

Sir Derek (Morison David) THOMAS (born 31.10.29)

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Sir Derek Thomas KCMG

This is Mrs Jill Sindall interviewing Sir Derek Thomas in his office at N M Rothschild's in London on 10 July 2002

JS: What made you decide to join the Diplomatic Service having embarked on a very different career in the private sector?

DT: Well it looks from my Who's Who entry as though I'd embarked on a different career in the private sector. In a sense that's true but when I left school at the age of 17 in 1947 I did not have the faintest idea about what I was going to do with my life and I met somebody who was running an engineering works. I was very keen, like all boys are about cars, and I visited his place. He had Aston Martins and goodness knows what and I could think of a no better life than spending it fooling around with cars. I still had three months to do before I could be conscripted into the army and so I wrote to him from France where I was staying with a French family in 1947 and said: could I come and work in his factory for three months to earn some money and wait until I was going to be called up? And he wrote back and said, no I couldn't do that, but what I could do if I was interested would be to come and do an apprenticeship - get deferred from my call-up - and learn to be a proper engineer and change my mind about what sort of a life I was going to have. So I thought about that and decided to do it. I went and became an apprentice in a factory.

It was a small development engineering works in Buckinghamshire, very close to Silverstone, and I spent three years there trying to gain enough knowledge of mathematics and statics and dynamics and things to get into Cambridge to read engineering. I tried that exam twice and I came close enough the second time for my College at Cambridge to say: well, if you are really keen to do this we'll let you come up and read for a pass degree, but we think it would be much better if you went back to languages for which you had a place before and where you have got a much better likelihood of getting a decent degree. That coincided with the first of the post war depressions and the firm I was with went bankrupt. The man I was apprenticed to wanted to go back to Aldermaston to design nuclear weapons and I thought that I did not want to spend my life designing nuclear weapons so I stopped that course and went to

Cambridge - still deferred - to read modern languages. And that was how I came to give up engineering.

When I got to Cambridge my tutor said to me what are you going to read and I said, well, I am supposed to be reading French and German and I said I have always disliked German at school and I thought I would have a go at Russian. He said, why and I said well because it is obviously an important and interesting country and I think it would be rather fun. So he said, well, why don't you go and see the professor of Russian. My tutor said it was actually not a he it was a she - Elizabeth Hill - and here was her address. Elizabeth Hill was a fantastic, charismatic, marvellous person and she very quickly persuaded me that German was a complete waste of time and that I'd better do French and Russian together. In those days you did two languages at Cambridge and the Slavonic faculty was very small, we were only about twenty people in it, so you got a lot of personal attention. A lot of the emphasis was on learning about Russia and Russian culture and she greatly enthused me. So I went back to see my tutor and he said so you are reading Russian. I said: how did you know? And he said everybody who goes to see Elizabeth Hill finishes up reading Russian. I saw that tutor the other day, he's well into his late eighties now, and I told him this story and he was hugely entertained. So that is how I came to do Russian.

At the end of three years at Cambridge I still did not know what I was going to do. One rowing coach wanted me to join his coal distribution company in Kings Lynn and I was not 100% sure that I liked that idea. The other options were either to go into industry like everybody else and join ICI as a personnel manager and that did not grab me very much. Or to go into the Colonial Service but it did not seem to me that that was going to be a long term option, or to go into teaching, which did not attract me very much either. So, I thought well, why don't I have a crack at the Foreign Service and at least then I'll know that that is not an option and I won't think for the rest of my life, what a pity I did not try. So I talked to one of my tutors about that and he thought that it was a brilliant idea and said if that does not work, he said, I might have something else that would be of interest to you. I said oh, what's that? He said he would rather not say anything about that then. But clearly he was one of the recruiters for an alternative service. But his judgement was that I would be a better fit in the Foreign Office as it then was than in the service that nobody mentions because it was not supposed to exist. So anyway I had a go at the Foreign Office exam and much to my surprise, and everybody else's, I got a telegram at the end of the whole ghastly process saying that I

had been accepted, subject to my degree result. This was a serious challenge because I was then into the exams already and I had not done nearly enough work as it had never occurred to me that I had reached that stage and I only just sort of squeaked by with the necessary degree, which was a minimum 2.2 in those days – just squeaked by with a 2.2 - and got into the Foreign Service.

But I still had to go and do my National Service and by then I had decided I never wanted to go into the army in the first place – my original career choice at the age of 13 had been to be a naval officer but Dartmouth turned me down because of my eyesight. So I said when I reported for my National Service, that I wanted to go into the navy. Then I realised with the utmost horror that the only possible reason why I had passed the Foreign Service exam was that I would have a degree in Russian. But only Elizabeth Hill and I knew how little Russian I knew at the end of three years at Cambridge. Although I had no doubt written a respectable paper on the novels of Dostojevsky and so on I had read them all in English. Doing Russian from scratch and getting to a degree level doing the language in two years and the whole of the literature in the third year was really a very tall order for a good student and I was not one of those. So I really came to the end of Cambridge, barely able to string two words of Russian together. What I did in the Navy was to apply to be a naval interpreter and do the naval course so I went straight from Cambridge to London University and effectively did a second degree in Russian at the Navy's expense. So when I came out of the Navy I had respectable Russian and the Foreign Office sent me to Moscow as my first post which was great.

