the two pillars on which the job rests and it does mean an enormous amount of hard work and it certainly means.. when I retired from the service people used to ask me, did I miss the Foreign Office, I said, it depends on what you mean, if you mean, do I miss one box every night and two boxes at weekends the answer is absolutely not for one second, but if you mean, do I miss my friends and the people I knew and so on, the answer is yes. That I think is the sort of basis on which one has to work, and it does mean very hard work. The other thing though, which from my point of view is very relevant I think, well, two aspects of it, it was an enormously useful preparation to have been at the job in Brussels before hand because it meant that in Brussels I'd got to know, not just my own staff from Whitehall Ministries, and it was about 50/50, Foreign Office and Whitehall, but also the senior people in those Ministries. When I came back to London, I would go and call on the Permanent Secretary, DTI or the Permanent Secretary, Agriculture or the Permanent Secretary, wherever, and talk to them about the sort of problems we were having in Brussels. So I came back to Whitehall knowing the Cabinet Secretary and Cabinet Office people very well because they were the sort of co-ordinators, knowing, as it happened, both the Prime Ministers very well but in some ways more importantly, knowing the Permanent Secretaries in Whitehall. This gave one a.. you knew what made them tick and why their departments were doing this, that, or the other. The other related point, people said to me didn't you feel you were there too long and I think in a way that six and a half years, nearly seven years, is very long; on the other hand one of the aspects of Whitehall, which people probably don't realise and which probably oughtn't to be there but is, is that if you are in a gathering of Permanent Secretaries, or if you are negotiating with another department, the

knowledge that the head of that department has that he is going to go before you do actually has a psychological impact and I always felt one of the great disadvantages which poor Tom Brimelow had to cope with was that everybody knew that he was only going to be there for two years so what he said... you know, you could be polite, but ignore it, that's an exaggeration too but there's a considerable element of truth to it. If you are negotiating with someone or just discussing with them and they know that what you say is going to be your view four years ahead, by which time they will have gone, it does make quite a difference in terms of how they react to what you are saying. That's a bit of Whitehall lore which I think isn't always appreciated and it reflects what is a disadvantage which the diplomatic service has in dealing with Whitehall, that not enough of us actually know our way around Whitehall. How can we? We are abroad for most of our lives. I used to find that talking to heads of mission coming back, and any Ambassador coming home on leave whom I wanted to see, they sort of need educating, it's not too strong a word I think, in the realities of British political life. It is very difficult if you are at the other end of the world. It's very difficult to grasp that even if you're a faithful reader of newspapers and you listen to the BBC overseas service and so on. It's not something you can really grasp which means that when they come home it takes them almost as long as their posting in London to sort of get into it. It is a positive disadvantage for the service in its relationships with Whitehall so I would always hope that we would appoint Permanent Secretaries who are going to be there for at least five and potentially six years.

JH I feel that ought really to be not part of this kind of history interview but some thing to be put to your successor to be perhaps circulated in the office and, indeed, even round Whitehall. But coming back to your specific time, if we may, was there any... what was perhaps the biggest issue, apart maybe from the ongoing European Community work, during that long period?

MP I suppose relations with the Soviet Union in the broadest sense. One's got to think back to the period 1975 to 1982, there was.....

JH In the middle of it they went into Afghanistan..

MP There was Afghanistan, there was the change to Gorbachev, the arms control, Reagan's handling of his relationship with Gorbachev, the end of the Brezhnev era when Brezhnev was still a formidable figure but in many respects ga-ga, we look at Yeltsin now but we tend to forget Brezhnev. I would say that, that was then, as in many ways it is still, a kind of priority number one for everything we did, because in those days the Soviet Union tentacles still stretched out very widely and you are quite right to mention Afghanistan which was a disaster for them. The whole business of arms control... were they going to be a real menace again in the nuclear field and what

about all that. I think that this was still the most serious of the international problems we had to deal with...

JH The British interest being the interest in our own peace and security...

MP Absolutely, a fundamental one. I think another area, which perhaps reflects something I said to you a moment or two ago, is Japan. I think Japan fully emerged on the scene during that period as both an economic giant but also progressively beginning to become a little more political. I went with Margaret Thatcher to a summit meeting, I don't know if it was the G7 in those days, but a summit meeting of that group in Tokyo at which one became conscious of this continuing Japanese reticence to be involved politically but a recognition, a growing recognition that they had to be, a reluctant recognition. I think that China was still not in that world league: now it is. So, at that time this was not true of China, but it was very true of Japan, and then as you quite rightly said, throughout the whole of it there were negotiations with the European Community, the problems there and then smaller but still quite acute problems, the cod war we have talked about, and, of course, culminating in the most serious, which was literally at the moment of my retirement, the Falklands.

JH Yes indeed, the Falklands.... and that involved a good deal of criticism, afterwards, of the role of the foreign service. Why didn't we tell the government that the Argentine patience was about to become exhausted, and, of course, there is the Franks report, do you think it covers it and do you think it exonerates us or does us justice? I'm not sure how to put it.

MP You are quite right. It is difficult to put it in the right way. I thought the Franks report was very good. Again, anecdotally, I was interested in going to give evidence there in observing how totally in command Oliver Franks was, and it was quite clear to me that, although he had this very interesting group of colleagues, basically he set the agenda and he knew what the questions were that he wanted asked and the sheer intellectual and personality quality of the man came across very well in that body. I thought the report was a perfectly fair report. It's a very difficult one. It's interesting that the last heads of mission meeting that I chaired, I think, was in Buenos Aires, of all our Latin American heads of mission in January of 1982. Obviously at that time I called on the Foreign Minister and the things the Ambassador wanted me to do, but mostly we were having a heads of mission meeting in a friendly capital where it was convenient for everybody in Latin America, even if some of the distances were big, to meet and also agreeable because it's a lovely city. That's just an interesting sort of side light on this. At that point, I mean we knew we had a problem with the Falklands and indeed this had been evident in the resistance we had put up in 1981 to the decommissioning of Endurance, which I still think was a very serious mistake. But the

fact that it was done is, to my mind, the best illustration of the lack of perception throughout Whitehall, and certainly in the Ministry of Defence; but the Prime Minister allowed this to happen, and indeed over-ruled Peter Carrington on it so that there was already an atmosphere of lack of interest in the Falklands. It is perfectly true that during the summer of 1981 our embassy in Buenos Aires became increasingly concerned about attitudes there. I won't recap all the ground of the report, but the fact is that when we tried, I remember speaking to Peter Carrington about this, and he said, look, it's a sheer waste of time trying to get the Prime Minister and colleagues in the Overseas and Defence Policy committee to focus on this and get the Cabinet to focus on this. They won't, and I'm just not prepared to expend my capital on asking them to. This was nine months before, more than that, before the trouble broke out. I think we got to the point, when I came back from that heads of mission meeting I did feel that we were testing Argentinian patience very near the limit but I didn't expect them to attack when they did and perhaps I should have done, or perhaps others should have done too, but anyway, we didn't in fact get, for one reason or another, we didn't succeed in getting the Cabinet to focus on this until much too late. I think that's really all I need say about the Falklands. I don't feel that we were at fault except that we should perhaps have pressed Ministers harder than we did to grip it.

JH Yes, thank you. What I'd like to ask, I think, in our remaining time today is what you found important about the *modus operandi*, in the plural, of the various Foreign Secretaries and, indeed, Prime Ministers that you worked to during that six and a half years because that very often does throw light on various issues as well as on the personality, it's the influence of the personalities on the British interest, on the issues, which is important, of course?

MP Well, Callaghan, as you've said, was only briefly Foreign Secretary, but as I said earlier I had a much more cordial relationship with him at that time and that's correct. We had got to know each other much better during the re-negotiation business and although he had been out of office for a while previously, we knew each other quite well and it was he who decided that I should be Permanent Under Secretary. I imagine Wilson agreed because of Wilson's attitude to me that I described before. As I have said, Tom Brimelow had already let me know the decision. Callaghan talked to me about it interestingly in the hotel Danielli in Venice where we were for one of the numerous European Community meetings and we sat in a large sort of drawing room, which I think was part of his suite at the Danielli, very splendidly oldfashioned. There were two parts to the hotel, the modern part and the oldfashioned part. We were in the oldfashioned part, we talked about what we both thought British foreign policy should try to be. I won't go into the details of it but it was an interesting and, from my point of view, encouraging discussion; he had his failings but he was intelligent, he used his time as Foreign Secretary to get a sense of foreign policy in the broad sense, and we had an interesting, and as I said, rather encouraging discussion. I remember

one of the things he said to me which was I think correct and which has always remained with me. He said, if you think changes need to be made, make them within the first six months because that's the time when you are new and fresh. I think that is good advice, I'm not sure I followed it, but it was good advice. It was an interesting discussion. So I found working for him at that time agreeable and interesting, but of course, it was for a short while and we then had Tony Crosland, and Crosland was a very different person.

