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Retired 2004	

Sir Hilary (Nicholas Hugh) Synnott KCMG
interviewed by Malcolm McBain on 29 January 2008

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Educational background, Royal Navy, Foreign Office, 1973

MM Would you start by telling us a little about your background? How you came to join the Diplomatic Service after service in the Royal Navy, and including a mention of your education?

HS I went to a boarding school, which I left after A levels at the age of seventeen and a half, and went directly from there to the Naval College at Dartmouth. I got a scholarship to Dartmouth at the age of fifteen. I went there for a year's basic training, which included three months at sea in the West Indies, and then after that, as a midshipman, I was sent to the Far East, where I served in a minesweeper during the confrontation with Indonesia over the creation of Malaysia. I spent six fascinating months going up the rivers of Sarawak, and then I had six months on an aircraft carrier, HMS Victorious. During that time I applied to Cambridge, and was awarded a place. The reason I did that was because, in those days, the only way you could go to University with the Navy was to get your place first, and the only place the Navy would send you was Cambridge University. The only reason they'd send you there was if you studied engineering, which is what I did. Then having got my engineering degree I started to become a submariner, and went for submarine training, and at the end of that - that was after six years of training altogether, - I was selected to become a nuclear engineer with two other colleagues. For me that was the final straw, because I had decided that I didn't like engineering, and that I was not a good engineer. So I resigned from the Navy, but again in those days it took five years after completion of training for you to leave the Navy if you resigned. So I became a conventional submariner, which is what I had wanted to do in the first place. I spent five years in conventional submarines, and in my final year I applied to join the Foreign Office. I was just under the age limit, and I did all the Foreign Office exams and interviews. I should really have joined in the summer of 1973, but the Navy were insistent on me completing my full five years, and the Foreign Office were kind enough to let me join them the day after Boxing Day, 1973. So that is how I joined.

MM You squeaked in under the age limit?

HS I just squeaked in under the age limit. You had to be under twenty eight, but when I actually joined I was twenty eight and a half. I'd applied at twenty eight and they didn't seem to mind very much.

MM Did the fact that you had been selected as a nuclear engineer mean that you underwent further nuclear training?

HS It would have involved another year of engineering training in Thurso – in the north of Scotland, in the middle of nowhere, and at the time I was trying to have a girlfriend in London, which was a factor, though that came to nothing. But it was something that did not appeal to me at all.

MM So conventional submarines?

HS Conventional submarines.

MM That was a very good introduction to the diplomatic life to spend time touring round the world and foreign parts and under the sea. What Department did you go to in the Foreign Office?

Council of Europe desk in the Foreign Office

HS My first job was on the Council of Europe desk which was a talking shop really. It was only for a year, but it was very useful because I used to go out to Strasbourg for the Parliamentary Assemblies and in a sense be the Foreign Office man liaising with Members of Parliament, so I met quite a number of Members of Parliament. I also saw the relationship between the Foreign Office and Parliament. I tended to call everybody 'sir' in those days, fresh from the Navy. I'm not sure how good a training the Navy was for the Diplomatic Service, but it was a question that was asked me at my final interview board. An aggressive interviewer said to me – Well, Synnott, what makes you think that you could negotiate with the Russians? I remember my

response to that, and perhaps it was a little bit too clever. I said that I felt that if I could negotiate with Vickers Shipyard I could probably negotiate with the Russians, and everybody except the tough man on the interview board laughed. So I probably won that point, at least with them, if not with him.

MM So the Council of Europe; and you were dealing with Members of Parliament right from the beginning of your time with the Foreign Office?

HS Yes, I was. And I was also having to write briefs for the monthly meetings of the Council of Ministers – the Council of Europe Council – the meeting of ambassadors, and twice a year there would be meetings of Ministers. So I went out with FO Ministers, which was very instructive. But writing the briefs, or preparing the briefs, I found very difficult to start with, because I really hadn't done any writing since I was at school. I wasn't used to writing. So I would spend hours anguishing as to whether to say I should be grateful if you would, or I would be grateful if you could, that sort of thing. I remember being told by my predecessor that in the Foreign Office we deal with words, which I found incredibly intimidating, because although I could talk, I didn't think I was very good at writing.

MM But you found out.

HS Well I found that it was a craft which was capable of development; a skill and a craft.

MM What did you make of our Ministers at the time? It was a Labour Government in 1973, wasn't it?

HS They were intimidating. I think Crosland was the Foreign Secretary then, whom I never met. I came across the Permanent Under-Secretary who was completely terrifying to me.

MM Who was that?

HS Denis Greenhill. Antony Acland at that time was Private Secretary; he became Permanent Under Secretary later. My Head of Department was Crispin Tickell, and at that time it was a Department which also dealt with NATO and all the CSCE process. The Council of Europe was really completely at the bottom of the heap. That was made fairly clear to me.

MM You have to start somewhere.

HS It was a good place to start because there were some very good role models in that Department.

First Secretary at the UKDEL to the OECD, Paris, 1975

MM So after that, well not long after that you went to Paris?

HS Yes. I was very disappointed that they sent me to Paris, because I'd been there. My wife and I had just got married before I joined the Office, and we'd been to Paris on our honeymoon. The posting which I'd been told I'd been selected for was Moscow, at the height of the Cold War. I really wanted to go there. I'd even started to learn Russian. The plan was that I would learn Russian for a year or so then go to Moscow. But for reasons which still escape me, that fell through and I was sent to OECD in Paris instead, not the Embassy, but the side shoot really, and that was an enormous disappointment to me. But it did mean that I had three months or so to learn French on my own, which was an excuse to go and see French movies, which I enjoyed.

First Secretary Bonn, 1978

MM I don't think we need to spend much time on the OECD really. Your next posting after that, 1978, was in Bonn.

HS Yes. That I was pleased about. In the usual way, Personnel Department had said to me – Well, after Paris you need to go somewhere very, very different, somewhere in the developing world, a long way away, to give you new skill sets. In fact I was

sent a couple of hundred miles down the road to Bonn, where I did the military/political job in what was then called Chancery, liaising with the British Army of the Rhine and the Air Force. The UK had 65,000 troops in Germany at that time, and it was a crucial time when NATO was reacting to the introduction of the new Russian missiles, and there were some important decisions to be taken about Cruise Missiles and Pershing Missiles, all of which I got involved in, working directly to the Number Two of the Embassy. He was Sir Julian Bullard, whom I greatly admired, and that was very stimulating. I think that people thought that because I had been in the Forces I might be able to deal with the Army. I'm not sure they were right, because the Navy/Army relationship is not totally harmonious, and I regarded some of the military practices as quite bizarre, particularly in their tendency to dress up for dinner and to insist that ladies should leave - which they did at that time - after the dessert, which absolutely appalled my wife, and me, but nonetheless we conformed, since I was supposed to be a diplomat.

MM And anyway you didn't have ladies in the Navy.

HS In those days we didn't have ladies. It was very bad luck if ladies came on submarines, although that was how I met my wife.

MM So that was really quite an interesting period, and of course the Bonn post itself was an extremely important one.

HS Yes it was, and again it exposed me to the very close linkage with Whitehall. I felt that I was in the thick of things and if not influencing policy, at least seeing policy being made, and seeing how it was influenced. And it also required me to hone up my writing skills, which I had developed a lot in Paris from reporting meetings. So I managed to develop skills in taking notes and producing telegrams quickly. I managed to catch up in terms of craft with my peers at that time.

MM After Bonn?

Return to the Southern European Department of the FCO, 1981

HS After Bonn I came back to the FCO where in a sense I was looking for a job. My boss in Paris turned out to be Head of Southern European Department. I whispered in his ear that it would be very nice if I could work with him again. I'd heard that there was a vacancy coming up on the Spanish desk, and I was delighted that I got that. In those days these sorts of postings were done by winks and nods, and I found myself on the Spanish desk shortly after the death of Franco and after the parliament had been stuck up by Colonel Tejero of the Guardia Civil. Democracy was still uncertain. The internal political scene in Spain was very interesting but, more important from the point of view of British interests, was that the Gibraltar issue had really started bubbling again, now that we were dealing with a democratic Spain rather than a Fascist Spain. There was a great pressure on Britain to give up Gibraltar, at the same time as Spain wanted to join the European Community. Britain was insisting that Spain lifted the restrictions on Gibraltar if Britain was to agree to Spain entering into the European Union. It also coincided with the Falklands War. The then Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, insisted that – how shall I put it? – it was possible that Argentine/Spanish relations might be such that the Spaniards might try something on Gibraltar, so we found ourselves having to have very tight security in Gibraltar. I was constantly having to go to the Joint Intelligence Committee to discuss the risks of Spain mounting a coup against Gibraltar, which I have to say I thought was a complete fantasy, but there you are.

MM Still one has to take ...

HS The conclusion was always – it cannot be entirely ruled out.

After I had been on the Spanish desk for about two years, I was promoted, as it were, to be Assistant Head of Southern European Department – as it was in those days – so that broadened my portfolio to include Greece and Cyprus and Turkey.

MM So an important move and clearly brought your drafting skills up to speed.

HS Again I was lucky because it was a very topical subject with Ministers taking a very close interest. Geoffrey Howe was Foreign Minister then. There were constant meetings about Gibraltar. I had become the guru. I was working to the Head of

Department, who was David Wilson. He was subsequently Governor of Hong Kong, and of course immensely able. When he arrived I had become the Foreign Office fount of all knowledge of Gibraltar, so I was doing, with him, personal briefings for Ministers and writing all the notes, and so on. That exposed me to high level people.