The only snag was that in the year in between leaving the Navy and going to Moscow I had been recalled by the Navy to do the two weeks of statutory annual service that you had to do in those days and they called me back to be one of the naval interpreters during the visit of Bulganin and Khrushchev to England in June 1956 when the great Soviet cruiser the Ordzhonikidze came to Portsmouth. I was based on HMS Bulwark, an aircraft carrier in Portsmouth along with half a dozen other young naval officers – interpreters in Russian and we looked after the Soviet naval troops while they were in Portsmouth and spent two weeks doing that. So, barely four months later I turned up at the embassy in Moscow as a quote Third Secretary unquote on the SS Vyacheslav Molotov which was the only way of getting to Moscow in those days. There were no direct flights, and so the Foreign Office sent one by boat from Surrey Commercial Docks via Copenhagen and Stockholm, Helsinki and

Leningrad. In the meantime I had got married and my wife of one month and I boarded the SS Vyacheslav Molotov on the 31st of October 1956 – we'll come back to that in a moment – and this is what I meant when I said I remember all this very clearly (*laughs*). In Helsinki the boat was joined by a Lieutenant Commander RN who turned out to be the Assistant Naval Attaché from Moscow. He had flown out to Helsinki and was coming back in the SS Vyacheslav Molotov to have a good look at Leningrad harbour as we went in to see what Soviet naval vessels were up to there so that he could write a report back to the Admiralty. So, of course we met him when he came on board and we all got together and it turned out that he had been at Dartmouth at the same time as my elder brother. His cousin had been my brother's first fiancée and so we had a lot in common and we arrived in Leningrad in the morning with pretty severe hangovers, got in the train for Moscow and arrived in Moscow together. He took my wife and myself to the flat where we were to live, which turned out to be the next door flat to him and his wife. So, put yourself in a position of any even remotely intelligent Soviet official, and there is a clear picture from day 1 that here is an RN intelligence officer clumsily disguised as a Third Secretary in the British Embassy and clearly sent to do undercover naval intelligence work. So my time in Moscow was pretty heavily constrained.

Wherever we went in those years we had at least one, and very often two, cars of KGB officers, male and female, behind us. My wife, if she went out shopping was always followed into and out of every shop. Our flat was absolutely bristling with microphones of every kind. We never bothered to lock the door because we very quickly discovered that they went in and out with complete freedom. So everything we did - having been married one month was listened in to, watched over, and it was a very strange kind of experience. But that is how it was in those days. Everybody else was also followed. But I knew from what my second ambassador there, Sir Patrick Reilly, told me afterwards that he was very concerned at the extent to which my wife and I were much more closely clearly kept under observation by the Soviets than almost anybody else in the Embassy. I am absolutely sure that the reason was that they had identified me as an intelligence officer. I mention that as a strange bit of background how the choices that one makes as one goes along actually then affect what one does later.

One's life in the embassy in those days in Moscow was constrained by the fact that no Russians or no Soviet citizens would find it at all easy to have any contact with us at all. Our

range of contacts was confined to the administrative staff in the embassy itself, all of whom were of course reporting back to the agency from which they came. So they had to be kept very much at arm's length. There were also officials in the ministries, mainly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, because the only channel through which foreign diplomats were allowed to do anything was Protocol Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or, at a pinch in our case, the Second European Department, which was the department dealing with Britain and the Commonwealth. I had one Second Secretary in that department that I used to ring up if I wanted some information or wanted to convey something or wanted to try and do some bit of negotiation as it might have been. On the one occasion, I remember, we had a visit from a group of British teachers coming to Moscow on a sort of exchange with Russians teachers and we wanted to have a little party to enable them to meet their Russian counterparts. I invited Rogov, who was this guy that I knew in the Second European Department, to come and meet the English teachers. He said that he could not give me an answer at once, but he could give me an answer in 48 hours. In 48 hours he rang up and said he was sorry he had another engagement. That it illustrates the difficulty of having any kind of natural relationship with these guys at all. The only time one ever had a chance to talk to ordinary Russians was in a train or in a bus or in a bar and even then one had to be frightfully careful. I remember on one occasion going to a bar in Moscow which was called 'Beer Hall No 1', 'Pivnoi Zal Nomer Odin', which was the nicest – I mean they are all pretty grotty, but it was the nicest of them. Once in a while, a small group of us would go in there to see what happened and sit and have a beer or something and on one occasion I remember a group of Russian youngsters came up to us and started chatting. We talked to them and they talked to us and that was it – that was all that happened. And about a month later we went in to the same bar again and one of these boys came up to us looking extremely aggressive and said: Please don't come in here. Please go away, and we said: Why, we are just having a beer. And he said, last time you came in you talked to three people. One of them is now in prison. And then he turned his back on us and went away. Those were discouraging things which whether true or not, I mean, who knows he might have been a KGB plant, who just did not want to take the risk of having us talk to him. It might not have been true. But there were worse things that happened than that. I remember when Prime Minister Macmillan came out a lot of British journalists came with him. There was one man from the Daily Express who asked us where he could go and meet Russians and one of the places we mentioned was that bar, that Beer Hall which, was right in the middle of Moscow. It is the kind of place where foreigners did go and it was a kind of permitted place, you didn't get shooed out and we said, he should try that and he went and he

had a similar kind of conversation with somebody. The next day The Daily Express carried an article about how this journalist had met Vladimir and arranged to sell him a pair of jeans for roubles, a completely illegal transaction and we had warned this journalist not to do that sort of thing. We heard afterwards that following the visit of western journalists a number had done this kind of thing and the KGB had just gone round and picked up these youngsters and put them behind bars and no doubt subjected them to all sorts of horrors. So it was not a nice atmosphere.

The one occasion when we got into difficulties ourselves was when a young American couple and we - he was one of the First Secretaries from the US embassy - he and his wife, my wife and I put in for permission to go skiing in Georgia. The reason we did this was partly because it would be fun to go skiing, but partly because we had heard that in 1957 there had been considerable problems in the capital of Georgia, Tbilisi, between the students and the authorities. This was about the extent to which Georgia had lost its independence. There was good political background, at least according to the stories we had heard in Moscow. So with the ambassador's permission we put in for this skiing trip and off we went to the heart of Georgia to the mountains to go and do some skiing. This was known to be the period during which the students would also be skiing and we thought we might see what we could pick up. So off we set and when we got to the place we had permission to be, all the local officials had beaming faces and said, no skiing here, you can go straight back. There was no skiing because the only name we had discovered was Borzhomi, which was at the foot of the mountain. Where we should have been going was Bakuryani, which is up at the top of the mountain. This was where the only ski lift in the Soviet Union was to be found. But on the plane going down we had met a Master of Georgian Sport (this is a sort of title) who was going down to his son's wedding. He warned us that we would never get any snow at Borzhomi so we could not ski there. But, he said, come up to Bakuryani and I'll arrange for you to stay at the sports centre and the skiing there is great. We thought we were home and dry but of course when we got to the Sports Centre at Bakuryani we got arrested and sent down again because we did not have permission to be up there.