JH Did he manage to.... was there something he achieved for us in the tragically brief time he was Foreign Secretary?

MP Well, I suppose the cod war was his main achievement in reaching a settlement with Iceland which was not wholly advantageous to us which entailed a lot of disgruntlement by his constituents but which was undoubtedly in our interest and it was, as I said, a courageous and good achievement. He was there too short a while and for him it was basically an educational process. He was a man who liked to study things in enormous depth and detail, he didn't like having to take decisions overnight as Foreign Secretaries often have to do. He preferred to take the papers away and read them then ask a lot of questions, read again and this irritated a number of people who thought they weren't getting a quick decision; but I rather sympathised with him and understood. He had a formidable intellect and remarkable grasp of a problem. I like the story of him and Henry Kissinger, which is, I think, now quite well known. Crosland had never met Kissinger, who was by then a kind of international star, a guru, and he was due to come through London on a return flight to Washington from, I forget where, and he sent a message saying could the Foreign Secretary meet him, and I'm quite sure what Kissinger hoped was that Crosland would come out to Heathrow and have a chat out there and he could then move on. But Crosland wasn't going to have this. Crosland took a lot of persuading that he ought to see Kissinger anyway. He was nervous. This was fairly early on in his appointment and he felt, here was this star performer who would be singularly unimpressed by a British Foreign Secretary who didn't know the job, and I told him that I thought that was nonsense. His intellect was wholly comparable to that of Kissinger. I thought he ought to meet Kissinger, he ought to get to know this guy and that we would help him to the extent he needed help in the discussion and preparation and so on. So with considerable ill grace he said, all right, I'll meet him if he will come to Grimsby. I've got to be at Grimsby whenever it was, the Friday I think, and if we can get him up there I'll see him up there, while I'm up there. He said, if he's got an aeroplane he can fly up, there is a very good RAF base just outside Grimsby and we can have breakfast, lunch or dinner there depending on his timing. So I conveyed all this to Ann Armstrong who was the American Ambassador at the time, a delightful lady and very bright, and I think she was slightly appalled at this, but anyway she sent the message back and I think Kissinger was intrigued by this impertinent man who treated him in this way. Where was

Grimsby? Anyway, he agreed to do this and indeed he gave a lift up to Grimsby in his plane to Ann Armstrong and myself. I had known him for many years. I think I can genuinely say I was a friend, and still am. So when I came on board the plane at 7 o'clock on the Friday morning, or Saturday morning, he said, 'this is quite something, he is going to owe me something for this.' We flew up to Grimsby, landed at the RAF base. The RAF as usual did their stuff marvellously, a huge breakfast and a big conference table and we had an extremely good discussion, with Kissinger and his team and Crosland, myself and probably Tony Duff. I can't remember now who else was there. I think that Kissinger generally rather took to Crosland, who, you know, was a very formidable intellect and Kissinger was an intellectual. And the two men got on, and anyway Kissinger seemed perfectly happy with it and Crosland was happy with it but it was interesting as an example of his, reluctance, almost shyness, about exposing himself when he didn't really feel he knew things completely. And this was characteristic. Fishing in Grimsby he knew; that wasn't a problem. Then, sadly, he died. It was sad. We were all distressed, and the rather surprising appointment of David Owen was made and Callaghan said to me, I'm appointing this young man. I think he is brilliant, I think it's good to have a young Foreign Secretary but you are going to have to help him a lot. He sent for me at No. 10 and we talked about it quite frankly and I think the only area where we then, not exactly disagreed, but where I was unhappy with what Callaghan let Owen do was in the appointment of Peter Jay as Ambassador in Washington. Sir Peter Ramsbotham, whom I had known for years, he was an old friend, was an exceptionally successful Ambassador in Washington, was greatly liked by the Carter administration and indeed by their predecessors, not least because, as one of them told me when I was over there at some point, talking to a senior member in the White House, he said, well, we like the British Ambassador and his team because, you know, there are only three Embassies in Washington which predicted a Carter victory. Oh, I said, and which were those? He said, well, they are probably three of the best informed, there were the British, the Israelis and the Russians. He said we know that in those three Embassies the prediction was that we were going to win. I have to say, it's an interesting point, that one of the reasons why the British Embassy took this view was because we had in Atlanta an exceptionally perceptive Consul General, Frank Kennedy, who had got to know Carter, and had got to know the Carter people and said, this is a guy who is going to go far and don't think that he is just a peanut farmer or whatever. The Embassy, I think, paid attention and the Embassy therefore got to know Carter's people and, I'm not sure it was Frank but I rather think it was, anyway, whoever it was, was perceptive and produced this result. So Peter Ramsbotham was a very popular Ambassador with the administration and I felt that it was a singular mistake, quite apart from being extremely discourteous to him, to remove him and to put anybody in, if you like, in his place. One of Peter's problems was that Harold Wilson didn't like him, for reasons which I have never fully understood, but they didn't gel, so that I think this had rubbed off on Callaghan when he took over from Wilson as Prime Minister, and I have always suspected, though this is suspicion and not knowledge, that

Wilson had said to Callaghan, you probably need a new Ambassador in Washington. This was grossly unfair to Ramsbotham and I think a serious mistake to the extent that the appointment of Ambassadors matter and in Washington they do. I felt it was even greater a mistake to appoint Peter Jay who, quite apart from.... I mean, clever and all the rest of it but not particularly experienced and was the Prime Minister's son in law. I remember saying this to Callaghan, and he said, well Michael, this is all very well but are you telling me that if my Foreign Secretary wants to make an appointment of an Ambassador whom he trusts and who is a friend and he knows he can rely on, that I am to turn that down because that guy happens to be my son in law. He said, it's not my appointment, it's the Foreign Secretary's. I said to him, well I can see the force of that but of course it won't be seen in PR terms as anything other than your appointment. Anyway, we didn't agree on that and I made the same points to Owen who also was determined to assert his right to do things whatever people thought, and that's a rather foolish way to approach the conduct of public business but I'm sure that is the case. Otherwise I had an extraordinary relationship with Owen. He's one of the most difficult men in public life to deal with, and it's not just me speaking, ask Shirley Williams, ask Roy Jenkins, ask anybody you like who has dealt with him. After a while it became clear to me that he was destroying morale amongst the younger members of the service because whatever submission was put up to him, very often with my chop on it, and my chop only because I thought it was a good submission and made sense. It may have been drafted by a head of department, more likely drafted by a desk officer originally; whatever submission was put up to him was torn to shreds, ruderier in almost indecipherable medical language written, if you could call it handwriting, all over it. It became, quite soon, apparent to me that this was having a very disturbing effect down the line. This is one of the problems, that people who spend a lot of time and trouble on drafting what they think is the right advice, or the right comment or whatever, get thoroughly discouraged and I detected a sense of people saying what's the point of putting up anything. Whatever it is, it's going to be turned down, so let's not sit in the office until 7 o'clock doing it. We'll do something and put it up and to hell with it. That's an exaggeration but there's an element of truth to it. I found that the only way to deal with this was to go to all Owen's office meetings with people from the department. Normally I might have gone to one or two if it was really important but I didn't feel that the younger people should be exposed to the sort of treatment that they were getting. The other thing that I discovered was in order to get a decision from him you had to have a row. So I would go up daily and have a row and we'd get a decision and I would protect the younger people a bit. I think this was necessary and beneficial, but, to Owen's credit, first of all very often his instincts were right. He had a real feel for foreign policy and also it in no way affected our relationship: we could have a flaming row at 11 o'clock in the morning, I would see him in his office in the House of Commons or wherever at 3 o'clock in the afternoon and it was as if nothing had happened, which was very pleasant, and we remained good friends. That was him, but very difficult and very wearing for all concerned. Peter Carrington, night and day, or day

and night, a man who had a tremendous feel for foreign policy, who handled the Prime Minister with consummate skill over, in particular, Rhodesia, and who sadly was brought low by the Falklands, but undoubtedly the most agreeable man to work with other than Alec Home. But of course I never worked with Alec Home in the Foreign Office. I saw him as Foreign Secretary from Brussels. He was a delightful man to work for and an intelligent and interesting man to work for.