MM Were you there at the time of the SAS operation against the IRA?

HS I wasn't, but that came back to haunt me in another job later on when I was dealing with counter-terrorism.

MM Is there anything further you want to say about your 1981-85 period in the Foreign Office?

HS I had quite a lot to do with the Cyprus issue which was bubbling quite vigorously at that time, and I found it interesting to be wooed by both the Greek Embassy and the Turkish Embassy, and being taken out to lunch by both of them with diametrically differing views. I was interested also to compare and contrast the style of diplomacy of both those countries.

MM And that is seven, eight years after the invasion of Cyprus.

HS 1974, wasn't it, so yes. Yes, a bit after that. We were still trying to get the Turks to give up Varosha – the old Famagusta, and of course we still had the British Sovereign bases there – again there was a link with the military. All these issues are absolutely full of history and precedent and so on, so the devil lay in the detail, but of course it proved to be a completely intractable problem: one that had to be managed rather than solved.

MM And it is still unsolved. 1985, another complete change of scene?

Counsellor, Head of Chancery and Consul General, Amman, 1985

HS Yes, I was promoted then to what was the Counsellor grade – now called SMS – and sent to be Deputy Head of Mission to Jordan. Generally people who went there

were Arabists, and I wasn't. But they decided that actually a generalist could do that job, because the Jordanians, or senior Jordanians, all spoke English, which was true. John Coles was the ambassador, subsequently PUS, who had just come out of 10 Downing Street and was extremely vigorous, and I was his Deputy. I did a week's Arabic and learned some greetings. I was quite a good mimic so people often thought I spoke Arabic because I could reel off a few phrases, but I didn't understand a word of it. But it got one quite a long way.

MM How many languages did you have, actually, at that stage?

HS French and German. That was all. I didn't come in with any. I got pretty good at French and passable at German, so they sent me to Jordan. That was also interesting because again it was one of those places which were bubbling. This was a period of hope for breakthroughs, and King Hussein was very active in this, so the links with King Hussein, which were exercised by my Ambassador, were very important, and he had very close ties to Britain, and again there were very close ties between our Armed Forces, so we saw a lot of our Armed Forces out there. We had exceptionally close ties to the establishment in Jordan, and since the Ambassador dealt with the King at the very top level, I dealt with the next level down, which was pretty senior. We had very good access, because the Jordanian establishment realised that the link with Britain was in their interests, so they spoke very frankly and openly to us, and that was very stimulating. Although not an Arabist, I was interested in politics and I tried to develop an expertise in the Arab/Israel problem, and got to know a lot about the sociology of Islam and the Arab world. I did a lot of reading about it and developed that skill to a certain extent. My Arabist friends really didn't like the situation at all, because in those days, - I don't know if it's true now - Lebanon was closed - Jordan was the most comfortable post for any Arabist to be in, and I'd taken one of their slots, so I was fortunate. They were less so. And it was a wonderful place to tour about, and have barbecues in the desert. I think I went to Petra accompanying official visitors over twenty times, and I liked it more and more each time I went. My wife was also very busy there. She worked in several Palestinian refugee camps, dealing with disabled children, which gave me insights I would never have been able to have as an ordinary diplomat. So that was a very stimulating time for us both.

MM Why was our relationship with Jordan so important?

HS For historical reasons really. Churchill created Jordan. King Hussein went to Harrow and to Sandhurst and he modelled himself and the Army on the rather old-fashioned British Army - pre-War British Army - ethos. Britain at that time was punching above its weight in the Arab/Israel issue, and was closely involved in the negotiations. Jordan was a key player - so there was a mutual interest there. We didn't give Jordan much aid, but we gave quite a lot of military cooperation.

MM Was Glubb Pasha still there?

HS No, he'd gone.

MM - I can't remember what date.

HS Oh, quite a while before then.

MM Must have been the 1970s. But still his historic links obviously persisted, well probably still do?

HS They do. They do, because of course his son also followed in his footsteps and is Anglophile and Anglophone. But the other thing that happened there was the start of the first *intifada* – the first revolt by Palestinian youths in the Occupied Territories, which occurred just before I left; it must have been November 1988 or so. That was the sort of negative turning point. The hopes for progress became dashed with that.

MM Progress within Jordan?

HS Progress over Arab/Israel. But it also gave me an opportunity to visit places like Gaza and Hebron; to Tel Aviv and so on. Places which were politically difficult for my Ambassador to go to, but easier for me to go to being inconspicuous and able to do assessments.

MM A fascinating period.

HS It was. In retrospect, the knowledge I acquired about Islam – Muslim and Arabic customs – stood me in very good stead in three subsequent postings.

MM I can imagine. Four years later you were Head of Western European Department.

Head of Western European Department, 1989

HS Yes. I was very keen to get back to London.

MM Why?

HS Well it was funny – I liked being in London – the centre of power as it was. It was partly also that my wife, as she never ceases to remind me, did not marry a diplomat and by no stretch of the imagination considered herself a diplomatic wife. She had a career of her own, and she was able to pursue that more easily in Britain. She was a nurse, then a midwife and developed on from there, to become what she is now, which is a psychotherapist. The studying for that she did through the Open University when we were in Britain. It was difficult to continue that in Jordan, though she did so, then she carried on in Britain. Again the cards fell very much in my favour because I came back as Head of Western European Department in April 1989, and what was completely unforeseeable then was that the Berlin Wall fell later that year, and Western European Department was also dealing with Germany. That period, 1989 – 91, of course, saw all the negotiations for the unification of Germany. Now you might think, what's that got to do with Britain? In fact it had a great deal to do with Britain, because of the status of Berlin, which was of course, still occupied by the four powers – Russia, United States, France and Britain. We had, by formal agreement, both rights and responsibilities in relation to Berlin, and these had to be negotiated away. So there were some very intense, and sometimes rather bitter, negotiations called the 2+4 Talks, which took place at this time, and they were very difficult, particularly internally within Britain, partly because of Mrs Thatcher's attitude.

MM Could you expand on 2+4?

HS Well the 2+4 were the two Germanys - that's the two; and the four were the four powers, and it was necessary for them to have talks. That system of 2+4 was established in February 1990, and led to a whole series of meetings at official level. Our delegation comprised four people, of whom I was the number two, as Head of the Department. We also had a lawyer, Michael Wood, who subsequently became the Foreign Office's Legal Adviser; a note taker, Jonathan Powell, who subsequently became Mr Blair's Chief of Staff; and the Head of the Delegation was John Weston, who became Ambassador to NATO and the UN. But Mrs Thatcher managed to get herself on record as saying "Never in my lifetime would Germany unify," which of course incensed the Germans. M. Mitterrand was saying exactly the same thing privately to Mrs Thatcher; so they were winding each other up. But of course he never said it in public. So British motives were deeply suspect throughout these negotiations. In fact British motives, leaving aside the Prime Minister's personal opinion, were very honourable. The real issue of concern was what the stance of the Soviet Union would be. Since we didn't know what the motives of the Soviet Union were - we didn't realise they were on the edge of break up - we feared that they would insist that they should retain rights to retain troops in East Germany, and if that were to be the case, it would mean that a unified Germany, including East Germany, which would be part of NATO, would include the presence of Soviet troops. And that we British regarded, I think rightly, as quite unacceptable. So that was the nub of the issue right up to the final Ministerial Conference in Moscow, where it was resolved. And I shook hands with Gorbachev.

MM That's wonderful really. What was the attitude of the Germans? Were you dealing with Kohl?

HS Yes. Chancellor Kohl - of course he and Mrs Thatcher absolutely did not get on. They would sit together at dinner and would not talk to each other a single word. There was real personal animosity between them, stoked up by Jonathan Powell's brother, Charles. I can reveal this because a Minute found its way to the press, not from me, which recorded that famous meeting at No 10 with a group of academics. I remember being asked to advise on which academics should be invited, and I did so.

Most of them were invited, but one or two of them who were known to have views that were contrary to those of the Prime Minister, were not invited, which I thought was very sad, because they were very respectable academics. Charles Powell wrote a very colourful account of that meeting which, according to the academics who went, they regarded as a completely disastrous meeting, basically because they gave a line of advice that was clearly not welcome.

MM Very difficult to advise Mrs Thatcher apparently?

HS Well, I think that the general view of the academics was that the unification of Germany was both inevitable and desirable, and neither of those ideas found favour.

MM What about the French? Did they really think that was not a good thing?

HS Mitterrand had deep reservations. I think based on the history of France. But they went along with it. It was the Americans who seized the role, which I personally thought should have been assumed by Britain, which was as the friendly mentor of Germany. They quickly assessed the situation. Condoleezza Rice was involved because she was a Soviet expert, and although she was not part of the negotiating team, she came along. But it was the Americans who took the lead. I think Britain had a very interesting role, because Michael Wood was, I think, the world's living expert on Berlin law, so when there was a legal matter, the weight of the pronouncements of the British delegation was very considerable, and deferred to even by the Germans. The other way we had a great advantage was a technical one, of craft, and that was because we were better at English than anybody else. The negotiations all took place in English, although sometimes with translation; the documents were produced in English, and this was the day before the very quick and small laptops. We used to ensure that we took along a laptop and printer so when one was haggling over words, we produced texts on bits of paper, in real time, and circulated them round the meeting room. And often it was felicitous British phrases which came to be accepted, and of course that was very useful because sometimes people would have fundamental disagreements in their own languages. If a seemingly neutral - and we were neutral - Brit came along and said - I think this is what you mean, this is how it would be in English that was a face-saving device. This wasn't

unique to these negotiations. It's a common practice, but it played well. It could be very useful, and it could break logjams.