So we sent a telegram to each of our embassies and said please put in an application for permission to change our point of stay in Georgia to Bakuryani. We thought nothing ventured nothing gained and, two days later, we got a telegram back saying permission granted. So we got on the train again and off we went up the mountain. We got out at the other end and there

were a lot of stony faced officials around saying let's see your permission. So they said, there is no point in you staying here because all the accommodation is full, there is nowhere for you to stay. So we said let's fish around and see what we can find and we did find somewhere that would take us but we had not been there for more than an hour when along came a bunch of very stony faced looking supposed Georgian students and sportsmen saying, very sorry but this has been taken by our sports club and you cannot stay here so we were shooed out. But these were plants they had never been heard of or seen by the family who they were supposed to stay with. So we eventually had to give up and go down in the train. We did get to ski. The train did not get back until the evening so we actually took our skis and went up the slopes. We could not go up in the ski lift, but we went on the nursery slopes and skied down the nursery slopes. By then I think the students must have been briefed that a bunch of American spies were in town and they came crashing into us and they knocked my wife completely flat and injured her ankle to the extent that she has always had a problem with it ever since. And you know they shouted, America spies at us on the slopes.

The strange thing was that we noticed in the heart of Tbilisi that there were indeed bullet marks in some of the buildings and after 1991 I remember reading an account of those years in Georgia and indeed there had been a very severe outbreak of unrest which the Soviet authorities had to put down violently and quite a lot of people had been killed. So the stories we had been getting in Moscow were perfectly accurate or at least they had a basis of accuracy. But it was never confirmed until after the whole Soviet Union had broken up.

So there were interesting things one could do. But it was always a nerve-racking and tense time and although this did not happen in the British Embassy there were in one or two other embassies - the French Embassy and the Belgian Embassy and there was at least one other Embassy where people after leaving Moscow never quite recovered their mental and emotional stability. Three people committed suicide for no apparent reason. I have never been able to look into why that happened – there seems to have been a different reason in each case. But one of them was the wife of the American couple who went skiing with us and it was put down to postnatal depression. But who knows? It was a difficult time.

For all that it was huge fun in all sorts of ways – at the age of 26, 27 and 28 one puts up with that sort of thing and the community that we lived among was a completely international community of Pakistanis, Iranians, Americans and all the Nato countries. The Germans

arrived in the middle of our time there with a trade mission. There had not been an embassy there before as West Germany was only just emerging from the status it had had in the immediate post war years and they set up a trade mission in Moscow and then gradually turned it into an embassy. So all the western missions were there and one just lived among the international community of diplomats and journalists, mainly American, British and French journalists. And they were all highly intelligent and they were all great fun. We put plays on and did all kinds of things to amuse ourselves. But it was a strange life. William Hayter, who was my first ambassador, described it in one of his annual reports as being like a goldfish in a bowl. You could feel what it was like, you could look out through the glass, but that was it.

JS: Did you find it easy to keep up your Russian in the sense that you obviously did not get much practice?

DT: Yes I kept up my Russian as one of my jobs in the embassy was to be the daily press reader for foreign affairs. Somebody else did the internal affairs and I did foreign affairs. If Khrushchev had made a speech lasting four hours on foreign affairs, by the 9.30am Ambassador's meeting I had to have read that and then deliver a summary of it. Among the senior people – the Minister spoke quite good Russian - he was a Czech speaker but he had quite good Russian. The Ambassador hardly spoke a word at the beginning. He learned it as he went along. The Counsellor did not speak Russian. So the three Third Secretaries and the Attachés were the only ones who could speak Russian. One did a lot of interpreting and a lot of reading - and one did a lot of shopping of course. You had to go out and talk to people in the queue. And ordinary life - going to the theatre or going to the ballet or a concert or travelling to Leningrad, which we were always allowed to do, involved contact with people on ordinary every day things. We had a maid who was of course recruited by the KGB and we had to talk to her. And my wife learnt Russian when we were there so, yes, I could keep up my Russian reasonably well but not really in the sort of way that one would do in a normal embassy all the time going around seeing people in the Ministries and talking to them. So it was a strange way of doing things. But, no, one could keep up one's Russian and then later I went to Bulgaria in the 1960s and I tried to learn Bulgarian before I went but it is a bit like Spanish and Portuguese. It was not very easy to make the transition so when I got to Sofia – *crosstalk* - I used to say in Bulgarian, I am afraid I do not speak Bulgarian, do you mind if we

speaking Russian? In those days they would all say, no that is fine and so in Bulgaria I did a lot of my work in Russian so I had in a way two spells of being in Russian speaking countries.

JS: Tell me how easy was it then in these restricted circumstances to gauge the country's reaction to the transition from Stalin's era to Khrushchev's era – presumably the press was just the mouthpiece?

DT: Well I got there after the 20th party congress so that was all a state of – to the extent it was known – the era of détente was beginning. The President of the United States was Nixon as far as I remember and there was a lot of talk about détente. Macmillan came and had meetings with Khrushchev - it was the famous Astrakhan hat and all that. At my level I would not claim that I could have noticed any perceptible difference nor could I make any judgement on the way people reacted because in those days people went about the streets of Moscow with dark gloomy faces. I remember it principally - I do not remember the sun at all - as snow and clouds and dark Russians, in my experience at least, in their native land were silent, gloomy. This was fear.