JH Can I ask in our last two minutes how you found working with Mrs Thatcher?

MP Very difficult, very challenging but, interestingly, I think with her, I found, you simply had to argue the toss with her. She didn't resent it, at least she showed no sign of resenting it. She might or might not pay attention to what you said but if you thought she was wrong you had to say so, you didn't necessarily say, I think you're dead wrong, but you had to argue and try to persuade and I always thought this was easier in fact for a Permanent Under Secretary (though not all my colleagues necessarily would have agreed), but I felt it was easier for a very senior official than for a Minister. Ministers were hired and fired. As far as I was concerned she could have forced my resignation any time if she had felt strongly enough but so what? I was OK so I could stick with what I thought to be right, it would not be the ruin of a career and indeed it might have been for the credit to one's future career. It didn't worry me and I had no problem. This is true with others as well. With Harold Wilson the relationship was quite different and indeed with Callaghan. I didn't mind talking rather bluntly with Callaghan. You've got to be ready to do that if you are a senior official. She was immensely obstinate. There's the marvellous story, which I think I can tell anecdotally. When the then Chinese Vice-Premier visited London and she received him, Peter Carrington and I were there together with the Deputy Under Secretary for the Far East. He had his team sitting opposite us at the Cabinet table and we had advised her that it would be appropriate to let him lead off. She began welcoming words and then said perhaps you would like to begin our conversation. He then talked non-stop for the next three quarters of an hour. After about half an hour of this Peter Carrington handed her a little note, which I read over his shoulder, which said, 'Margaret, you are talking too much as usual.' I think the Chinese Vice-Premier must have been very perplexed that at a given point in his conversation she roared with laughter. Anyway, that was.... normally she talked too much, and she just over-ruled and over-spoke everybody. I found the only way to deal with this, which was not very agreeable but you had to be prepared to talk whilst she was talking, that's to say if she interrupted me and went into a flow, I continued with my argument. As some point one or the other of us would have to draw breath and some times that worked. She was difficult. She was all the things one knows about her. I can't say I ever greatly enjoyed meetings with her, which were frequent, or indeed travelling with her. One shouldn't exaggerate, she was charming, courteous, a very agreeable hostess. Denis is a marvellous figure. I'm very fond of Denis. We belong to the same club so I see him quite often. He was a tremendous

help on foreign journeys such as Commonwealth Prime Ministers' meetings. She would be willing to sit far into the night when all the rest of us had papers to do and briefs to prepare for the following morning and so on. She just liked to sit with a glass of whisky talking and finally someone or other would hand a little note to Denis saying, it's time you took her to bed. Denis would say, 'come on old girl, time for bed' and off they went to our immense relief. So Denis was a great help. There is an intensity to the woman which nobody has talked about which did make her very difficult to work with and deal with, but at the same time often very pleasant. Coming back from the Lusaka Prime Ministers meeting, the first thing we did when we got on the plane was to have a glass of champagne together, saying what a good meeting it had been, largely thanks to her. So one has mixed feelings about her. I think fundamentally she was wrong on foreign policy, she was pretty wrong with Gorbachev in that she didn't really understand him. She was fundamentally wrong with Kohl over German reunification when she really queered our pitch for quite a while by the attitude she took, which was totally unjustified and wrong. She was often wrong but she was obdurate and it was difficult to persuade her she was wrong.

JH If we have to stop, we have to stop but that, in fact, opens up a number of questions, I have never asked anyone for a third session but I'm almost inclined to do so but perhaps you feel that.....

MP No, If you think a third session would help I'm perfectly...

JH I'm sure it would be shorter, it would consist partly of a follow-up to what you've just said.

Third and final interview with Sir Michael Palliser on 18 August 1999, by John Hutson.

JH Sir Michael, in the third and final session I would like to begin where we left off in the second session two months ago by recalling what you said about working with Mrs Thatcher as Prime Minister. You said she had got some things wrong in foreign affairs and I would like to ask you about those. The one you mentioned which was new to me was that she got it wrong about Gorbachev. Could you speak about that?

MP Yes. I think Gorbachev exercised a great deal of charm on a great many people abroad. There is a kind of almost parallel between Gorbachev and Mrs Thatcher in the sense that he was much more appreciated abroad than at home and I think over time one could say the same with her. Indeed, of her it has been said that the further away you get from the United Kingdom the more appreciated she is, which is a bit unkind but not wholly untrue. She made the famous remark that Gorbachev was someone she could do business with, and I think there was truth in that if the assessment that she made of Gorbachev had been correct. I think she genuinely believed that Gorbachev was a sort of new generation man who was prepared to overthrow Communism and transform the Soviet Union into a democratic country. I think that was a mistake. Gorbachev always wanted to use the Communist Party of the Soviet Union as his chosen instrument and, indeed, as the instrument to run the country and, I suppose where he really came a cropper was arising out of that. He failed to see that this was not going to be possible in the situation that he himself had largely helped to create. I think that Mrs Thatcher misjudged him on that, and to that extent their entente, if one can call it that, was, I felt, always rather bogus. In a way it's illustrated also by the fact that she had to weigh in very vigorously when President Reagan, who I think was also rather seduced by Gorbachev, in effect, offered a deal without any consultation with anyone to Gorbachev to abolish nuclear weapons, which to Gorbachev for perfectly understandable reasons, if one looks at it from the Soviet, and indeed the Soviet Communist point of view, made perfectly good sense. He was prepared to accept this. This thoroughly alarmed Mrs Thatcher, but I think she blamed Reagan more than Gorbachev, and again I think that was fundamentally a misjudgment.

JH Yes, I see. Could one say that nevertheless from this misjudgment the right consequences for our side, so to speak, more or less followed?

MP Well, I think that reflects another aspect of Mrs Thatcher, the way that she was perceived abroad, undoubtedly one of the major pluses of her conduct of foreign policy, because she really was trying at least to be her own Foreign Secretary, was the relationship she established with President Reagan. There were limits to that relationship. Reagan had no compunction in invading Grenada without consulting Mrs Thatcher, or indeed without consulting the Queen, who was the

Head of State of that country. This produced an undoubted chill in their relations, but broadly speaking, she did have a very close personal relationship with the American President and that was beneficial to this country. In a way it was an exploitation of that relationship which enabled her, in fact, to say to Reagan, you must not do this or that to Gorbachev, and to support, indeed, a number of senior Americans who were saying the same thing.

JH I see, so one can't point then, to any disastrous consequences from this particular misjudgment?

MP No, I don't think so. I think what you said just now is broadly right, that in the end it worked out satisfactorily from our point of view, but I think it was a serious misjudgment and, of course, the other major misjudgment that she made in foreign policy was over Europe, in the whole conduct of European foreign policy. I think this was the result of her own prejudices, her own ideas though, even there, there's a considerable contradiction in the way that she behaved. One has to remember that she campaigned very vigorously in support of the Heath government's entry into the European Community as it then was. Indeed she voted, so far as I know, voted 'yes' in the 1975 referendum. Her dislike of Europe grew, I think, increasingly from a feeling that Europe was a sort of Socialist caucus and that the European Community was run by a bunch of lefties and that this was going to be a highly damaging both to the European Community as a whole but particularly to Britain. Again, one of the paradoxes of history is that in the early days of the European Community it was seen by, for example, the Labour Party in this country and all the Scandinavian Labour Parties, and this view of course was very much encouraged by the Communists throughout Europe, it was seen as a kind of right-wing Catholic cabal intent on forcing right-wing policies on a reluctant Europe. So, the views held about the European Community have fluctuated fairly wildly over the years. I think Mrs Thatcher subscribed to the view of it as a sort of dangerous gaggle of Socialists and therefore to be firmly dealt with. Again, a totally erroneous concept.

JH Yes, if I may come back to a personality, and I'm sure it's relevant to what you have said, the second person you mentioned that she had, so to speak, got wrong was Herr Kohl.