MM It just shows how vital it is to have people who are really skilled at our own language.

HS The craft I think is very important. Throughout my career I first had to learn the wretched craft, and then found myself correcting other people when I became Assistant Head of Southern European Department, I think I spent twenty five years correcting other people's drafts. Even in my last job, my Private Secretary, a highly educated young man, I lamented to him one day that in a report he'd written there wasn't a single semi-colon and he really should get his girlfriend to give him "*Eat, Shoots and Leaves*" for Christmas, which had just come out. I was delighted to find out that she did. He couldn't punctuate, because I think parsing sentences is rarely taught in schools.

MM Right.

HS It is a craft and one which it takes a lot of working at.

MM How fascinating. That clearly was probably one of the most important negotiations that have occurred in the past sixty years?

HS Yes, in retrospect its importance diminishes. It diminished of course as the Soviet Union collapsed. We didn't know that at the time. So it seemed incredibly important. It also was a negotiation, which really didn't win us too many points. By virtue of history; we had to be part of it. But the way it had to be conducted, because of the views of Number 10 Downing Street, meant that we didn't really make friends. The Americans thought we were behaving crassly, and the Germans intensely disliked it and regarded it as insulting. Some of the German literature makes no bones about that.

MM That's extremely unfortunate, to put it mildly. Anyway your next move was still in London.

Head of Security Co-ordination Department, 1991

HS Still in London. When Germany united, I felt that life in peaceful Western European Department would never be the same. I mean it was seventeen countries and generally and in times in peace, as it were, it was a very dull Department. Its main role was to co-ordinate briefs from other departments for Ministers when they were visiting the capitals. These were NATO Departments and EU Departments, and again I was correcting other people's drafts from other Departments. I pointed out that my Department had just reduced from seventeen to sixteen countries. I want to do something else, I said. I'm bored. So they put me into what was called in those days Security Co-ordination Department, which dealt with the international aspects of terrorism. There again, I fell on my feet, because it was at that time that Terry Waite and John McCarthy were still kidnapped in Lebanon. Because of the thawing in relations with Iran, they came to be released, and I actually had the privilege and interest of picking up Terry Waite from Damascus and ferrying him and Jack Mann, also one of the men kidnapped, back to London. In addition there was a lot of terrorism going on.

On my first day in my new Department, the first morning, I heard an explosion, and two IRA mortars landed in the garden of Number 10 Downing Street. Later that morning I was summoned to see the Permanent Under Secretary to find his windows shattered. So that was a very dramatic start. We did a lot of exercising - terrorism incidents with the Metropolitan Police, the military, and the SAS, and we were the link people with the SAS at Hereford. Our job in these exercises was to feed in verisimilitude from the foreign angle. But there was another aspect, which was also interesting. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, all the East European intelligence agencies became objects of intense interest to our intelligence agencies, and whole lots of liaison mechanisms developed. Since it was difficult to establish direct liaison between the intelligence agencies, the Foreign Office became hosts to these, and I found myself as leader of delegations, comprising lots of people in dark glasses and mackintoshes. I took them to the country and we'd have a meeting, and they'd all disappear off into corners and I was almost left drinking coffee on my own, dressed in a smart suit while they conducted their nefarious business.

MM Were these foreign intelligence people?

HS These were British intelligence people going out to meet foreign intelligence people in former satellite countries. After that I was told that I would be due for promotion, subject to the decisions of the board, of course. In the meantime I should do something else. I was then asked to head a Bill unit to produce a Bill before Parliament to regularise the existence of the Secret Intelligence Service. Up to that point, there was no confirmation that any such thing as MI6, or the Secret Intelligence Service, existed. John Major decided, famously, that he wanted to “sweep away the cobwebs of secrecy”. The whole of that veil of secrecy had become a farce, and it was decided to regularise the existence of the SIS by means of an Act of Parliament. My job, with a small team, was to draw up the criteria which should be delivered to Parliamentary Counsel to enable Parliamentary Counsel to draw up a Bill. There was an Act of Parliament which dealt with the Security Service and one which dealt with GCHQ, but nothing which dealt with SIS. I was not a spy myself, but I had to learn the secrets of spying if we were to ensure that they were, as it were, captured by the Bill. There was very strong support from the then Head of the Secret Intelligence Service, “C”, but at the next level down were some old Cold War warriors who didn’t like the idea at all, and when I and a couple of my colleagues called on them and basically said - Tell me, Sir, what you do? - I got some very sniffy replies. But I’d learned patience by this time and I remember saying to one of them - Well, of course, it’s up to you. But I’m not sure you realise - because it was a legal point which had only become apparent quite recently - that there are certain activities which, if you conduct them abroad, they would be treated the same way as if they were conducted in Britain, and they would be regarded as criminal. If there was any evidence that you were acting in that way abroad, you would be liable to criminal prosecution. And these people didn’t know that. That was one of the main motivating factors behind the Act, because somebody discovered - I don’t know if it was a new point of law, but discovered that point of law. The process involved some intellectual struggle, as it were. We had on our team Elisabeth Wilmshurst, who subsequently resigned over Iraq, who was one of the keenest, least compromising legal minds in the Foreign Office, if not the keenest. There was also a young man who had been Private Secretary to the Controller of SIS, and someone from the Home Office, who had

expertise in legal drafting. The Foreign Office had no such expertise as they seldom produce Bills. That doughty team of four was a wonderful size, because you could just sit round a table and brainstorm. But we also had to deal with the handling of the Bill through Parliament and therefore had to prepare answers to possible Parliamentary Questions, and devise a strategy to ensure that it was supported in Parliament, which meant looking at all Members of Parliament and seeing who should be approached by whom, to say what. Because what we didn't want was for the whole thing to be launched with controversy. This wasn't spinning or fixing, but it would have been fatal to the Bill if people had not understood what was its object, and had decided to oppose it publicly on ill-informed grounds. Having done that it would be very difficult to shift them.

MM Had this all arisen out of human rights legislation or what?

HS No, I don't think so. No. I think it was two things. It was all stimulated by the Deputy Under Secretary in the Foreign Office who was responsible for these matters, and who fingered me. I'd worked very closely with him.

MM Who was that?

HS Nigel Broomfield, who subsequently became Ambassador in Bonn. He pushed it within the Administration, but the Bill also reflected the political view that it was really silly not to admit to having a foreign intelligence service. Every other country had one.

MM And everyone knew that we had one.

HS Now we were entering cyber age it was absurd not to do so.

MM You said at the beginning of this section that Iran had suddenly become more accessible. What had brought that about?

HS I can't remember, because I wasn't dealing with it. The anti-British animosity after the fall of the Shah was moderating. The anti-British sentiment was very

powerful when Terry Waite was kidnapped, but after five years or so, the strategic dynamics changed.

MM Did the release of the American hostages in Iran have any bearing on the imprisonment of the hostages in Lebanon?

HS As regards the influence of Iran, there were American, British, and Irish hostages in Beirut and over a period they were gradually released. Keenan was one of them. I think Waite was towards the end. It was that sort of pattern which gave us hope. We were never quite certain whether the British would be released or not, because we seemed to be particular targets and we had little leverage. It was also at the time of the Oliver North affair.

MM The strange relationship between Terry Waite and North?

HS And that was something which we had to pay very close attention to. There were TV documentaries about it all.

MM Well anyway that's all water under the bridge now, isn't it? The fact is that in 1993 you did get the promotion and went to Delhi.

Minister and Deputy High Commissioner, New Delhi, 1993

HS Yes I went to Delhi. Nigel Broomfield, who had been my boss during my spell at Security Co-ordination Department, had said to me, coincidentally, some months before, that he had been number two in Delhi and that if I were to be offered a choice between an ambassadorship somewhere and something like being number two in Delhi, I should give it very careful thought, and not be seduced by the possibility of an ambassadorship. I put in for Delhi. I was therefore delighted when I got it. Again it was a matter of luck. The big Indian economic reforms took place at the end of 1991, and that transformed the country we see now, India's view on the world, and the world's view of India. This great elephant of a self-reliant economy on the verge of bankruptcy suddenly shifted. While pretending that they were still self-reliant and following the traditions of Gandhi and Nehru, they actually began to sweep away

what they called the “licence raj”, which was still there. The reforms certainly swept a lot of it away, and liberalised the economy to let foreigners in. During the period I was there - 1993-1996 - a very special relationship developed between India and Britain, thanks to the then High Commissioner, Sir Nicholas Fenn. An Indo-British Partnership Initiative - IBPI - was established. We were interested in it because we wanted to develop a new relationship, distinct from the old colonial one, which was founded on historical commonality and close educational links, and cricket, and humour and all that sort of thing, and we wanted to improve investment in both directions - investment in Britain and investment in India, and trade, given that there was an enormous market there. We had a head start because we were the biggest single historical investor in India. The Americans didn't understand it. The Japanese always got ill. The French didn't speak the language. So we had a lot going for us.

MM The Germans?