So, as far as I was concerned, the change from Stalin to Khrushchev hadn't made any perceptible difference at all. But they did claim that a great deal of economic development was taking place. In the shops in Moscow one was told that one could see a big difference, but one could not in fact. There was very little in the shops. If you went to the grocer's to buy something for the weekend you bought what was there. You could not say I think we will have lamb this week. If there was chicken, there was chicken and you got it. Or if there was only sausage you bought the sausage. That's how it was, that's how it had been before and how it stayed. The difference was that all prices were fixed. And everybody, even the most humble Soviet citizen, could afford to buy what there was because he did not have to pay any taxes, and his salary, whatever that was, was enough to buy something in the shops. Very often they built up quite considerable savings in roubles because there was nothing to spend it on. If they went on holiday, that was a trade union jaunt and paid for by the trade union. They could go down to the Black Sea. Aeroflot tickets cost nothing. It was such a distorted economy. It was a kind of coupon based, the coupons being roubles, a kind of rationing system. There were shops where you could buy things like pictures, antiques and paintings and so on which ordinary families had managed to hang on to but then needed money for something - maybe to try and get out. They would take them along to the

Commission Shop - it might be books, it might be pictures, it might be silver, it might be a samovar, all things like that. You could go and buy these things in the Commission Shops. In those days it had to be for roubles – later it became for hard currency and the Russians who had taken them in there would get some of that money back. The Commission Shop would keep a percentage and the rest would go to the Russian family. So one could buy those things but ordinary Russians would not be doing that. They would be using as much money as they had on basic commodities and the rest was pretty much free. It was a funny state of affairs but, no, it did not visibly improve during Khrushchev's time.

JS: I wondered given that it was a time of détente and so on, how much contact did the Ambassador and senior diplomats in the Embassy have with Russian government officials. And as you were a Russian speaker did you act as interpreter or what?

DT: Yes often I did, but more usually the ambassador would use his private secretary who in those days was Ken Scott and then later John Ure. I would be used if they were not around or if I was thought a more suitable person because of the job I was doing. For instance, the Royal Shakespeare Memorial Theatre came to Moscow when we were there. As there was no cultural attaché, and part of my job as Third Secretary in the Embassy was to do cultural things, so I was the sort of link for the Royal Shakespeare Theatre visit. There was a lot of admin involved in arranging for their stage equipment and stuff to be brought in through customs. Also when they went to Leningrad to give performances there, the Ambassador and Lady Reilly took me and my wife to be their lookers-after there. The atmosphere in Leningrad was rather different from Moscow. It was away from Party headquarters. People would be much more friendly in coming up to one in the champagne bar on the Nevsky Prospect and actually talking to one, which was quite different. I always loved going there and so, going there for the Royal Shakespeare plays was a fantastic experience. The Ambassador gave a big reception when we were there and I had to arrange that. He also opened a factory which some British company had built for making plywood and a kind of composite wood which was a new kind of process in those days – a very useful building material. A British company had done that so when he was there he went and called on the Mayor of Leningrad, he called on the president – the chairman of the Leningrad Economic Committee, a sort of local ministry of economy. And I was with him for those talks and I interpreted for him then.

But you asked about his degree of contact. I would say very formal – not easy to get to see people in those days and I am not sure that I ever remember him getting a private interview with Khrushchev who as First Secretary of the Communist Party was head of the government. And I am pretty sure he went to see Gromyko fairly regularly who was the Foreign Minister but I mean it would be a very inhibited kind of discussion. Then he would send a telegram back afterwards, but I think that the level of contact of senior people in the Embassy was pretty restricted. For the Queen's Birthday Party all the great and good would be invited and sometimes there would be a general or two. I remember one year, it was the year that Macmillan was there and two generals came and my wife was seen talking to the one of them in an animated way. Immediately afterwards she was asked to go and see the Defence Attaché who said, you spent twenty minutes talking to General who-ever-it-was. What did he say? And she said well, we had had a very lively conversation about his grandchildren. And apparently they all tried to go and talk to him but he would not open his mouth, so it was quite difficult.

JS: What memories do you have of Macmillan's visit?

DT: Well, not many unfortunately, because it fell to me to stay behind and mind the shop whereas the brighter brethren were the ones who got out and went around with Macmillan and did the all the exciting things. There were other Ministers who came – I think Duncan Sandys came with him and there were two or three other Third Secretaries in the place. I think whether it was because I was married or whether it was because Patrick Reilly regarded me as a risk because of the funny background I had had or what I do not know. Any way Paul Homer who was the First Secretary and I were told off to mind the shop and answer telegrams and things while everybody else went out and looked after the Prime Minister. So I did not see that at very close quarters.

JS: Did he go on television?

DT: I doubt it. I really cannot remember that much about it because I was stuck in the Embassy. I think I went to the airport to meet them. I do remember seeing him coming off the plane in his splendid white hat. It made a difference for a while in the level of our relationships.

JS: When you left you mentioned that you had an experience when you got back to London?

DT: Oh, yes. When we got back to London, lo and behold Yevgeny Rogov who had been my principal opposite number at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs turned up in the Soviet embassy in London. My parents' house was very close to the Soviet embassy. I was born and raised in Notting Hill Gate, which is just the other side of the Bayswater Road from the Soviet embassy and when we got back from Manila and I was first of all rewriting a War Book. They didn't quite know what to do with me, so I was sent to re-draft the War Book – it was a part of – a set of instructions on what everybody must do in the event of war, which seemed to me a fairly abstract kind of activity but they did not know where to post me. So I did that for a few weeks and then in October 1961 I was posted to be Private Secretary in Brussels to Sir Pierson-Dixon, who was Head of the UK Delegation negotiating our way into the European Community. And it turned out afterwards that I had been sent off to re-write the War Book because they were waiting until all this had sorted itself out. I had already been identified as Bob Dixon's Private Secretary, but I could not be told because the negotiations had not started and they did not want to do anything until they started. So I was put into a holding job on the War Book and then I went off to be Bob Dixon's Private Secretary in Brussels. And that lasted for 6 months – a little bit longer than 6 months - we were not posted to Brussels for this purpose. It was not a resident delegation and I was sent there to live in the Metropole Hotel. The Foreign Office could not have cared a hoot what happened to my wife of then two years. We were not posted to London. We were not supposed to be in Brussels. I suppose we were supposed to be in London, but where was she going to live? So for the time being she went to stay with her parents in the Netherlands and I was in the Metropole Hotel in Brussels. She would come and visit me there from time to time. Eventually the FO wanted to promote me to the rank of First Secretary. They told Bob Dixon he could not keep me as a First Secretary and he said I can't keep him as a Second Secretary and inhibit his career prospects. So I went back to London to EEOD, European Economic Organisations Department, because at least I knew about the negotiations. This was 1962 and so my wife and I then set about buying a house in London and in the meantime I stayed - we both stayed - with my parents in Notting Hill Gate. And it was then we went for a walk in Kensington Gardens and bumped into Yevgeny Rogov who had been my opposite number in Moscow two years before. So he said how nice to see you - and his wife was there and we chatted and said we must get together, so I went back and I reported this conversation to the Office and got no response and we got an invitation to the Soviet Embassy and I got permission to go.