MP Yes. Again I think it was quite interesting that Chancellor Kohl managed to strike up really quite a close and friendly relationship with Mr Major when Major succeeded Mrs Thatcher; but I think it's fair to say that all the heads of government in other Community countries, but of course the German Chancellor was one of the most important, they all found her insufferable and Kohl and the French President handled her differently, Kohl I think less subtly and effectively than his French opposite number, (not strictly speaking opposite because Mitterand was President of France,) but Kohl was perceived, I think, by Mrs Thatcher not as a dangerous leftie but as a

dangerous Federalist and therefore equally undesirable from the British point of view. Again one of the continuing paradoxes or, I don't know what the word is I'm looking for is, I mean one of the continuing contradictions if you like, in life within the Community has been in the different definition almost that is given to Federalism in this country and every other country of the European Community. Where we tend to see, apparently, and certainly I think this was the Thatcher view, Federalism, a Federal Europe as a centralised highly authoritarian Europe controlled from Brussels, to continental Federalists it means decentralised with much more power to the regions and much less power to the centre. How one will ever resolve this sort of totally contradictory series of definitions I'm afraid I don't know because it still persists today, long after Thatcher has left the scene.

JH Yes, indeed. Could I ask you, or perhaps in a sense you might say you've answered this already but was there anything that she was, while you worked with her, either from Brussels or from across Downing Street, anything that she was really very right about, did she solve any foreign affairs problems for us, for Britain?

MP Well, I suppose the most obvious victory on the international scene was the successful Falklands campaign and I do think this, while this is more than arguable, that it was lack of interest in the Falklands on our part and the part of the Cabinet and other Ministers which perhaps got us, not wholly their fault, but was partly responsible for getting us into the situation resulting in the Argentinian invasion. I think it is quite likely that no other British Prime Minister would not have acted with the determination and resolution that she showed. In a sense this is the good side of the coin of her character but she saw this very much in black and white terms whereas I think both her military and a number of her political advisers were inclined to see it as varying shades of grey. She saw it in black and white terms and something that just had to be beaten down and she was determined to beat it down. What would have happened if some of the things in the Falklands war had gone wrong, or had gone further wrong than they did is, of course, one of those unanswerable questions - in any way it begs the vital point which is that we won that war and there I do think that she deserves the credit that she's had. I also think that she allowed it to go to her head and in a way you can trace her subsequent slow progress downhill internationally which led in part to her rejection by her own Party. You can trace that back to the electoral victory which followed the Falklands.

JH Yes, I quite see that. Certainly I can testify that the Falklands did her reputation good abroad among many people. I remember a German newspaper editor saying afterwards that if the Russians did come in Europe, the British at least would fight. He was obviously unsure about some other allies.

MP No, I think that is a very fair comment and a fair judgment on this extraordinary woman.

JH This brings us back, in a sense, to the question of Britain and the European Community, as it was, because one could say, I think, that the immediate cause of her downfall was her behaviour over the European Community which finally exhausted Sir Geoffrey Howe's patience.

MP Yes, I think there is no doubt Geoffrey Howe's famous resignation speech in the House of Commons was the final nail in the coffin. I think it had been growing up for quite a while and I don't think one should ascribe her downfall only to her conduct of European policy though there's no doubt that it played a big part. Harking back to what I said a moment or two ago about her success going to her head, I think that all her colleagues found her becoming increasingly domineering, increasingly reluctant to listen to the views of others. She made a number of enemies in the Party, partly through her sackings of people like Lord Gilmour, as he is now; Leon Brittan must have felt extremely betrayed from No. 10 when he had to leave the Department of Trade and Industry although he subsequently went on to an extremely successful career in Brussels. She'd made enemies. Her conduct of public business in the Cabinet and elsewhere was increasingly irritating her colleagues and I think that Geoffrey Howe, again as he said in his speech, perhaps waited too long to say all these things. He was treated with total contempt by Margaret Thatcher and I think the way that he subsequently castigated her was a perfectly understandable reflection of that and I might say he always had a good deal of my sympathy. But there is no doubt too that the feeling that this sort of domineering attitude in domestic affairs was also doing real damage to our relations with our partners in Europe was growing in the Cabinet, in the Party and in the country. I think these two strands, if you like, were what resulted in her downfall and perhaps one of the paradoxes was that this came while she was at a meeting in Paris.

JH Quite. You would rate foreign affairs as more important in all this than, say, the poll tax fiasco?

MP Oh no, I mean in a way this is.... the poll tax reflects on the domestic front, exactly what I have been describing. It was something that she pushed through. I don't say she had no support at all. She did from some colleagues, but I think there was a general feeling, which of course grew when the public reaction became obvious, that this was a disastrous and headstrong piece of work and if she went on this way the Party were in real trouble. And that was probably correct.

JH Yes. You yourself were PUS during her first two years as Prime Minister when a lot of what happened at the end, didn't apply, I believe, Indeed I've heard it said that when she was learning

about a new subject she would go up the learning curve, working very hard indeed and asking endless questions to make sure that she did understand the problems and thought sensibly about them...

MP That's absolutely right. I would question the last phrase you used about thinking sensibly. She undoubtedly briefed herself very thoroughly. She got briefings both on foreign policy and on domestic policy issues from senior civil servants or foreign service officers whose knowledge and experience she did in fact respect. But of course once she'd thought she had mastered the subject she then had very much her own ideas on how it ought to be handled which were often very misguided. To give one example of the way that she tended to behave, when I went with a group of others, this must have been shortly after I retired in fact, but as a member of the Japan 2000 Group which was set up as a body to strengthen relations between the two countries, launched jointly by herself and the then Japanese Prime Minister Nakasone. Traditionally the two Prime Ministers each saw their own team before and after the proceedings. I remember being struck by the contrast between the briefing that we had with her and the subsequent one we had with John Major. When we went to see Mrs Thatcher, she had of course been in office for quite a while. She had been to Japan I think once or twice, she'd met Japanese Prime Ministers at summits and so on and we went basically to tell her how we proposed to handle our meetings, what the topics were and so on and to seek her guidance. In fact the moment we all sat down she began to speak and didn't stop for 25 minutes telling us what Japan was like. Well, I'm not an expert on Japan but I knew that much of what she was saying was nonsense and the experts on Japan in our group left No. 10 in a fairly shattered condition because if that was the view of Japan taken by a British Prime Minister what were we all trying to do! It was a pretty savage and unrelenting critique of everything Japanese, based on highly superficial knowledge. I don't mean inadequate briefing about problems and so on but very superficial knowledge about Japan itself. When we went to see John Major on a similar occasion after he had been Prime Minister for a year or so it was totally different. He asked us what we were trying to do. He listened very politely while various people spoke. He commented as seemed to him appropriate and at the end he gave us a short and very clear analysis of his view of the problems we were going to deal with and more generally of relations with Japan. It was chalk and cheese. To me it always illustrated a lot of her problem, but she briefed herself very well and was convinced that she knew it all.

JH Yes, that sums it up. You said, also in, I think, the last session that all Prime Ministers, even those who had themselves been Secretaries of State for Foreign Affairs entertained a slight suspicion of Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Was this markedly more so in the case of Mrs Thatcher? She had some reputation in the press of being almost contemptuous of the FCO.

MP I think it was more so, yes. As I said it's true I think as a generalisation of all Prime Ministers and it's perhaps inevitable. I saw myself when I was in No. 10, the perspective of the world from No. 10 is rather different from the perspective of the world from across the street in the FCO. But I think that it had an additional dimension with her which flowed partly from the fact that she was and is exceptionally insular. Whether this is upbringing, whether it's... I don't quite know what it is, she's a highly intelligent, extremely well educated woman and in a way it's rather surprising that she should be as insular as she is or, if you like, as distrustful of foreigners. I don't think she sees Americans as foreign and this in a way explains the different attitude that she had towards the United States from the attitude she has really to any other foreign country whether in or out of the European Union. There is the famous saying, that we are no longer allowed even to contemplate, that wogs begin at Calais, which I sometimes pull my wife's leg about. I really think it did almost represent her point of view, and to that extent I think it made her ability to conduct foreign affairs rather limited. Interestingly I think she also had a rather different view of the Arab world. She was of course very much subject to Jewish influence. Her Finchley constituency has a very large number of Jewish constituents and to give her credit I don't think that she allowed those pressures to influence her attitude on foreign policy in a way that perhaps was more the case with people like Harold Wilson or others who also were subject to rather similar pressures. I think she had a rather romantic view of the Arab world and of Arab leaders. I don't know how far she trusted them but there was something I think about the desert robes and all the rest of it which rather attracted her. I think there's a splendid picture of her which one saw in the press at some point riding in a tank with a great scarf wrapped around her head which you may remember, which in a sense gave her almost an Arab dimension. I think that she did take a rather different view, if you like a less contemptuous view, of the Arab world than sadly a certain number of British people take. But broadly speaking the only foreigners that she really respected, partly I think because she didn't, as I said, regard them as foreign, were the Americans, which of course is... has a lot... one understands perfectly well this feeling that somehow the Americans aren't foreign. They speak the same language up to a point.