HS The Germans didn't really have a look in. We had a big aid programme. The Indian interest was that if they could demonstrate that they could do good, reliable business with a country like Britain, by implication it should be possible for other countries to do business with them. So in a sense we would blaze the trail. Among the more enlightened Indians, that was a very powerful asset. So they were prepared to have this very special relationship with us, not for any sentimental reason or the colour of our eyes, but for cold calculation. The situation has now changed of course, and that cold calculation does not lean towards Britain but towards America. The only difficulty was that these first hopes which we in Delhi were trumpeting back to Whitehall took a bit of a tumble, in the sense that the Indian economy took a downturn for a few years. But it has now surged forward again, so what's happening now - we were a little bit ahead of the game - we thought would happen in about 2000. There is now absolutely no doubt about India's movement towards becoming a global power. There was also a concern about the possibility of India acquiring nuclear weapons, which they did in 1998. In December 1995 the Prime Minister, Narasimha Rao, very nearly tested nuclear weapons, and among the factors which may have dissuaded him were repeated threats from the United States and Britain about what we would do if he did.

MM Which we didn't carry out?

HS Which we didn't carry out, as was proved in 1998.

MM The Indians were obviously fully aware of that?

HS I think by 1998 they were prepared to call the bluff. In 1996, bearing in mind their economic aspirations, I think they may have been genuinely concerned about economic sanctions. Two years later, they'd moved on; different Prime Minister, different political imperatives within the body politic in India. A BJP prime minister.

MM Which one was that?

HS Bajpai.

MM So where did you live in India?

HS My wife and I lived in the compound, right next to the shop. The High Commissioner was fortunate in living further away in a magnificent colonial residence. But there was always some crisis or other whether political, consular or immigration - we had a massive immigration role - we had the biggest bilateral aid programme, which I had day to day responsibility for in a broad sense. We had our own development office. So, there was no privacy. People would just walk through the front door without knocking and say 'You need to know this', or something. We toyed with the idea of, rather than have a place in the country, hiring a flat in town to which we could escape, but it never came to anything.

MM Development - were you able to keep some kind of eye over the development programme?

HS Yes, in a broad sense, because often the Development Ministry or the Foreign Office wanted an assessment on things or might want political judgment about some future plan. And in order to be able to do that, I had a great excuse to go to see local development projects. During my first year I travelled extensively in India. There

were then twenty five States and I travelled to twenty of them; the very small five up in the far North East took just too long a time to reach. But I went to some very obscure places quite beyond the reach of any form of tourism, and the Western Ghats, forests and so on; absolutely fascinating. But after a year that came to an abrupt halt because of some kidnaps in Kashmir. There were two sets of kidnaps in two successive summers which really tied me to the 'phone because I was in charge of operations and it meant being available twenty four hours a day in case there was a 'phone call about a breakthrough.

MM Was it still Nicholas Fenn as High Commissioner?

HS Yes. Then David Gore-Booth took over later in late 1995, so we overlapped briefly. There were two aspects to the kidnaps. There were the real efforts to try to get them released and in the first set we were successful. A British man and the young sixteen year old son of a British journalist were kidnapped. We mobilised every form of leverage, including religious broadcasts, and they were released. We discovered from them that their kidnappers - they were young people, mujahideen - would listen to the BBC Urdu Service on their portable radios, and hear the calls from Muslims to release the hostages in the name of Islam. The problem then became how to engineer the release in a way that allowed them to escape. That came out pretty happily. The people kidnapped in the following year included a German, two Americans, two British and a Norwegian. These events really dragged on and ended tragically. The Norwegian was decapitated at a fairly early stage, and the others - they were kidnapped in about June or July - all communications stopped with a final 'phone call to me in early December. But since we had neither proof of life nor death, the search for them continued for months afterwards. The other aspect, which was very important and labour intensive, was dealing with the relatives, and with public opinion. We took great care over this, because it was a real humanitarian disaster, but also because, frankly, the British newspapers were dying for stories, and the sort of stories they would have loved to have were the callousness and ineffectualness of Government Departments. We were determined that this should not happen. So the relatives were put up in the High Commission - we looked after all of the nationalities, and we worked very closely with the other Embassies. One of the relatives was an East German, who was a girlfriend of a young man who was

kidnapped and so she was, as it were, a relative, and we treated her as such, as if she were a next-of-kin. The German Embassy took a rather different view of it, and decided she had no locus, and there were terrific accusations in the German press that this reflected prejudice against East Germans; that she was a bit of a hippy and that the German Embassy were holding this against her. Her family took it up; there were questions in Parliament; the German Ambassador had to answer to Parliament. For our part, I am happy to say, we got nothing but praise from the Germans. Now that was partly as a result of my own experience with dealing with the relatives of Terry Waite and Jack Mann and John McCarthy, because it was so important that they be kept informed. We took a strategic decision to be very open, honest and frank with the relatives, and rely on their discretion not to reveal the secrets of our intelligence. We shared intelligence with them so that they were kept up to date. That was, if you like, a gamble, or it was just a matter of trust, and that trust was never breached.

MM And you had them in the compound?

HS We had them in the compound staying in flats there, and we could see them every day. Eventually they decided to leave, but of course it was a difficult time for everybody because it affected the whole mission.

MM One hears very little about good news, of course.

HS Stuff has been written about Terry Waite in his book, and then by the *Telegraph* journalist Con Coughlin about the Terry Waite kidnap, and of course McCarthy and Keenan wrote about theirs, but there hasn't really been much written up about the others. Basically there's not a great deal to say. Those in Kashmir were kidnapped by ruthless terrorists and subsequently murdered.

It all came as a bit of a shock, because up to then the conventional wisdom was that the Kashmiri militants would not risk kidnapping foreigners, as distinct from killing Indians, because they wouldn't want to alienate foreign public opinion. But that in a sense was the beginning of change of the Islamist view that foreigners were infidels and they were legitimate targets. At the time of the first kidnaps it was a shock and a

surprise. That said, the advice to the British public was - don't go there. So these people had actually gone there contrary to public advice, but then they often did.

MM Well they were foreigners anyway - would they have got advice?

HS No, no these were British people. In the first case they were two British people, in the second there were two British people, two Americans, a Norwegian and a German. So the British people got the advice and I think the American advice was similar. But at that age I would probably have done the same. British Foreign Office advice was regarded as fuddy-duddy.

MM They don't know what they're talking about.

HS Over-careful. And all it enabled us to do if we cared to was to say I told you so, after the fact, which wouldn't do any good at all.

MM A pretty interesting period, altogether.

HS Yes. For very many reasons. And also in arguably the second largest Islamic community in the world; again a lot of exposure to Islam.

MM Is it bigger than Indonesia?

HS No that's the largest. India and Pakistan each claim that they're the second, and then there's Bangladesh after that.

MM You returned to London?

Director, South and South East Asia, FCO, 1996

HS I returned to London as Director for South and South East Asia, which included Indonesia, which was the biggest single issue of my time there until the nuclear tests in 1998, and the Indonesia issue was complicated because of the fall of Suharto. It coincided with Robin Cook as Foreign Minister, who revolutionised British arms

sales policy. The problem there was in a sense Indonesia, which became a test case. It was decided that we wouldn't sell arms which could be used for repression. The change represented a big shift from Alan Clark's Conservative policy. He was prepared to sell arms to anybody anywhere, apparently. Hence we had the Sandline enquiry. Robin Cook wanted to change the Conservative policy, but there were some real problems, because there was the issue of what do you do about a contract for spare parts, which had been entered into before the changing rules, in good faith and legally? There were tremendous squabbles about this. It took, as far as I remember, the Attorney General to point out that, if the Government decided that a company could not proceed with a sale - with maintenance and spare parts as a result of a contract earlier - the Government would be liable to compensate it. So you were talking about hundreds of millions of pounds. There was a rift between Number 10 Downing Street, which was very pragmatic about such matters, and the Foreign Office, and I found myself in the middle, which was a very uncomfortable position indeed. I went round South-East Asia with Robin Cook in August 1997. We found ourselves in Malaysia I think when the news came through about the death of the Princess of Wales, in August 1997. The first Government Minister to comment on it was not the Prime Minister, but Robin Cook and we had held up the 'plane at the airfield so he could give an interview to the BBC reporter who was travelling with us once the news was confirmed, which I thought was a strange thing to do. Because of the difference of time zone, we saw the breaking news on the television as we were getting up and as we were changing to catch the 'plane, whereas this was the middle of the night in the UK.

MM Why was he so keen?

HS I think you'd better ask a politician that question.

MM Publicity obviously. What did you think of Mr Cook?

HS Well he was my political master. But I found it difficult because a lot of the advice which I gave him was not welcome. He had done a lot of studies on Kashmir and was very knowledgeable about it. But I advised him very strongly, repeatedly and in writing about Kashmir issues.

MM You told him that you should avoid the subject basically?

HS I told him that certain lines of approach would be regarded by India as unfriendly.

MM Like speaking the truth?

HS Well it came to a head when, during the Royal Visit to India and Pakistan to mark the 50th Anniversary of Independence, October 1997, the Foreign Secretary accompanied Her Majesty to both places and contrary to custom, conducted substantive talks when doing so. And in Pakistan he informed the Pakistanis that he was ready to act as a mediator with India, and of course the Pakistanis immediately leaked that because the need for mediation had always been a very strong element of the Pakistani position. That of course incensed the Indians, and partly because of that, Her Majesty's subsequent visit to New Delhi can only be described as a disaster. The then High Commissioner, Sir David Gore-Booth, was publicly humiliated by the Indian press. They didn't want to go for the Foreign Secretary himself, or still less the Queen.

MM And so they blamed him?