At the Soviet Embassy I said to him my parents live just across the road, if I invite you will your wife and you come to dinner? So he said yes, I would love to - so truly a different regime - and I reported that back to the Foreign Office. He and his wife came to dinner and we invited - I can't remember who else - and we had a very jolly evening. My parents were away, and we sang Russian songs round the piano and did all kinds of things with them and had a great evening. Our purpose was to demonstrate that life in London was rather different from life in Moscow - we could behave like normal human beings. Of course at every stage I reported all this back to the powers that be, and we were invited again to the Soviet Embassy and we invited them to come to the theatre and so on. We had quite a kind of on-going relationship and eventually he was posted back to Moscow and that was the end of that.

But while I was still in that EEOD job and Patrick Reilly was then Deputy Under Secretary he rang me up one day and said would I go and see him. He said, Derek, I have been asked if you would mind helping MI5 with some investigations they are doing into what life was like at the embassy in Moscow during our time. This all followed one of the defector incidents - some defector who had gone seriously astray in Moscow. The way that Patrick Reilly explained it to me was that they wanted to understand the relationships within the embassy and how somebody like that Naval Clerk could have felt so excluded that he finished up by going off and getting into bed with some Soviet young man and ultimately being blackmailed? If I was willing to talk to MI5 about life at the Embassy, Patrick Reilly would arrange for me to be away for a couple of days, for "special duty". So I reported to the Metropole Hotel, which was then the HQ of MI5 and I started off one morning at about 10 o'clock having a long chat about what life was like in the Embassy, rather like we have just been doing and about half way through this I suddenly realised that the questions coming at me were very different. They focussed very much on Yevgeny Rogov and by lunch time, when the guy who was talking to me said, well I think we will break for lunch now please come back at two o'clock. I said to him look you may think I'm extremely stupid but I can see exactly where you are coming from. This is not about relations in the embassy. I seem to be under some sort of suspicion. Why don't you tell me what you are driving at and maybe I can help you to clarify it? He said all right I will. He said when you left Manila you sent a postcard telling how you were going to be coming home to a member of your family. In the event that was not what you did. You went back to the Netherlands and you spent three weeks in the Netherlands and some of that time you claimed to be sailing. We have no trace of what you were doing when you were supposed to be sailing but when you left the

Netherlands and came back to the UK you were on the same ferryboat as Yevgeny Rogov. And I said, well this is absolute news to me. I said I did go back to the Netherlands. I said, the reason why we changed our plans was what ever it was. I can't even remember what it was now, but we had a perfectly sound reason for changing our plans. We had flown from Singapore to Amsterdam and stayed with my wife's family in the Netherlands. I think that my father-in-law had rented a big boat and we'd changed the whole timing of our summer plans to do this. And so he said well that sounds an interesting story let's continue going into it after lunch. So off I went at lunch time. In the morning, something had gone wrong with our new gas stove in our house in Esher and I said to my wife that I would go to the Gas Board where we bought it in Tottenham Court Road and arrange to have someone to come and look at it. So I came out of the Metropole and I went into the tube at Trafalgar Square as it then was - it is called Charing Cross now, then it was Trafalgar Square - and I phoned my wife to confirm that I was going to the Gas Board partly because - I wasn't going to tell her what was going on - but I needed a bit of moral support. As I was in the phone box I noticed a man in a beret looking in through the door watching me dial and I thought that's queer. And I got on the tube and there was the same man following me all the way up to - and after Moscow I was quite good at spotting when I was being followed - following me all the way up to the Gas Board. He stayed outside the Gas Board when I was in there and followed me back to Trafalgar Square when I came back.

When I went in to see this guy again I said - And you had me followed at lunch time. I don't know what you thought I was going to do at the Gas Board but I will tell you what I was doing at the Gas Board and then I thought of all the stories I had heard about what spies do and where they drop their pieces of paper and things and thought oh my God I'm getting in to seriously deep water here. We had a conversation through the afternoon about how my postcard could have got into somebody else's hands, how Rogov could have known that I was on that boat, but it turned out eventually that he was not on that boat but he had made a reservation on that boat but he had never actually taken it up, or he had made a reservation on the boat we were supposed to coming back on and we'd changed our plans again very quickly. But clearly the way this line of questioning was going there was a suspicion that I had pretended to be in the Netherlands sailing and I had actually gone off to Moscow and come back with Rogov and we were going together back to London. The afternoon was a pretty fraught afternoon and got pretty unpleasant at times. But at the end of it he said well you have convinced me that you are absolutely clean, there is no shadow of suspicion any

more except that they clearly had targetted you - now what we want to do tomorrow is to try to understand why, what is in your background or in your history that has made the Russians target you in particular.