JH And we are continually absorbing more of their culture.

MP But, of course, the interesting thing is that we don't realise to what extent the same is true of other European countries and here it is undoubtedly language that's crucial. If you watch French television or German television or Belgian television and Dutch television, any television you like on the continent of Europe, there is just as much American content as in our television but the fact that it's dubbed into whichever language it is, in most cases, not in the case of the Dutch but certainly in the case of France, Italy, Germany, Spain, somehow or other makes us, at any rate, it makes me, feel less that it is an American product, whereas here with the American accent but in English and no dubbing, one is much more conscious of how pervasive it is. But it's just as

pervasive elsewhere in Europe though mitigated by the linguistic problem.

JH Yes, I'm sure that's very true. Anyway, Mrs Thatcher's slight suspicion of the FCO, because they dealt with foreigners perhaps, did she have a sort of 'win at all costs' mentality? In other words, don't come to an agreement which is good because both sides will do well out of it but come to an agreement that we will do well out of.

MP Well of course the word she hated most I think was consensus, but also concession. And I think she was too intelligent not to realise that in any negotiation both sides have to make concessions. Unless you are totally dominant in a way that we no longer are in virtually any negotiation, you have to make concessions to whoever it is you are negotiating with and you expect them to make some to you. Her view of concessions was that they were wrong and the notion of consensus, of reaching a consensual agreement was again something she really despised. It did make reaching agreement with her in an international context very difficult.

JH Quite. That seems to lead us back to a fairly dominant subject in the latter years of your career in a way, namely the European Community as it was. Obviously consensus is very much what is required there and the kind of reciprocal concessions that seem to be the outstanding method of reaching decisions in the Community. I would like to talk about that because it was not only important in your career but it continues to be a vital subject. However before we leave Mrs Thatcher, she didn't allow any prejudices she had or developed to interfere with sensible personnel policy as regards the FCO did she? I mean she kept people like yourself and Sir Michael Butler on the job and was obviously satisfied that you were doing your job properly without fear or favour? Would that be a true statement?

MP Yes. Again, one of the paradoxes I think in her attitude to the Foreign Office was that she saw us as a group as, I won't say a bunch of traitors, but we were prepared almost to sell the country out to foreigners on almost any issue; but in contrast to that she respected and indeed paid a lot of attention to the views of a number of very senior people in the diplomatic service. After the Falklands war, Sir Percy Cradock was her foreign affairs adviser, Sir Rodric Braithwaite who had been our Ambassador in Moscow was his successor. When she wanted briefing on arms control matters, just for example, she took it for granted that... we took it for granted and she obviously took it for granted that this would be given her by, I think it was then Sir Christopher Mallaby who was at the time either the head of department or Under Secretary in the FCO. She paid attention to their views and obviously respected them. Michael Butler is another example. He was someone whom she knew to be what I think she would describe as a committed Federalist (though, of course, that's not a fair description of Michael Butler,) but she respected his ability, his energy, his

tremendous negotiating capability. I can't speak about myself beyond saying that we argued a great deal, she and I, about European affairs. I think she thought I was a dangerously committed Federalist but it didn't stop her asking me to come to the Cabinet Office at the outbreak of the Falklands war and be her principal adviser in that context. So, as I said, it's a paradox that the Foreign Office as an entity is highly suspect and deeply distrusted but individual members of the service are respected and used very effectively and intelligently. These are the sort of contradictions of a very strange personality.

JH Thank you. I think that is the point at which I should stop talking about Mrs Thatcher, important as she was and is, but I would like to go on talking about European Community and ask for your views in the light of your extensive experience up to and indeed after your retirement. And as a way of getting into this subject could I mention Sir Roy Denman's book, of a couple of years ago was it, 'Missed Chances', a profoundly depressing book which suggests that we've got most important things wrong since the beginning of century and not least the European Community. One of the things he mentions, which happened, of course, in your time, was the first British Presidency and as a concrete example could I ask, of course you were PUS at the time so you had many other things to deal with, but if you recall, was Mr Silkin's chairmanship of the Council on agriculture and fisheries, and his decisions about agricultural prices and fisheries negotiations, was that the disaster portrayed by Sir Roy?

MP Well, first a general point about Roy Denman, for whom I have both enormous respect and a lot of affection going back to the days when he was one of the negotiating team for our successful entry and has had a remarkable, well deserved, successful career. But Roy is, by nature, a pessimist. I am, by nature, an optimist. I don't know really whether these are good or bad things but I'm always struck by this when I talk with Roy which I frequently do. I see him quite often and always enjoy seeing him. But for him the glass is probably more than half empty whereas in my case it tends to be slightly more than half full. I make that as a general comment because it applies also to my view of Roy's book where fundamentally I agree with him about 'Missed Chances' but I think that he tends to over-paint the negative and perhaps not give enough credit to the positive, and there was, as always, a mixture of both. In the case of John Silkin I don't think Roy is wrong because Silkin was a passionate anti-European and I think had his own agenda as Minister of Agriculture. I think he really wanted, was more concerned with sort of doing down the Community ... than advancing the interests of British Agriculture and, as one saw with subsequent Ministers of Agriculture, there are ways and ways of dealing with this and Silkin's way was certainly not the right way from the point of view of this country.

JH And would inspire some lasting prejudice perhaps in the other members of the agricultural

council at the time?

MP Well, the interesting thing is how short resentments are in the European Community. I've been struck by this many times, that you will get a Minister, not only from Britain, from many other countries, who will try to ride roughshod over his colleagues and will arouse great resentment and a lot of opposition. But when he or she disappears from the scene things revert to basically an objective assessment. Again (this has both positive and negative components to it) there is a camaraderie which develops amongst Ministers, particularly, I have to say, amongst Ministers of Agriculture, and very often when you hear British Ministers castigating the common agricultural policy and everything else you'll find that, once the Minister of Agriculture gets to the cosy togetherness of the Agriculture Ministers Council, he goes along with all sorts of things which one would have thought he should not go along with if he really meant what was being said by his government about the CAP. But the same is true; there is a camaraderie amongst Foreign Ministers; there is a camaraderie amongst Trade Ministers, amongst Finance Ministers. Perhaps camaraderie is the wrong word for it but I don't think so. I think there's a sense of common purpose if you like which is of course conditioned by national interests and national perceptions and indeed the way that different countries look at it; but when they get together in the Council there is a sense 'of we are together in order to make this work'. I believe that's still there and actually interestingly, harking back to Mrs Thatcher, one of the things that irritated her most was the feeling that she couldn't trust her Ministers to go to Brussels and beat the others around the ears, as she did with heads of government, because of this feeling that they had, that they were there to make things work and to find solutions. They don't always achieve it. The same is true of course of the Ambassadors in the COREPER, perhaps even more true, for they see each other all the time. They are very close, they entertain each other, there's a sort of symbiosis in that group which I think is still there by all accounts. But, as I say, there are positive and negative sides to this. The negative side is that sometimes people don't stand up for their interests enough. The positive side is that there is this shared feeling that there is a common interest at stake and a common interest that needs to be pursued and preserved. and I think that is one of the strengths of the European Union. Of course there is much criticism of the Council of Ministers. There is enormous criticism of the Commission, enormous criticism of the Parliament and so on but actually people who know about the workings of the Community, if they are critical will be critical of the Council of Ministers because that is actually where the decisions are taken and whatever people may think about the Commission or the Parliament the Commission doesn't do things and doesn't get things approved except in agreement with the Council of Ministers.

JH But the Commission has the monopoly of the right to put proposals to the Council of Ministers.