HS They blamed him for a whole lot of things. But in doing so made their displeasure very clear against Britain. It was a very difficult period, because there had been, what, eighteen years under Conservative rule before that? There was a deep distrust among parts of the Labour Government of British Government officials, and particularly of the Foreign Office, and I think, quite wrongly, there was a feeling that we must all be Tories. Or if we weren't Tories, we were dyed in the wool by infection. But actually, I think, we were honest people trying to do an honest job, and in some cases pretty expert on both sides of the issue; and we tried to give impartial advice about the consequences. But after eighteen years in opposition, the then Ministers had developed their own system of advisers with whom they had strong personal links, they trusted their integrity, and they preferred to take that advice. Now, that's fine. They were entitled to do that. But a lot of these difficulties were on sensitive issues. Advice is coloured by intelligence material, and that intelligence

material is not available to outsiders, and can make a very considerable difference to the nature of the advice.

MM But surely intelligence briefing is shared between the Government and leaders of the Opposition?

HS To a certain extent it is. That's right. And certainly before the Elections, as is the custom, they would be given intelligence briefings under Privy Council rules. Also I remember being summoned to a briefing being given by Deputy Under Secretaries to Robin Cook and Charles Clarke, who was then his political adviser, and I was rather surprised to be summoned because I was more junior than the Deputy Under Secretaries. But I soon discovered why, because after the Deputy Under Secretaries had given their presentations, which were greeted almost without exception, in total silence by Robin Cook, he then focused exclusively on Kashmir, and I was put in the hot seat, because I knew about Kashmir having been there. It was a very tough interrogation. It was clear that some of the opinions I was expressing were not welcome.

MM What about this business of the arms contracts - spare parts and maintenance contracts? Were you able to pin Cook down on that?

HS Well that wasn't really my job. In a sense I could advise, but the ultimate decisions really were thrashed out at a much higher level, because we were talking about not just policy, but real commercial knock-on effects and the law. So they were resolved really between Number 10, the law officers and Mr Cook. As an official, one's job was to present before him all the various factors, and of course come up with a recommendation. We were paid to do that. And because we were aware of what the factors were, the recommendations weren't always welcome.

MM What a difficult situation!

HS I wasn't the only one in it. The Permanent Under Secretary, John Kerr, had a very difficult time.

MM Yes. I've interviewed him.

HS I don't know how much he has revealed. I'm just wondering how much I should have revealed.

MM He was very forthcoming.

HS Good.

MM Have you got anything further to say about this?

HS Maybe I should just talk about the nuclear tests?

MM Oh yes. Terribly important.

HS In the Spring of 1998, India surprised the world by testing some nuclear weapons. Pakistan followed suit. This led to massive international diplomacy and it happened to coincide with a time when Britain held the Presidency of the EU, and the Chairmanship of the G8, so as a result of that coincidence, we were in the lead for mobilising international opinion after the act. And we were also therefore architects of UN Security Council Resolution 1180 which followed G8 and EU coordination. The reaction was mainly focused on the arms control aspect. But the discussions revealed the weakness of our hand. Some attempts were made at sanctions, but the Development Minister didn't want to cut off aid because of the effect on poor people. She did cut off aid when Musharraf took over, but that was another matter. And nobody had an appetite for commercial sanctions. So it was left to various Resolutions which basically told India and Pakistan to do something which they would never ever do, which was to give up their nuclear weapons, and turn the clock back. There were some gestures on the military front; some freezing of military relations. The Ministry of Defence deeply resented that, on the grounds that, at a time when the military were going to assume even more importance, that was a time to develop good relations, not cut them off. And I became deeply unpopular with the Ministry of Defence because I advocated them, and the reason I advocated them was because there was nothing else, and there had to be something. It couldn't be aid, it

couldn't be commercial. There had to be something, and I argued at interminable meetings in the Cabinet Office, that it was appropriate that a military gesture should be followed by a military gesture. Ministry of Defence representatives were very angry, but so it came to pass, because there was an inevitability about it, politically that is. The cases against anything else were very strong.

MM Robin Cook would be all in favour of that.

HS Yes. It was in tune with his political thinking.

MM Ethical foreign policy. Help to make up for Kashmir.

HS Yes. The paradoxical effect was that such sanctions as there were had a much greater effect on Pakistan than on India, because the Pakistani economy was much smaller, and because the effect of public opinion was much greater on Pakistan than on India. But India was the country that had initiated the tests, so that was rather unfair. In a way that's how it came to look to the world, I think. There was a shift of opinion which became slightly sympathetic to Pakistan, but this was completely destroyed when Musharraf decided on the Kargil adventure - an act of blatant territorial aggression - in 1999. The Pakistani story was that the mujahideen spontaneously decided to take some territory administered by India in Kashmir, which they regarded as belonging to Pakistan. This took place in the winter at a time when the Indian forces had withdrawn because of the snows. The action was actually masterminded by Musharraf, and involved a lot of Pakistani regular forces. Even the Chinese, strong allies of Pakistan, condemned that. That happened shortly after I left the Directorship. I left that job in 1998 and Kargil took place in 1999.

MM You then left the Foreign Office to do a sabbatical?

Sabbatical year at the Institute of Strategic Studies, 1999

HS I was given an option to go off and be Ambassador somewhere - the Philippines was mentioned. I really wanted to stay in the UK for longer; I had been there already two years. When I said no way did I want to be Ambassador in the Philippines - I'd

been there and didn't want to go there - the Chief Clerk very kindly said well you can do a secondment to industry or have a sabbatical, and I couldn't quite believe it. I said I had done my secondment in the Navy beforehand, as it were, so I'll do a sabbatical. I'm sure I can think of something to write about. And that's what I decided to do, and I must say my future in the Office was looking very bleak at that time. I had fallen out with the Foreign Secretary. I had fallen out with the Permanent Under Secretary and I was really seriously considering leaving the Service and was looking around for other jobs. I thought my career had come to an end. But anyway until such time as I'd found another job, I would do a sabbatical and I thought this was seriously an opportunity to get another string to my bow. One possibility was an attachment to St Antony's, Oxford, but that meant being separated, at least during the week, from my wife in Sussex. I knew a specialist in Indian Development Affairs at Sussex University, and approached him, and he very kindly arranged a Visiting Fellowship to Sussex and I had ideas of doing a thesis on the growth of the Indian States, as distinct from the centre. He dissuaded me from that, saying it required more expertise than I had, which was very true. I think I then thought I might do something about the nuclear issue, and he strongly recommended that. As a result of that the Institute of Strategic Studies said - Well why don't you come and do it with us, because that's our field. That was in London and I could work mainly at home. I started after a few months of commuting to Sussex University reading up about nuclear issues there, I transferred to IISS, and wrote an Adelphi Paper called the "Causes and Consequences of the South Asian Nuclear Tests" which is a hundred page monograph. It was an analysis of the motivations and consequences of both sides, and it really was dispassionate. I had no axes to grind. I was glad that both my Indian friends and my Pakistani friends regarded it as neutral and objective. I was rather pleased with it. I was dismayed that an academic I knew in the United States was writing a book on the Indian bomb at the same time. I thought, well, this going to come out before mine. I'm going to be completely scooped. My work will be useless. But he very kindly sent me a copy of his book, and it was 650 pages and it was only about India, and mine had 100 pages, and was about both. Of course, I wanted officials to read it in Britain and in Pakistan and India - and 100 pages, which included footnotes, is readable by officials, and it was read and I was pleased. It was during that time, when as I say, I thought my career was at its end that the Pakistan

job came up rather unexpectedly, because the then High Commissioner left rather sooner than expected.

High Commissioner, Islamabad, 2000-2003

HS I was asked if I was prepared to go there at short notice. That short notice sort of stretched a bit, so after a year with the sabbatical I did about three months of Urdu then went out Pakistan.

MM You got a bit of Urdu?

HS I got a bit of Urdu at SOAS which I greatly enjoyed. Not enough to be fluent, but enough to be able to read speeches convincingly which had been transliterated into English. You only actually had to say a few words to get a round of applause, and if you did five minutes worth the roof came off. I always made a point of doing that. This was to an audience which could speak and understand English very well. My successor could speak the language, and I wish I could have. It would have made a lot of difference, but it helped to be able to do a bit.

MM How did you find Islamabad?

HS Again it was fortuitous. Musharraf had engaged in a coup which was very popular in Pakistan in October 1999 and I arrived in spring 2000. He'd been there about six months. Robin Cook had declared that there was no such thing as a good coup, and all aid was cut off to Pakistan, which had been our third biggest bilateral programme. Musharraf was deeply unpopular in the UK, despite being very popular, which he is not now, in Pakistan. But after six months or so, Musharraf genuinely made a very good start. He started doing all sorts of things which we thoroughly approved of, and it was rather good for me that, at my first meeting with the Finance Minister - it took me a while to see Musharraf personally - I was able to tell him that we were resuming £15 million worth of aid. That was a nice opening ploy for any new Head of Mission to be able to make. But then - this was before 9/11 - in 2000, the issues were democracy and human rights; constantly pressing for the repeal of bad laws and discriminatory laws against women; co-operation about forced marriages,

which was very successful, and similar things. We were under instructions to engage in a sort of preaching, as it were. But again access was very good, and I found that the whole political community who objected to the military regime were constantly coming to my High Commission to talk to me because the British were perceived as being both understanding and influential, more so than others. Similarly access to the government was very great, so I was able to have very long substantive meeting with Musharraf at my first courtesy call. His aides were constantly indicating that my time was up, but he continued to answer my questions and carried on answering.

MM Did your Military Attaché have good access?