So I came back the next day, I still didn't say anything to my wife. The next day was a Friday and we were going to the Netherlands again, and we had a Mini car in those days and by then we had a baby as well and we were going to the Netherlands – I don't know what time of the year it was, but it was either Christmas, or it was Easter or it was summer holidays or it was something any way, so in addition to normal luggage we had the baby's playpen on the roof and the cot on top of the playpen. We looked like an emigrating family and I thought my God this is going from bad to worse. Any way the second day went quite well I thought, and at the end of it all he said look I don't want you to worry about this. There will be no record of all this. The file will be destroyed. This will absolutely not affect the rest of your career. There are no possible grounds for suspicion against you, and we are wholly, 100% satisfied. There are a lot of questions on their side we have not understood, but as far as you are concerned you are completely clean and we will so report to Sir Patrick Reilly. Off I went to pick up my car and off we went to the Netherlands for the weekend or whatever it was. When I got back to the Foreign Office there was a message saying would I go and see Sir Patrick and he said, look I am terribly sorry about all that. (He was also the Under Secretary in charge of security). He said I knew there wasn't going to be anything in it but I had to agree to let them do the interrogation. That was the end of that.

It was not until I was appointed Political Director twenty years later that I learned what lay behind that unpleasant episode. Part of my job was to be one of the Foreign Secretary's principal links with the two intelligent services and indeed with Cheltenham. I went to see the then head of MI5 as part of my initial briefing and he said almost in his opening remarks, you may like to know the background about the two difficult days you had in 1962. So they had not destroyed the records and they had not forgotten. But it all turned out to be a completely invented scenario, which was provoked by the fact that a Soviet defector in Canada had identified a mole in the Foreign Office with certain characteristics. He couldn't give a name. He couldn't give a job. But he could give certain characteristics and bits of background and I was one of three people where the lines crossed. And they had invented this whole scenario about Rogov in order to put me through a really challenging series of tests and see if out of that they could winkle something out. They didn't, I can assure you of that.

JS: And do you know if they actually found...

DT: No they did not find the mole on that occasion. Indeed, there may never have been one. But the games that those professionals play are extremely deep and beyond a normal person's understanding. Who knows, there may never have been a mole but there is very strong evidence there was one.

JS: It must have been a very disturbing experience.

DT: It was a very disturbing experience and it is one I have not thought about very often since. But the one really positive thing I got out of it until that interview with, what ever his name was who was then head of MI5, was that you know however the Russians did it - on our side there really was no - there was no mark left once the suspicion had been removed. They really - they did not destroy the files but the next posting I had was to Sofia which was the strongest confirmation that I could have had that nothing had stuck.

JS: So that must have been a tremendous relief to you.

DT: Yes, it was in a way and it was a great posting for all sorts of other reasons.

JS: I would like to continue with Sofia but perhaps we can go back to your experiences in Brussels in 1971, I think. Of course you arrived at the time of Khrushchev's fall and Brezhnev's arrival on the scene. What was the reaction in Bulgaria to this or was it just Khrushchev's departure and Brezhnev's arrival again, rather like Stalin – it actually didn't make any difference?

DT: It was "The King is dead, long live the King". The Bulgars were past masters at what is now called spin: what was accepted yesterday is history now. Khrushchev was the leader of the world and had fallen from grace, because we always knew that Khrushchev had certain defects. But of course Brezhnev is the answer to everyone's prayer and everything is going to be different from now on. It is all going to be fantastic and why did you ever think otherwise? So no immediate impact but the quality of life in Bulgaria was totally different from the old Soviet Union for us. But the newcomers all thought it was dreadful. For us it was fantastic

because we were never followed. Once in a while -if we were outside Sofia - we would find there was a car on our tail. The Defence Attaché was probably followed but we were not. Only occasionally when we went to spend a holiday in Varna, on golden sands, which was after the days the Bulgarians developed western tourism on the Black Sea and we went to spend a week or a couple of weeks maybe on the Black Sea with a cousin of mine and her family. We noticed there that we were followed there but very gently: the following car was at a distance and never intruded. It was just making sure that we were not going to visit some naval port or something like that, but they never bothered us at all. The local people were much friendlier. Out in the countryside, it is tradition in Bulgaria to have a foreigner at your wedding. And if we were driving through a village on a Sunday or something where they were having a local wedding I remember once we were asked to come and join in.

Almost the first thing I did on arrival in Sofia was to get the car and go to Plovdiv International Fair where a number of British firms were displaying their wares. I had learnt some Bulgarian and also spoke Russian, I was the number two at the embassy and the ambassador thought it would be good idea if I went. So I got in my car on my own and I drove to Plovdiv. There was only one road so that wasn't difficult and I went and saw all these firms and came back. On my way back I remember going into a restaurant because it was quite a long drive and I was hungry and it was late - I went into a restaurant, and I was immediately surrounded by Bulgars who wanted to know who I was, what I was, why I was there and have another drink. How lovely to see an Englishman. It was something that couldn't have happened in the Soviet Union. So from all sorts of points of view, it was a lovely country, where we really could go skiing. The embassy had a dacha out in the mountains and we could book it in turns and take the family out there, summer and winter and that was lovely. So we had two and a half years of sheer bliss in Bulgaria. Plus I had the sweetest ambassador Bill Harpham whose last post it was and who regarded me for some extraordinary reason as the best thing since sliced bread and I quickly discovered that whatever I submitted to him he just initialled and it went off. It was the first time this had ever happened to me. I really felt for the first time that I had to exercise my own responsibility, because he wasn't going to change a word I had written whether it was a despatch or a telegram. The only thing he would add was I am most grateful to Derek Thomas, so all of a sudden – an awesome responsibility it really was - but he was such a sweet man.

JS: What was the main function of the Embassy there?