MP That's quite true. That's all part of the original treaty. That of course goes back to the original concept of the treaty which has changed so much since 1956 '57 that people tend to forget it, but the original concept, the Treaty of Rome was very much based on a kind of European version of the United States of America and I am sure that the people who wrote that treaty were actually very influenced by that, and by their experience of the United States during the war and afterwards. If you look at the components of the Community as it was you had the Commission with this sole right of proposal which is seen now as the sort of bureaucracy of the Community. In those days it was seen as the potential government of the united Europe. The Council of Ministers, which now is the fount of all authority in a way, was perceived then as the Senate. This is where the countries were represented and they had this rather obscure relationship with the Commission which was partly because the drafters of the treaty didn't quite know how to deal with the separation of powers which characterises the American constitution so they produced a slightly hybrid thing which.... but this was undoubtedly their concept, the Commission would be a future government. The Council of Ministers would be the future Senate, the Assembly as it was still called in those days would be the Lower House and the Court of Justice would be the Supreme Court. Well, as the thing has developed that hasn't happened but it's because there is this sort of underlying concept still that you get these rather strange conflicts between the institutions. I think it is constitutionally very interesting and of course in terms of historical development it's also a fascinating subject.

JH It is indeed. It takes me back to the only, very brief, conversation I ever had with Sir Edward Heath when I caught him standing alone in a lobby once, when he said that the Commission civil servants, the dominant people in the Commission, were able to do things which British civil servants would never have been able to do, which I thought sounded rather strange but what you've said puts a lot of light on that. The thing is they have different powers and rather different tasks. They are supposed to take the initiative but of course you make it sound even more Federalist in the proper sense perhaps than even most people suspect. This takes us back to other points made by Sir Roy Denman. he maintains, and it's a different picture from the one you have just given, that British Ministers are ineffective in the Council, uncomfortable, they don't brief themselves well enough and they get away as soon as possible. They don't understand these foreigners cracking quick jokes across the table and in short they are just rather uncomfortable and ineffective in the Community. And he goes on to say that Whitehall civil servants are rather ignorant and contemptuous of the Commission and the best people do not accept posts there.

MP I think that the first point he makes, in a way, is a reflection of the second. I think it is nonsense to say that British Ministers are ineffective in the Council. It entirely depends on the Minister and the relationship that he manages to create with his fellow Ministers. I would say that

on the whole, after an initial period, British Ministers are just as effective, or ineffective, as Ministers from other countries. It is true that they tend to get away from Council meetings as soon as they can and they very often disappear leaving their Permanent Representative in charge of the national seat. But that's not a British, an exclusively British way of behaving. During my time in Brussels it was equally true of virtually all the member countries, particularly true of those, the Italians for example, who had to go much further to get to Brussels. So, as I say, I think Roy is wrong on that point. I think that some British Ministers, either because they are not very good Ministers, they haven't briefed themselves properly or they thoroughly disliked the Community and all its works, (and I can think of examples of all three but won't), some of them undoubtedly were not successful in their Councils. But where you had an intelligent and able Minister he was respected and appreciated and established a perfectly satisfactory relationship with the others. And I think perhaps one of the sort of examples one can think of, and since this is being favourable I don't mind mentioning it, for example Dennis Healey, when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer, was an extraordinarily successful Minister in the Council even though he was very often in conflict of ideas with others. The same has been true of Conservative Ministers. Douglas Hurd was highly respected by the Council, I am told. There is no doubt that Alec Home, who was Foreign Secretary when we first joined, was held in enormous respect. He himself was not uncertain about the Community but it was not an environment in which he felt particularly at home, but he simply, by his good nature, the way he behaved, his courtesy and so on, was enormously appreciated. I think really the point of the Denman critique, and the one where I am bound to say I do agree with him is in the general attitude that has been pretty pervasive throughout Whitehall, with the exception of the Foreign Office, ever since we first joined the Community which is that there has been a reluctance to reward good conduct, if you like, doing well, success in the Commission when people have returned. Roy Denman is himself a good example of this. He had an extraordinarily distinguished career in the DTI but in fact it became clear to him I think that if he returned after he had been in the Commission if he returned to the UK there wasn't much future for him. So he didn't return to the UK. He stayed in the Commission. He was their Representative in Washington. He was Director General in Brussels and did outstandingly well in the Commission. I can think of other examples where civil servants who did extremely well, whether in the Permanent Representation in Brussels or in the Commission, and the two are not dissimilar actually, went back to Whitehall and felt they were simply not being recognised. Someone else had taken their place and they were not really treated as people who belonged to the club. I used to complain about this. It was not universally true. It depended enormously upon the Permanent Under Secretaries in the Departments concerned. Just anecdotally to illustrate the point, William Armstrong, Lord Armstrong, who was extremely close to Edward Heath and was a very loyal supporter of him, William Armstrong came over to Brussels after a year or so of our membership with Lord Jellicoe, who was the Minister in charge of the civil service, and I remember we were

having dinner in our house in Brussels and talking about this problem and getting good people into the Commission and so on, and I said that of course one had to realise that Directors General of divisions in the Commission were roughly the equivalent of Permanent Under Secretaries in Whitehall. I could see that this in itself was a concept, although William didn't really comment on it, it was not one that he received favourably. The notion that any Brussels official could be comparable to a Permanent Secretary in Whitehall was rather foreign to him, but of course it was the case. They were heading a big and important administration, as varied and important as Whitehall departments, and fundamentally these were Permanent Secretaries. But I then compounded the problem in a way by going on to say, this was many years ago, this was the early days of our membership, by going on to say that of course the other thing about Directors General was that a lot of them were in their late thirties or early forties that is to say Permanent Secretaries who were 10 years at least younger than their equivalents in Whitehall: and William looked at me in despair and said, 'but you are talking about Principals in the Home Civil Service', and I said, 'yes, I suppose I am,' because most of the Principals in the Home Civil Service were indeed in their late thirties. But I said these are the facts, these are very young men by our standards, in charge of big departments, with a rank that is roughly equivalent to Permanent Secretary. 'But Michael,' he said, 'I don't know any Principals.' Now, that's unfair to him in a way and as I said it is purely anecdotal but it illustrates the problem that Roy was defining. I think Roy is a shade too negative about it and I think things improved and good people did come to Brussels. One obvious example of someone who did well was Sir Michael Franklin who came to Brussels for a spell in the Agricultural Division and then went back in due course to Whitehall, was second Permanent Secretary in the Cabinet Office, was Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture, Permanent Secretary in the Department of Trade. One shouldn't generalise about this but all the same I think that there has been a failure in Whitehall to accept the importance of really good people being in Brussels, and here one does come back to the Ministers because this reflects a sort of schizophrenia in British attitudes which I think is more true of this country than the others, namely we don't want Brussels to be too powerful so we don't want to send outstanding people there whether as Commissioners or as Civil Servants; but of course the consequence of not sending good people is that the thing doesn't work and then we criticise the Commission for incompetence, for corruption, for all the other things. The best example of all of this I think is the appointment first of Monsieur Thorn, the former Prime Minister of Luxembourg, as President of the Commission and subsequently some years later of his successor as Prime Minister, or one of his successors as Prime Minister, Monsieur Santer as President of the Commission. Monsieur Thorn was appointed largely at the instigation of Margaret Thatcher, who undoubtedly wanted a weak Head of the Commission but then of course that produced all sorts of problems. Monsieur Santer was appointed because Mr Major would not accept the Belgian Prime Minister, who is infinitely more competent, but of course was seen as more 'Federalist', though why anybody should think a Belgian is liable to be more Federalist than a

Luxembourger is beyond me; but in both cases men of inadequate ability and competence were appointed to an exceptionally important job with unsatisfactory results, and unsatisfactory from this country's point of view as well as from the point of view of the European Community as a whole.

JH Indeed, sending second class people there from this country must mean that there is less British input into Commission proposals.

MP Absolutely, and actually, on the whole in terms of the members of the Commission the appointments from this country have been good and successful appointments down the years. It began of course initially - Ted Heath sent Christopher Soames and George Thomson, both of whom were outstanding in their different fields. But it has continued, we've had Leon Brittan, we had Roy Jenkins as I think one of the most successful Presidents of the Commission. At the moment we are proposing two people, Neil Kinnock who has done very well in Brussels and Christopher Patten who is seen as a high flying politician. I think on the whole this country in terms of Commission appointments has done pretty well. Of course one of the paradoxes too was over one of the major achievements of Margaret Thatcher's period in office, the Single Act. Who was the prime mover of the Single Act? Lord Cockfield, and Cockfield was sent to Brussels by Margaret Thatcher under the misguided belief that he was anti-European and she wanted to get rid of him from the Cabinet. He proved to be an outstandingly able and successful Commissioner and was, as I say, very largely instrumental in bringing about the Single Act and therefore the real Common Market. But we have done pretty well in people in the Commission and at senior level both Commissioners and former Directors and Directors General.