HS No, as is the case with India. The military are very secretive and only certain people are allowed to see Military Attachés, so really, in both countries, at that time, and it is still the case, the Attachés spent most of their time entertaining each other. I was invited very kindly by the Naval Attaché every year to the Trafalgar Night dinner as a former naval person, and the top brass of the Navy all turned up, but there was absolutely no question of talking shop. It was cricket, the weather, travelling. They would have been deeply embarrassed if we'd tried to talk business and they certainly would not have engaged in it. They had a very fine sense of security.

MM Were they afraid that you were going to spill the beans to the Indians or something of that sort? Maybe vice-versa in India?

HS Yes, maybe. But I think it was more that Attachés were seen to be regarded as spies.

MM Which they are. Well it's the nature of their job, isn't it?

HS Well certainly their job is to gain as good an appreciation of the order of battle of their countries as possible.

MM It must have been very grieving for the Ministry of Defence, because they obviously spend a lot of money on linkages with India and Pakistan?

HS Yes. Certainly in the case of India, of course, it was perceived as being a very lucrative, potential market for defence sales. When I was in India, enormous efforts were being made to sell the Hawk trainer aircraft which took well over a decade to come to fruition. Pakistan was more difficult, because of their links, as we regarded it, with terrorism, so whole areas of arms sales were completely off limits.

MM Oh really. And was there much evidence of this linkage?

HS There was definite linkage before 9/11 and subsequently between the Pakistani intelligence organisations, Musharraf himself and what we regarded as terrorist organisations. Very substantial links - links directed against India, and of course the ISI were absolutely hand in glove with the Taliban.

MM So very difficult? What was living there like?

HS Well, before 9/11 it was terrific. We had a very modern concrete High Commission/Embassy, and my Residence was modern and concrete, and was just across the courtyard, so again I had absolutely no privacy. People would, as in New Delhi, just walk in with telegrams and so on from the High Commission. But it was very comfortable. It was a very family-friendly post. The birth rate within the High Commission community was significantly higher than the UK norm. Servants were available. Cost of living was cheap. Pakistanis generally were extremely friendly. There were some problems for young women, over the way they dressed, but it was perfectly manageable. It is a beautiful country, so travelling for the adventurous was just glorious. You would always have some people who claimed that it wasn't like Bromley, but those people are everywhere. But for most people it was a terrific posting. The job was interesting; absolutely on the front line for the political people. Immigration - we became the single biggest British immigration outfit in the world in terms of the numbers of applications that we dealt with. We had an enormous number of immigration staff, though that had its own problems. Before 9/11 we were getting queues of up to 4,000 a day, which had great security implications and lots of attempts at bribery.

Tape 2, Side A

MM Here we are on the second tape and talking about your early days in Pakistan as High Commissioner in Islamabad. What were the main problems in those days?

HS The main issues were democracy, human rights, gender issues, forced marriages, as distinct from arranged marriages, massive immigration issues.

MM Into the UK?

HS Yes. Tremendous pressure to come to the UK, which was coupled with a lot of fraud. So that was quite difficult to manage. And nuclear issues, since Pakistan had only recently tested the bomb, and we had security and non-proliferation concerns. With the democracy issue came the need to be closely alongside the political parties and civil society who favoured an early return to democracy.

MM Did you come across Benazir Bhutto?

HS She was in exile at that time, but I first met her when I went out with John Major to Pakistan, when he was Prime Minister, in January 1997, and I met her several times subsequently, before she was assassinated, but she never set foot in Pakistan while I was there. She would have been arrested if she had done so because of the criminal charges against her. But *in absentia* it was always clear that she was the dominant force of her party, the PPP, which had got the single largest proportion of the vote in the elections in 2003. So she was an inimitable force leading an essentially feudal party, which was linked to the Bhutto name - her father.

MM She was the leading exponent of democracy?

HS She was said to be the leading exponent of democracy. She of course had been in office twice. Her periods of office came to an end prematurely, as was did those of her main political opponent, Nawaz Sharif. They both had two terms of being Prime Minister. The popular perception was that each of the terms was worse than the one before, and those, for instance, who advocated for women's rights were disappointed in her. I heard many people say how disappointed they were that once in office

Benazir Bhutto did not proceed with these rights, and the notorious Hudood ordinances remained on the statute book. Some of the old legislation has only recently been modified and improved by Musharraf. So I think Benazir proved to be a great disappointment to many of her Western supporters who made assumptions about her behaviour, possibly based on the fact that she was educated in the West, and appeared to be a Western figure. Actually the body politic in Pakistan is very complex, and the PPP particularly, which has its base in Sindh province, is very feudal. It's really a matter of vote-banks rather than democracy.

MM Is it possible to have democracy in Pakistan?

HS It might be, but it's never existed so far. It depends what you mean, of course, by democracy. It certainly should be possible to have greater democracy than exists at present, and a continuation of the present regime has very great disadvantages. I have always talked in terms of making progress towards democracy, rather than establishing democracy.

MM Because of this tendency to have a feudal society?

HS Part of it is a feudal society. It is also a tribal society in other parts. It is very complex, but it is also distorted by corruption and patronage, which exists in every democracy, so it is a matter of degree, just as you cannot really say that Britain is completely democratic. I think anybody who looks for a sort of neo-conservative application of democracy in Pakistan, Afghanistan or Iraq is on a hiding to nothing. It is a question of degree. I differ from those who can extrapolate from the statement that Pakistan never has been nor cannot be a democracy, and then go on to say, therefore a military regime is not too bad. That doesn't follow. The fact that Pakistan has been governed by the military for over half its history, which has had very damaging effects on civil society, the economy and the ethos of the nation. What we see at the moment is a sort of stranglehold by the army, which gives no opportunities for democracy to strengthen, and I think what I used to press for was the process rather than an outcome.

MM By that you mean arranging elections, and allowing the government to form out of an elected assembly?

HS Yes.

MM Rather than going through the army hierarchy?

HS Yes. But the elected assembly, if it is enlightened and sensible, would realise that the army has an important role to play, and should not humiliate it, which Nawaz Sharif tried to do, or sideline it. It is actually the only efficient institution in Pakistan, partly because the army has made sure no other institution is efficient. So you need a gradual process which acknowledges the efficiency and the importance of the military, while gradually replacing that power with some other power which is also efficient and trustworthy. The sadness has been that the series of political leaders before the last military coup made matters worse, rather than better.

MM Is it quite fair to say that the army has made sure that there are no other efficient organisations?

HS Yes, I think it is pretty fair to say that. It is partly the nature of the identity of Pakistan, a new nation created as a result of separateness from India, whereas India separated from the colonial power of Britain. Pakistan did not see its birth in those terms. And its make-up is very diverse. The Beluchis and Sindhis are very different from the Punjabis, whom they detest, and the Pathans on the North-West Frontier of Pakistan and Baluchistan are very different again. So you needed somebody to pull them together, and the two elements were Islam: the father of the nation, Jinnah, made it the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, although he was by no means a practising Muslim. And the other element, which has been kept alive by the army methodically since 1947, is the supposed injustice of Kashmir - the unfinished business of partition. That has been kept on the boil, and by keeping it on the boil, you preserve the importance of the army and you ensure that it has resources. So over the decades, public resources had been funnelled towards the army, which has the best education system; the only official education system, apart from Islamic education, in Pakistan. And the resources spent on social welfare are miniscule, and that is very bad for the nation. So

I think that is why my answer would be - Yes, it's been intentional on the part of the army, not necessarily primarily to ensure that there are no contenders, but more that that has been a result of their actions. So the biggest industries in Pakistan, are run by the army. And the army now - and this had got worse since Musharraf took over, because he has had to use his powers of patronage to keep the generals sweet, the army are now in increasingly civilian positions. There used to be one who ran the entire electricity and power system, but they also hold vice-chancellorships of universities. Rather like Mussolini made the trains run on time, in a sense they are the best qualified people for the job, because other qualified people emigrate. If you make these provisions, jobs for cronies in the army, what chance have you got to develop the skills and capacities of other people? So really the only other set-up which works is aspects of the commercial set-up, textiles and so on. But they're not entirely democratic.

MM Well the textile industry is presumably run by civilians.

HS Yes, that's right. But often on the basis of wealth and patronage. So in that sense unconventional. The big commercial firms are the province of a small number of wealthy families.

MM Did we do Pakistan a favour by allowing so much immigration from that country to the UK?

HS I am not sure that it affects Pakistan all that much in terms of doing them a favour or otherwise. I think that is more a question for Britain rather than Pakistan.

MM But we are allowing in, presumably, one of the most enterprising elements of their population?

HS Not particularly, actually. We are certainly allowing in - we've always done that - people who are well-qualified and wealthy. I think Britain has always encouraged those people to come here. But I think most of those, at least until 9/11, probably headed for the United States and still do. Historically, the people who come to Britain have not been the most well to do. They have been largely Kashmiris from

Mirpur, joining their families, as a result of the special provisions which were made for Mirpuris back in the 1950s, following the construction of the dam there. So, by far the biggest Pakistani population in Britain is of Kashmiri origin, and generally from a poor agricultural background. They are unlike the Indian community, which comes largely from Punjab and Gujarat, and often via Uganda, who are businessmen, shopkeepers, entrepreneurs. That has not been the case with the Pakistani community. And that brings you to British social questions of weak education and so on. The numbers concerned are quite large, but they are not large compared with the population of Pakistan.

MM Well, thank you very much indeed for that. Should we move on to Iraq?