DT: Keep its nose out of trouble and not bother the Foreign Office with a lot of boring reports of what was going on in Bulgaria. I discovered that one of the interesting things going on in Bulgaria was quite a lot of experimentation in economic policy. There was a political question and an economic question which arose in this context. The economic question was - is it working and how can we find out? The political question was - are they doing this on their own or if not what? Because they were putting more responsibility in the hands of companies like the Bulgarian airline or like the big wine producers and that sort of thing. They were clearly giving them a degree of economic independence and commercial judgement, and an ability to retain some of the profits from the work they were doing, plough them back into the company - even increase salaries in order to stimulate people's abilities. So the question was - is this part of the plan or is this outside the plan and who is approving it and what did it all mean? So I started making friends with the Deputy Chairmen of the State Plan and all kinds of people that normally one did not get to know as it was meaningless - in Bulgaria you could do that. And we got the Deputy Prime Minister invited on a visit to London and we had all sorts of interesting people come out and go round Bulgaria and look at things and do things, and I started sending back regular reports to the Foreign Office about the Bulgarian programme of economic experimentation. After about 9 months or a year of this we had a visit from the Assistant Head of Eastern Department who looked after the eastern and central European states, Perry Rhodes. He came and had dinner with me in my flat and we got talking about all these interesting reports I was sending back and he said: Yes, I did want to mention that. You are reporting rather a lot about Bulgarian economic experiments and we are not really interested, so please stop. But that's very much Perry's style and I think we did rein back a bit.

JS: But did this reflect the office's lack of interest in commerce at that time?

No, no, they were interested in commerce, they were interested in stimulating British exports to Bulgaria, they were interested in stimulating tourism; Thomson Holidays, used to come out on a big scale. But they were not interested basically in what the Bulgars were doing because the Foreign Office regarded Bulgaria as the most slavish of the satellites, the worst lick-spittles - whatever the Soviets did the Bulgarians would get on and do it and salute. And we used to write despatches explaining against the background of Bulgarian history and the

Turkish occupation for four hundred years, that this was really not so much the nature of Bulgarians, as their experience of history. It had taught them that when the wind blows, you lean with it.

JS: And they obviously got on with it

DT: It was pragmatism. And for heavens sake it was the Russians who liberated them from the Turks. The statue of Alexander II still stood in Sofia throughout the years of communism. He was always called Alexander the Liberator. He stayed there with his crown on and everything, on his horse and he is still there today. It was two Bulgarian monks who gave the Russians the Cyrillic alphabet. They were supposed to be Greeks but were actually Bulgarian Greek orthodox monks, Cyril and Methodius. Bulgarian today is in a way more like Church Slavonic, which is the language of the Russian bible than it is like contemporary Russian. They feel culturally very close to the Russians and Bulgaria had an empire long before the Russians had. In some senses, they feel discreetly, historically slightly superior to the Russians. It was the most natural thing for them to accept that if Russia was going communist OK that's what we are going to do. It was better than being run by the Nazis - that is what had happened before. And it was much, much better than being ruled by the Turks. But the Foreign Office never listened to this. They did not want anything positive said about Bulgaria. Bulgaria was the worst of the satellites: end of story. The Office did not want us to do very much except not have any nasty incidents of people becoming spies or anything like that. So our role was to keep up a tremendous amount of activity, organise tennis tournaments, organise plays, do lots with the staff and all that kind of thing. So when dear Bill and Isabel Harpham went on retirement and Desmond Crawley came out as the next ambassador, it was his first FO posting (he had been CRO before the amalgamation of the two Services and his previous posting had been in Ghana) and he arrived in Sofia and asked me to brief him on what his role was. A lot of it was about looking after the staff and he said, can you tell me what we run here? Is this a social security agency or is it an embassy? And I said frankly well it is a bit. We didn't have any great policy oriented role - except to report back, keep our noses clean and keep the staff happy, all of which I like to think we achieved remarkably well.

But, more seriously for me, this was the first job in which I had any administrative responsibility at all. I was suddenly plunged into trying to run an embassy of perhaps 15

people. And there had been no training for management, no indication at any stage that managing other people or running a mission was part of what the job was. It was noticeable in those days there was no training for it at all.

JS: Did you reflect on it at the time?

DT: Yes, I did. I reflected on what bad luck it was on everybody else that all my learning mistakes were – they had suffered from them and there were plenty of them I have no doubt.

JS: So did you think in that sense that the FO had that sort of slightly amateurish side to it?

DT: Yes I did and I would like to think that somewhere recorded in my exchanges with Personnel Department that something would have been said about it. Maybe I wasn't brave enough and daren't say it or I'd suddenly be made to work in one of the administrative departments if I showed too much interest in admin. I don't remember thinking that, but it was possible. What I wanted above all was to get back into the policy making end which was where I thought one's career should be. I felt I shouldn't really be concerned with things like management - that was up to somebody else to do. But I was conscious then and later when I – I don't remember thinking that too much in Paris, certainly not in this form, or in Washington, or back when I was Political Director. But I did feel it very strongly when I went to Rome as ambassador when suddenly I was the Accounting Officer, I was running this whole mission of whatever it was by then - 60 people or so. I thought then that the lack of training for management was a lacuna still.

JS: So it hadn't changed in all the 35 years you had been ...

DT: No, it had begun to change. We were already beginning to stop talking about the Head of Chancery and talking about the Political Counsellor. We were not allowed to call the Admin Officer Admin Officer, he was called Management First Secretary. By the early to middle eighties, a good deal of thinking was being done about this and I dare say in the Permanent Under Secretary's meetings with the Deputy Under Secretaries and the Chief Clerk we would have talked about all this and we would have seen change coming. But at my level anyway, as far as I was concerned, there was still no training for what one was then going to do.

JS: Did you attribute this to lack of foresight or interest by successive PUSs or Chief Clerks?