JH Thank you. If I may come back to Ministers, I won't press you for names although I'd love some, but I wonder if I could ask you for an estimate of the balance; do you think we have had more effective Ministers than relatively ineffective or anti-European ones, whichever one likes to call it?

MP Very difficult to say. I think that one of the interesting things, again about the Community, and this is true not just of the Council of Ministers, it is true of the parliament and I think it's true of people within the Commission itself. It comes back to what I said earlier about the working together, what I call camaraderie, that of course you will get a number of totally recalcitrant anti-Europeans in certain governments who will actually almost do their best not to achieve agreement and certainly could be damaging, but they are relatively few. And it's interesting to see how sceptics, and many Ministers have been sceptical in the proper sense of the word, I'm not using the noun Euro-sceptic, but who wondered whether this was the right way to do things, have with time come to realise that actually a lot of it makes pretty good sense, and they can co-operate with

colleagues and that if they do that they're more likely to achieve their objective than if they don't. And that's reasonable and intelligent people and I would say that on balance we've had more of those than of the negative ones, and as I said earlier, some have been outstandingly successful in their Councils. Of course the same is true of the Civil Servants. One of the most striking examples of how this country managed to keep influence through the quality of its people is Nigel Wickes of the Treasury. Until very recently he was chairman of the Monetary Committee of senior officials of the Community and indeed responsible for drawing up the terms of reference of the European Central Bank and so on, even though we weren't going to be in it. And that's entirely due to the personal qualities of Wickes, who is a very remarkable public servant. But there have been other examples too of that and it all comes back to something which is, John, I think you and I have seen this many times over the years, the importance of people, whether as Ministers, whether as Civil Servants, whether as Ambassadors or whatever. Someone good, intelligent and able will have a totally disproportionate influence compared with someone who isn't.

JH That's right. You remind me of something perhaps on the other side which I would like to ask about. Going back to the first meeting and attempt at EMU when Roy Jenkins was President of the Commission, there was going to be a committee of three there with a man from the Treasury, Couzens, who I am told is a singularly intelligent man, high quality, the kind you have been describing, but he left this Committee of three very shortly afterwards and I don't know, I would dearly like to know, what his instructions were when he went to it? Apparently he will never talk about it since, which is.....

MP That I can believe. I knew Ken Couzens well, I mean I know him. I haven't seen him lately but I used to see him a certain amount when we were both in the City, now that we have both retired. He is a very able senior Civil Servant, highly intelligent, I don't know exactly what his instructions were, it was after my time, but there's no doubt that in regard to EMS he was in a group which was really him, the Frenchman and the German. I don't know now who his opposite numbers were from those countries but I think that he went almost certainly with an extremely negative and restrictive brief, whatever the Treasury view may be now, the Treasury has consistently over the years been opposed to Economic Monetary Union and this was of course designed to produce the European Monetary System, the EMS as a sort of precursor. I think Ken Couzens brief made it almost impossible for him to be, or be seen to be, other than obstructive in that meeting and I think he or the Treasury concluded, certainly to the relief of the French and the Germans that there was really no purpose in continuing. If he had had a different brief it would probably have been different. I don't think he's of the same, really formidable intellectual qualities as Nigel Wickes, but all senior Treasury people are jolly bright and he was one of them. Interestingly he went on in retirement to work for a French bank.

JH Yes, that's, I nearly said, par for the course, but not quite. Thank you. A lot of what you've said does lead one to the general question of; why, given the balance on the whole of favourable good work that people have done in participating in the Community, why we are still so uncomfortable in it? I have the impression, if I might make a very short speech in itself, that we are quite good at implementing directives, that's to say we implement them but they are implemented by people in this country who may or may not have got them interpreted right and don't seem to have discretion to leave alone things that don't make sense, whereas I am quite sure that any country that in the past has been ruled by Napoleon and had the 'code Napoleon' more or less inflicted on them, - the French Prefect is very good at not applying something that doesn't make sense in his district and I'm sure he has discretion not to apply them and a lot of directives don't get applied in other countries as far as one can understand. We still seem terribly uncomfortable and not at home in the Community. Is this just that the House of Commons is afraid of diminishing to a provincial German land parliament or is there something more serious. Will we never be at home in the Community because the trouble is our half-heartedness? It seems to me, we could, if we had gone in there with self-confidence and used our elbows as the others do we would feel much more at home and have done much better.

MP No, I entirely agree with that latter point. I think that one has to distinguish between the attitude in parliament in Westminster and therefore to some extent that's reflected upon the government of the day, I mean they interact. The attitude in the country and the way in which our people in government, in the Council of Ministers, in the Commission and so on, actually dug themselves in and I think there are three distinct and separate points of view there. If you take first parliament, I think there's very much the point you made, parliament sees itself, I mean if you talk collectively about it in that way, and I think you can, parliament sees itself as threatened. Threatened now by devolution, but there has always been that sort of threat overhanging it, threatened by the increasing authoritarianism of Prime Ministers, and that's not new. You can go back to people like Lord Salisbury or indeed Baldwin or Chamberlain, but there's an increasing sense I think that parliament tends to be a rubber stamp. It's not adequately used and not adequately respected. You see this in the reports of parliamentary committees which tend to have a slightly resentful tone to them which are critical of all sorts of things going on but tend also to be sort of 'we're critical but we're not sure that anybody's going to pay any attention'. You see it very much in the attitude of parliament towards the European parliament with a real sense there that Westminster has treated the European parliament from the beginning in a scandalous way. MEP's were not allowed in and all that. That's changing but there is still very much a feeling of 'these people are our rivals and they are trying to undermine us and so on'. Parliament is on the defensive and that tends to have repercussions on the government and it tends to produce this mood of

criticism of Brussels that almost anything that comes out of Brussels is by definition unsatisfactory and if the parliament does things that is even more unsatisfactory. I'm exaggerating but that's Parliament. Then you have the country. Of course the prime factor in the country is total ignorance. People don't, I mean to the extent that they know we are in the European Union as it is now, they don't understand it. They see it as constant interference because whether it's in parliament or in the press or whatever, Brussels is always blamed, even if the responsibility lies with the government, and there is a general feeling of, 'why do we have to be involved in all this?' Again, I think that the country as a whole has much more common sense to it than parliament in that if you take a straw poll at almost any time in the country the mood that comes out is, 'we are not sure if we like this very much but it clearly doesn't make sense to leave it.' I think that continues to be the prevailing mood. It doesn't stop you being very critical and people are very critical. They dislike all the things which are played up by the press and which actually are, nine times out of ten, a complete nonsense, the shape of bananas or the Commission is planning to ban this or that. All of which is rubbish and usually totally unjustified, invented by someone. So that's the view in the country. It's a sceptical view but not one that wants us to leave the Community. And that's why, you see, when Margaret Thatcher is reported as saying we ought to leave the Community the Tory Party at once gets nervous and says, 'No, no, that's not our policy', because they know it's not the country's view. Once again she is out of step. But then you have the third, the behaviour of people, the Council of Ministers, the Commission, parliament and so on, in those institutions, and indeed the judges in the Court of Justice, and there you have a much more - a desire as I was saying earlier to make the thing work. A recognition of the importance of making it work, a search for new policies, foreign policy, security policy and so on. There you have got a much more coherent and positive attitude, but it tends to get overlaid by the parliamentary and public attitudes, the same actually as a very hostile media.

JH Yes, thank you. Well that does clarify it and it does cheer me up a little I must say. But it does remain does it not that we are more at home with and more pleased by the other two pillars which were erected by Maastricht than we are with the original structure whereby the Commission proposed everything and the Council of Ministers had to be really rather clever to decide anything completely different.