HS Should we talk about post-9/11 in Pakistan? The position completely changed post 9/11. On 9/11 (11 September 2001), I was in a hotel room in Lahore the day before opening a new visa office in Lahore to cope with the growing numbers of people wishing to come to Britain. That evening I was having a reception for all the staff of the visa office to celebrate the opening next day, and I was just changing when I saw the television pictures of 9/11. It altered the situation because the Western approach of finger wagging at Musharraf, and pressing for democracy changed. We needed him on side to pursue what became known as Operation Enduring Freedom. First of all there was the bombing campaign in Afghanistan, then dealing with the Al Qaeda who were infiltrating - moving backwards and forwards between Afghanistan and Pakistan. That led to two developments. One we needed Musharraf on side when Pakistan was actively supporting the Taliban - they needed to change their policy, which they did quite quickly, but the leadership of the ISI, until Musharraf changed it, was going along in the old ways, and it continued to support terrorist groups. That all needed to change. But then after that there were major threats against Britain and the security threats against Britain and the UK.

MM From within Pakistan?

HS Yes. Al Qaeda and terrorist groups. We became a fortress, as a result of successive terrorist threats, we partially evacuated the High Commission on three

separate occasions, which was a post-war record in terms of the number and duration of the evacuations.

NN From Islamabad?

HS Yes. But the other thing that happened was that in December 2001, there was a major terrorist attack on the Indian parliament - the world's largest democracy - which the Indians accused the Pakistanis of being responsible for, and that led to intense anger on the part of the Indians. As a result of that the Indian Army mobilised for a year, and the Pakistanis mobilised in response; it was a very tense situation, because there was a judgment from Delhi - it wasn't my call, it was Delhi's call - that the Indians could well decide to take some military action in Kashmir, possibly in response to Kargil - they were still smarting from their defeat in Kargil in 1999. Many generals were itching to give the Pakistanis a bloody nose. Every War Game suggested that it was unlikely that the Indians would win a tactical battle in Kashmir, and that therefore a real risk of an escalation into another war as occurred in 1971. But this time the two countries had nuclear weapons, at a time when Musharraf had made clear that he was willing to use nuclear weapons to defend the integrity of the country. So the British government took a view that the risk of the use of nuclear weapons was not zero, and that risk was unacceptable. Jack Straw persuaded the Americans that it had to be taken seriously. The Americans were far more concerned about what was going on in the West of Pakistan and Afghanistan than they were in what was going on in the East with India. We took a different view, a much more apocalyptic view. As a result of that, and there is now recent literature which gives an account of this, there was a series of shuttle diplomatic visits, orchestrated by Britain and the United States together, not involving other countries, whereby about every month Cabinet level people from the two countries met each other.

MM Britain and the US?

HS Britain and the US to talk to the Pakistanis and talk to the Indians too. So we had a constant flood of visitors. The British Prime Minister came in October 2001 and came again in January 2002. The Development Minister came; the Foreign Secretary came; the former Chief of Defence Staff, Charles Guthrie, came on several occasions;

the Defence Minister came. These visits were interesting for me because I accompanied them when they called on Musharraf. After a year the Indian forces stood down and the crisis was over, and since then Indian and Pakistani relations have enormously improved for a variety of reasons. But that was perceived to be a very tense time and completely altered our role, because we could no longer travel. I managed to get out and about a bit, but it was always with heavily armed escorts. It was very difficult for people to visit us, because they had to go through so many security checks - Pakistani security checks, as well as our own. We got letter bombs. We got a small explosive device on a car. We got white powder delivered at the time of rumours about anthrax, which led to some farcical scenes. There was a security officer who decided that the Head of Political Section, or my Deputy, needed to see the white powder, so he brought the whole thing up through the High Commission, contrary to all the rules, to show the Deputy Head of Mission, as a result of which twenty seven people had to have injections by the Embassy medical officer. They sent the powder back to Porton Down to be analysed.

MM What was it?

HS Oh it wasn't anything. They never told us what it was. But the other thing that happened was that our immigration role, which I said was enormous was enormously politically important as well, because of the role of members of the British parliament, who were supporting their constituents who wanted visas for their relatives. We could no longer have a queue of any size outside the High Commission, so subsequently our whole manner of dealing with visas completely changed. We could not have face to face interviews any more, which they had been doing. The interviews would be done by agents remotely. And then, as if that wasn't bad enough, the Iraq situation blew up, and on 20 March 2003 when I was still in office we took part in the invasion of Iraq, which was incredibly unpopular in Pakistan. The most extraordinary thing happened. The French and German Ambassadors, under instructions, set up a public meeting, a reception, to condemn the actions of the British and the Americans - their NATO and EU partners - and offered drinks to everybody afterwards. They gave impassioned speeches. I called on my American colleague - we used to see each other a great deal - beforehand to talk as we always did about the situation, and I said - Are you going to this French/German reception?

And she said no, she did not think she would go. I said that I thought I would go, just to show, and she said - Perhaps I'll go too. So we both went, obviously separately, and didn't sit next to each other, and we listened to this tirade from our French and German colleagues, staring them out. I was asked by the press what I thought about it during the reception. I said I had been invited to a reception. I am here to enjoy a nice glass of lime and soda - and that got front page headlines next day, which I rather enjoyed. But I thought it was extraordinary behaviour on their part, but there you are, it was neither here nor there. I left at the end of April. By that time it was politically and personally really quite uncomfortable, because people, who had been old friends, would come up to me to tell me in no uncertain manner how much they disliked everything I stood for, so it was a bit of a relief to leave.

MM What were they objecting to? That we had removed this dictator?

HS It was an illegal act, as far as they were concerned.

MM Because we had violated another Muslim State?

HS It was a mishmash of all that. The more sophisticated people referred to the alleged illegality of the action; that there was no UN sanction for it which there was not, but it represented what Bush had called the doctrine of pre-emption, which they said was an innovation in international affairs and there was no legal basis for that. But also at a more fundamental level, I think, was why is it was always, yet again, that another Islamic country gets beaten up; while Israel had violated successive binding Security Council Resolutions in the past and gets away with it. Regime change was never of course an argument of the British government. We had always said it was weapons of mass destruction.

MM Overtly?

HS Well the argument put to Parliament was weapons of mass destruction. Blair never used regime change. Bush had put forward several arguments. Blair only presented the one argument to Parliament, and that was the basis for the vote. But the Pakistanis also believed that we were fabricating the arguments about weapons of

mass destruction because that was the sort of thing that the CIA and the nefarious British did. And I think many people believed that without having any evidence to do so. When Colin Powell produced evidence, clearly without his heart being in it, that cut no ice. When subsequently one crucial piece of Colin Powell's evidence was rejected by Hans Blix, this compounded the feeling that it was a stitch-up. Fortunately for me I was not there when the so-called Dodgy Dossier was torn to pieces. That must have been very humiliating for any British representative to any country.

MM I wonder why they produced it? There are a lot of big question marks over the whole thing.

HS We need more than a Hutton Enquiry to get to the bottom of that.

MM Well, of course the Chief of the Defence Staff, Admiral Boyce insisted on getting an okay from the Attorney General that our action was legal, otherwise the military wouldn't have taken part. They got that assurance.

HS Good for him.

MM And it was backed up by the Security Council Resolution No 1147, was it? Or was it 1411? Which was signed by practically everyone, including the French. And the Syrians.

HS Well they talk about intelligence being circular - if you believed it, everyone believed it.

MM Obviously the Iraqis were extremely keen that everyone should think that they had got weapons of mass destruction, and actually they had used chemical weapons on their own people. So they weren't a particularly savoury crew.

HS The issue was not whether they were savoury, but whether there was a basis for the Western allegations of the existence of weapons of mass destruction.

MM Well, a jolly difficult situation. What do you think the motives of the French and German Ambassadors were?

HS Well they were under instructions, and they were profoundly shocked by the concept of the doctrine of pre-emption, which taken to extremes could be very chilling, and by the similarly cavalier approach to the United Nations, bearing in mind that there had been these great negotiations about the possibility of a second Resolution, which fell to pieces once the French made clear that they would, if necessary, exercise their veto. They didn't exercise their veto because it did not come to a vote. This was at a time when Pakistan was a member of the Security Council and we and the Americans were pressing the Pakistanis to vote in favour of the second Resolution. It was clear that the Pakistanis didn't want anything to do with it, but they had to have something to do with it, because they were in the Council, and it was pretty clear that they would prefer not to vote with us, but on the other hand their relations with the United States were very important to them, not least because of the amount of cash coming their way for military purposes.

MM And they were a military government.

HS Yes.

MM A right old mix-up.

HS Still is.

MM Shall we leave that a move on to your ..?

Coalition Provisional Authority Regional Coordinator for Southern Iraq, 2003-4

HS I left in April 2003 to take early retirement just aged fifty eight and normal retirement age was sixty, and I'd decided I'd had enough. There wasn't anything

more for me to do. I didn't want to stay in Pakistan, and the then Foreign Secretary very kindly said - we can find something for you to do - you can study if you like. But I didn't want to do any of that. There was nothing that could have topped Pakistan for interest and excitement, and we'd just bought a house in Sussex and I'd set about getting contracts for its renovation. We were painting the sitting room the at the end of July when I got a 'phone call from Michael Jay saying it would be very nice if I could get myself out to Basra by the end of that month, in two weeks time. They needed somebody there. There was a Dane who was running civilian affairs in the south. He was leaving early and the Prime Minister and President Bush decided it would be a good idea to have a Brit there, because the British Army were in charge of the military in the south, and my name had come up - would I care to go out there? Instead of saying - You must be joking, I'm retired - I said I would think about it. So within a fortnight or so I was out in Basra to find a state of complete chaos. The military were doing very well, but civilian aspects were completely chaotic. It was shortly after the Coalition Provisional Authority had been established towards the end of May. I called on my then boss, Gerry Bremer, on my third day in the country, and he made clear to me that the focus of attention would be Baghdad, and the south just had to get on the best it could: that proved to be without human or financial resources. A full account of this can be found in my book, which comes out on 6 March 2008, called "*Bad Days in Basra.*" The book is not an academic work. That is not to say it is inaccurate, or that it will give a full account of the chaos. The chaos on the civilian side of Baghdad has been very well documented. There is an endless amount of American literature on the subject. So far very little has been written about Basra. It is a long story, which is contained in the book.

MM But the situation in Baghdad is covered in American literature. I thought it was Paul Bremer?

HS Yes, his name is Gerry. His name is L Paul Bremer III and for some unknown reason his name is Gerry.

MM How did you find him?

HS He is a very tough nut with no experience of developing countries or of Islam at all, except in the context of terrorism. He had come up through staff jobs in the State Department. He had been an Ambassador thinking Europe, but his main claim to fame was that he was Head of the Counter-Terrorist Organisation in the State Department. And he went from there to work with Kissinger Associates. He was called from there to take this job. He believed in taking very close personal control of decisions. Having taken a decision he would as a matter of principle never change it unless instructed to do so by the President. So people found him very difficult to work for reasons of his personality, his style and substance. But we got on all right. I made it my business not to fall out with him. And he treated me with respect, which I appreciated, and if I wanted to say something, he would always listen carefully. But I quickly came to the view that I could expect very little active help from the organisation in Baghdad.

MM (Interruption) So we were talking about Paul Bremer coming from Kissinger Associates. A tough nut; and not much support down in Basra. No support down in Basra?

HS Well, there was some. We were very dependent on the Americans; they provided all our life support – accommodation, food and everything. And the British Government really supplied very little. There was a small aid programme, which Ministers said was large, but it was tiny compared to what was needed. More importantly we had very few people on the ground. But before I went out, the Prime Minister called me into No 10, literally the afternoon when I took the night flight. We had a chat that afternoon and he promised me his full support, and I have to say whenever I made requests, immediately No 10 instructed that they should be authorised. But there were real problems in executing these requests. I particularly needed experts, and I needed armoured vehicles. Armoured vehicles were not to be had. The recruitment of experts was by way of some antediluvian method of putting out multiple tenders, giving so many months notice, so between putting in a request for thirty seven experts in September, and leaving at the end of January, fewer than half those people had arrived and, at the same time, other people who had been appointed left without any arrangements for succession. I got very little joy out of the British administration, but we got a tremendous amount of support in the South from

other countries. We had a lot of Italians, and Danes, and others from a total of twenty-two separate countries. All the members of the Coalition wanted to be seen to help, but many of them didn't either want to work for the Americans or be exposed to danger, and the South was much less dangerous than other places. So we had a lot of help from other countries, and we mobilised them into coherent structures, and I saw our main task as being to build the capacity of the Iraqis to be able to do the job themselves, at a time when all the Iraqi senior managers had been sacked by the De-Baa'thification Order. We needed to bring the middle-managers up to being able to run things for themselves, and to do that they needed mentoring. They were very happy to be mentored, because they were being exposed to 21st century techniques, after a period of twelve years of sanctions and isolation. We got on quite well until the security situation deteriorated, which it started to do in November. It was at that point that the Americans decided that the Coalition Provisional Authority wasn't working and should be wound up in June 2004. It had been expected that it would last for several years. I decided in November that I did not want to preside over the winding up of the CPA, that I would carry on working at full steam, but would leave at the end of January, which was the finish of my six months' tour. This was the same length of tour of tour as the army did. Jack Straw (British Foreign Secretary) kindly said when I called on him, which I did frequently, that he would very much like it if I decided to stay on, but he wasn't going to request that I do so and thus put me in a difficult position. I thought that was very good of him, because if he had asked it would have been difficult to reply. He was right to maintain that six months was too short in many respects, but quite long enough in others. It was quite a strain: very rewarding in many ways, but immensely frustrating in others, and the writing was on the wall that this enterprise would not succeed and my recommendations for how to take it forward after the CPA was wound up didn't find favour, so I felt I had come to the limit of my utility.

MM So what did you recommend?

HS I recommended that the international set-up should be continued, if the Iraqi Government agreed with this, working directly with the Iraqi Government, so that all the expertise and administration arrangements for the many hundreds of contracts that we had set up should continue, using the same personnel who had built up tremendous

real expertise and who knew the people. But instead what happened was that the entire set-up of several hundred people by the time I left was disbanded and replaced by essentially American and British bilateral development co-operation relationships, and nearly all of the projects which we had established fizzled out. An enormous waste of money and resources, and an enormous loss of Iraqi trust. I thought that was a mistake, a profound mistake, if you wanted to make progress. But my perception was that the main priority was actually to start running down resources rather than maintaining them, or building them up, and although the development programme and the financial resources did increase in terms of personnel involved, there was massive reduction at that stage. But that said, the security situation had deteriorated a great deal by then, so it was very difficult to get out and about, and subsequently it became completely impossible to do so.

MM So not a very happy experience on the whole?

HS Oh no, on the whole it was, because of the enormous satisfaction I had with working with very highly motivated people.

MM Iraqis?

HS Iraqis, and my colleagues. I worked very closely with the British Army who were very frustrated because they saw us as their ticket out. We could never have been that. But everybody who worked with my outfit - CPA South as it was then known - was really keen. They were all volunteers; wonderful people from very diverse backgrounds; from bright young sparks from foreign ministries who wanted to change the world to ancient agricultural development specialists who actually were changing the world, and the combination was very stimulating. I had a good team around me, so I was in the enviable position that I could be the benign leader exhorting from the front, while I had some hit men below who maintained discipline and made sure that six guns were not brought into the canteen - literally, because a lot of the military personnel were carrying weapons, and it was thought best that they should not be brought into the canteen. I had some wonderful interaction with the Iraqis. I used to invite them to Iftar parties at Ramadan to break the fast and as a result I got invited back, which was of course my intention. So it was very

stimulating and in a way I wouldn't have missed it for the worlds. I came back physically and emotionally drained. I couldn't even walk the dog for an hour; although I used to go to the gym twice a week; it was playing around on a bicycle machine for forty minutes and my muscles had become wasted. Walking the dog for an hour was a real struggle.

MM Because you were kept confined within ..?

HS Yes, I was driven around everywhere by car or helicopter, or just walked a hundred yards to meetings. And I did not eat very well. The food became very good. It was ghastly to start with, but it became very good. And I didn't sleep at all well. The temperatures in the Summer were in the high 50s - higher than anything I'd experienced or endured in India or Pakistan, so it was very difficult to switch the mind off at night. At the end of each week you could look back and see real progress, and that's what kept everybody going. You could consider what issues you had considered the previous Friday, and what issues you were considering this Friday and you would find that many issues had disappeared. They had been resolved. At the end of every week you could certainly see achievements, but there came a stage where the challenges got bigger and bigger. It was partly that we became more aware of them, in contrast to our initial enthusiastic optimism, and partly because they really were getting bigger. There were technical and political challenges, which were very great and proved in the end to be insuperable. The other frustration was that it was becoming increasingly clear that the Baghdad organisation simply was not working and was not capable of ever working. That comes over as a criticism actually, if you think about it. The Coalition Provisional Authority was a civilian bureaucracy which was created out of nothing, with a whole lot of people who had never met each other before, working to do a task which was a sort of 19th century task of colonial administration, which was beyond most people's expertise and resources. So it was inevitable that it wouldn't work.

MM A long learning curve obviously.

HS Yes. But for many people it wasn't possible to learn, because in Baghdad the vast majority of people never met Iraqis at all. They were stuck inside the Green

Zone. I think it used to a greater extent than any of my other postings my full range of skills and expertise – of management, of leadership, of knowledge of Islam, knowledge of developing countries; dealing with the machinations of Whitehall (I attended Cabinet Committee meetings); reporting; grabbing Ministers' attentions - so it was very stimulating in that sense, and I was glad to have done it.

MM And also glad to have relinquished it.

HS Yes, six months was enough. I would not have been suited to the different task of running the organisation down, which I disagreed with anyway. I thought I was more suited to building the organisation up. So, by the time I finished there, I continued my efforts to retire early, but I ended up retiring just six months early instead of two years early.

MM An extremely fruitful and useful experience in the Diplomatic Service resulting in two books.

HS A monograph and a book, and a few articles.

MM *"The Causes and Consequences of South Asia's Nuclear Tests"*.

HS That is only a hundred pages. I would call that a monograph.

MM Is it available?

HS . It is available. Adelphi Paper 332, and it's still relevant, because many of the recommendations made have not been implemented, not because they are wrong, but because the political situation does not allow for it. I made recommendations which were based on pragmatism, rather than calling for Pakistan and India to give up the bomb, which is what the Security Council Resolutions call for, and that would never ever happen. It is basically about, having got the bomb, how do you deal with it? A lot of the recommendations I made have come to pass, not because I made the recommendations, but because they had really thought about it - things like

particularly the prevention of accidental use of nuclear - what would happen if there were an accidental nuclear explosion.

MM And then, who is publishing "*Bad Days in Basra*"?

HS I B Tauris, which is a small, but reputable company which has specialised in Middle Eastern affairs.

MM That will be available from ..?

HS 6th March. Waterstone's have taken advance contracts.

MM Thank you very much indeed

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