MP Yes, I have always felt that was a slightly oversimplified view because it is perfectly true that the Commission had, and indeed under the Treaty of Rome still has (I mean under the European Community Treaty) still has the right of initiative, but in fact that is very much conditioned by what the Commission discovers of attitudes within governments, within the parliament and so on. One of the, this is slightly en passant, but one of the bodies or the sets of bodies about which the least is known in this country - and I suspect elsewhere - are the parliamentary committees or the

committees of the European parliament which meet all the time in Brussels, are in constant touch with the Commission and which have a very considerable influence on the development of draft legislation by the Commission. That's one set of influences on the Commission. The other is governments. The Ambassadors reflect the policies of their governments and they know at once what is going on in the Commission and if they see something coming up which is going to cause a lot of trouble they go in at once and tell them so. So that the kind of picture of the Commission only proposing and nobody else having any sort of influence on what's proposed is actually very erroneous. There is a lot of influence on the Commission and on the whole the Commission does not propose things which it knows will not get through. It may propose things which it knows are disliked by this member government or that member government or which are going to cause problems in parliament but if it thinks it's got a reasonable chance of getting it through with support from enough people well then it may have a go, but the Commission isn't just in the business of launching off in to outer space, so to speak.

JH I see. Thank you. Well, I am cheered by your relative optimism arising out of your own first hand experience and I gather that you think that we are gradually becoming a little more at home in the Commission, a little more at home in the very detailed continental way of doing things which is how, I believe, the thing works.

MP Yes, I do. I think that we tend to be seen as the sort of awkward squad. You know that tendency is enhanced by the media presentation and by the need that British Ministers feel perhaps more than Ministers from other countries, to be in the business of winning victories, which is pretty good nonsense really. All that being said, I think that one of the sources of my relative optimism is the fact that the others don't want us to leave. They would like to see us in economic and monetary union. They want this country to participate and, although it's perhaps a negative factor, it's a factor of strength for us that we have partners who sometimes get absolutely maddened by the way we seem to be behaving, who at other times find attitudes in the press and elsewhere totally incomprehensible, but still see this country as important, both within Europe and elsewhere, and as a partner that they value. Even emerging from a meeting where Ministers had got thoroughly exasperated by their British colleague you won't find them saying, 'It's time the British left.' You will get people in the Community countries saying that but very often it's people who in any case are themselves eurosceptic. We don't have a monopoly of euroscepticism in this country. There are eurosceptics in France, in Germany, and I know several in Spain. For them in a way British behaviour is an illustration of how they think their governments ought to behave and it's basically designed to cut the Community down and if possible to eliminate it. But you don't get that from other governments and you don't get it on the whole from responsible people. If you went into a street in Paris or in a French town and said do you think the British ought to leave the Community

because they are so impossible you'll probably get a lot of French people saying, yes, of course. But actually that's not what they all really want. It's not what the Community as a whole wants. And I think that we have to be careful not to use it as a kind of source of blackmail, but it's a source of some strength for our position.

JH Yes, it has to be combined with increased understanding of the continental, as we might say, or the Community's way of doing things which, Sir Roy Denman thinks, Ministers simply didn't understand. There's one other thing that concerns me a bit, from my rather ignorant standpoint, no doubt, about the Community, and that is that the way it does achieve consensus by horse trading concessions which are not always relevant to each other, in different fields, maybe, but by reciprocal concession here and there. It seems to mean that nothing once decided can ever be changed, or it's very difficult even to modify it; it doesn't have a way of altering course when it finds it's done something that's perhaps rather a mistake. The sheer difficulty of amending a policy once adopted: they have modified some of the agricultural policy but even there there have been and are stubborn obstacles. It does need to be more subtle, does it not, to be successful?

MP Well, yes and no. Yes ideally, but why is it difficult to modify the common agricultural policy? I mean it has actually been very substantially changed in recent years. Why is that always very difficult? Because the policy reflects the wishes of three or four very significant members of the Community and the tacit wishes of a number of smaller members. The country that has probably done best out of the common agricultural policy is the Netherlands, with Denmark in second place since the Danes joined. The real difficulties appear to come from France and Germany. These are political realities. We are in the, I don't know if it's fortunate or unfortunate, position of only having I think it's two percent of the working population in agriculture and only about four percent of our GDP comes from agriculture. That's very different still in France. It's different in Germany in a different way because so many German farmers are also doing other things as well but it's certainly still true in Italy. It's still true in Spain, and until that balance changes, if it ever does, it's hard to say because, again, one feels this every time you go to France. We've just spent three weeks in France and we drove back slowly from the South of France through the Dordogne area, up to the Loire and all that and you realise to what extent France is still an agricultural and countryside country. I think the same is largely true in Germany if you drive across Germany. It's certainly true in Italy. I haven't been to Spain for a long time but I know it's true there. It's true in Portugal. These are still agricultural countries. France because of its size, is not likely to change very substantially. Germany is the same. Portugal probably is rather different. So that the common agricultural policy is a reflection of the political pressures on the governments, and of course within the governments you get conflicting tendencies. The French Treasury is longing to change the common agricultural policy because France is now, after a long

period of being a recipient, a contributor in net terms to the Community budget. The German Treasury, the Ministry of Finance, would do anything to change it but they don't have the influence that agriculture and other things have. So that is one thing, but of course the other thing is that we tend to forget that this can also work to our benefit. Everybody is longing to change the British budget contribution negotiated successfully on Mrs Thatcher's behalf by Lords Carrington and Gilmour. But the way the Community works, as you rightly said, makes this difficult and we are in no hurry to see that change. So it cuts both ways.

JH Yes, I see. Well I must thank you very sincerely for being willing to speak at such length and such relevance about our place in the Community, and as I said before, that does rather cheer me up and perhaps on that note we should remind ourselves that this is our final session. I wonder if in closing there is anything else you would like to say, either to talk about something specific from your experience or reflect more generally on your career and British foreign policy in your time as a closing contribution or, if you prefer we can of course just stop there because I already have to thank you for a rather wonderful interview, or series of interviews.

MP Well, John, thanks very much for what you say. I think, I mean reflecting on my career, which included of course four years in the Army during the war, and in spite of what Mrs Thatcher in particular, or Lady Thatcher as she is now, says about the defeatist people in the Foreign Office who have just endlessly been prophets of doom, the fact is that, throughout my career, the diplomatic service has been obliged in part to perform with mirrors. We emerged from World War Two as co-victors with the United States. I think this gave the country, perhaps not the politicians, though I'm not so sure even about that, but the country the illusion that we were somehow on a par with the United States which of course was a total illusion. This country basically was not destroyed by World War Two in the way that Germany or the European countries were but the damage done was enormous. What has been remarkable actually has been the rehabilitation of the country since then. But all the same we've moved in a hundred years from being basically number one in the western world, whatever you like to call it, to being one of a number but with illusions deriving from a rather splendid past which has made it difficult for us to adjust; and our task in the diplomatic service over these years has been to keep, against a background of a weak economy, of a small economy relatively speaking, a very small country with big ideas. (We fortunately discovered huge oil resources, the proceeds of which have been largely squandered and if you compare the way we've handled it compared with the way the Norwegians have handled it, it's perfectly true with a tiny population but still, we have no credit now.) Our task has been to go on keeping Britain at the top of the league and on the whole I think we've done rather well at it. We're still, I hate that phrase Douglas Hurd used, 'we are punching above our weight,' but this country is still a Permanent Member of the Security Council which is rooted in the history of fifty years ago,

and has no particular justification at the moment. We are still amongst the seven or eight largest economies, though not the most successful. We still have a position and importantly I think, and I think this is due in part to the efforts of the diplomatic service, we are still held in, I think, excessive, (in terms of our resources and so on) esteem around the world. In parts of the world where we are detested that itself is a tribute to our position because we are detested because we are seen as having more influence than we ought to have. In parts of the world where we are respected in a sense the same is true, there is a recognition of a continuing strength that we bring to international discussion and so on which is of value. So I believe, not just that there is a future for the diplomatic service but that the diplomatic service has done rather well and I would add that the other people who I think have done extraordinarily well over the years in this process are the armed forces. And we have managed to keep a standard of training, of discipline, of whatever you like, tradition in our armed forces which has stood us in very good stead. And I am not just thinking in military terms of the Falklands and all that but in the way that the British armed forces are respected around the world. Interestingly the French have managed to do rather the same thing and probably, if you leave aside the United States on the one hand and the Soviet Union on the other and of course eventually China, Britain and France are the two countries in the West where the contribution made by the armed forces is a real enhancement of the general sort of political strength of the country. I think that's all I want to say.

JH Thank you very much. We will stop there. Thank you again.