DT: No, I do not think so. I think it would be unfair to say that. I think the culture of the Service when I joined it and through most of my time was that we were a group of people whose role it was to advise ministers and the government on the identification of Britain's overseas interests in the context of its alliances and relationships with other countries and on the best ways of promoting those interests, protecting them against damage and improving Britain's prospects politically and economically. I think we would have assumed that the management of people as part of this process was incidental. It wasn't an important part of our jobs. Writing policy papers for ministers, sitting in discussions to work out the right policies or designing them was what our jobs were about. Everything else was incidental. If there was a management problem then someone else would take care of that. I remember when I was Financial Counsellor in Paris, a new Minister (Economic) arrived, Ronald Arculus, and he asked me to go in and see him. This surprised me slightly because as far as I was concerned, I reported to the Ambassador and not the Minister (Economic) and I certainly did not plan to have him coming and inserting himself in the system. He said he wanted to ask whether in this embassy we used "MBO." I said what is MBO? He said Management by Objectives. I said No, and he said well, what are your objectives? And I said I know what my objectives are and I don't have to write them down. And he said well I would be very grateful if you would write them down. I said it would be a complete waste of time, I mean, they change from day to day from week to week at least, and I certainly am not going to waste a lot of time – I didn't put it quite like that but I dare say my body language conveyed this and I dare say that I did go away with a requirement from my superior officer to write down what my objectives were. But it was the first time in my entire career - and I was by then 40 something - that anybody had thought to ask me to think through what my objectives were. And it was a long time before it filtered through to my consciousness that this was actually quite an important thing to do.

JS: So by the time you became Ambassador in Rome or even when you were at home in London as AUSS and DUSS, was this something you felt was important to instil in others?

DT: Yes, I think I probably did. Sometime when I was AUSS and DUSS, the identification of departmental objectives had become part of the working process. It was one of those

things which the administration were boringly imposing on us – a complete waste of time of course - but we all had to sit down and do these tedious things writing down objectives as if we did not know what they were already, and as if they were going to be the slightest use to anybody! But once those objectives - now I do remember doing this, and requiring AUSS's and Heads of Department to do it, when I was Political Director - and once those objectives began to be linked with budgets, then the whole thing began to make a lot more sense. Though one was still pretty resentful about the amount of time all this took up, distracting one from what one regarded as one's proper job, which was doing the policy end.

JS: So how difficult was it to achieve the right balance between objectives, setting objectives and doing the job you were there to do?

DT: Well I think it is very difficult to achieve that balance, unless a good deal of attention is being paid at the same time to what is now called the 'management of change'. And I think the process of moving from one culture and one organisational system to another - which was in fact what we were doing - requires a lot of skills and from the people who are instituting the changes. I think that the pressures were coming from all sort of areas. The Tory Government, Margaret Thatcher's government, was very keen to change the whole culture of the civil service and how it was working. They wanted to impose on it a system much more similar to the systems that worked so well in business. And so they introduced dotty things like incentive payments for senior members of the staff. In retrospect and after twelve years out of the Foreign Office, I can see the reasons why they thought it would be worth trying to introduce incentive payments. But to me at the time, all this showed was a complete lack of understanding about what drove the Civil Service and made it a unique and really worthwhile organisation. There was a culture there, of providing completely impartial advice, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to ministers. Highly intelligent people doing this with a very strong sense of duty - and they were not there for the money – they were paid peanuts – but they were not monkeys and almost unique in that sense - usually if you pay people peanuts – you do get monkeys and in the Civil Service in those days you didn't. You had some extraordinary people like the Robin Renwicks or the Antony Aclands who devoted every waking moment to the good of the nation and the service of the government and to offer people like that incentive payments worth a few hundred pounds was a bloody insult, apart from being completely stupid. I remember suggesting when this ludicrous proposal was made (each department was allowed to work out how they should do this) I suggested that as far as the

Foreign Office was concerned we should keep the whole sum intact and have an annual lottery within the service and who ever won it won it, that would be a terrific incentive and a bit of fun. And it certainly wouldn't be restricted to everybody up to B6 or something – not people who by then were getting slightly better paid. I really thought this was just such a total misconception of how the Public Service worked, it just made me angry. But I have to say, looking back, it was the start of a process, very clumsily and stupidly done, but it was the start of a process which was probably very necessary. The Management of Change would have been an important lubricant. I think as a result an awful lot of waste and unnecessary pain and grief was caused. There was a loss of people too, I don't mean lives but I mean people who would not accept this and just got out.

JS: While we're on this subject, there have been suggestions from time to time from various Prime Ministers and Foreign Secretaries about introducing businessmen into the Service to be ambassadors or to perform specific functions, the implication being that a businessman would be more capable of being an ambassador. Would you go along with this, or do you support more the idea of the totally professional Civil Service or Diplomatic Service in particular?

DT: I strongly support the idea of a professional Diplomatic Service. Simon Jenkins has tried for at least the last 25 years to prove that the Diplomatic Service is superfluous - an anachronism - and what is needed is a mixture of a civil service from which people would be drawn to do jobs overseas from time to time as and when they were needed and additional implants from outside for specific professional purposes. I think that is a completely misguided idea. I think that the life of people that are serving a government overseas is different qualitatively from doing a job in the capital and never moving out of the capital. It requires a different kind of culture, a different kind of spirit and I think it has proven its worth over the years. I think if you base your senior levels of your Foreign Service or your Overseas Service – sorry, no, let me complete my thought. They have tried on many occasions to encourage people in the Home Civil Service, sometimes in the Department of Trade and Industry, sometimes in the Treasury, sometimes in the Ministry of Agriculture, sometimes in Defence to go abroad. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. Very often the difficulty is getting back in again and I remember one very good example of an absolutely outstanding official in Washington from the Ministry of Agriculture who had been promised that if he went to do this job in Washington it would not affect his career. When he got back

to the Ministry of Agriculture he was put back into the same job at the same level as he had been in four years before. So that was the sort of encouragement that was given to people to go and do jobs outside. The answer when he challenged it and we challenged it and argued it with the Ministry of Agriculture was, they said, look, he has lost the place. He has spent four jolly good years having a wonderful time in Washington and not doing very much work and now he has got to learn what it is like back home. Now I have seen that happening in business here, exactly the same thing, it is a very human thing which is why I would argue very strongly if you want a successful service overseas – an effective service overseas – it has got to be a group of people who are recruited with that in mind. OK, you can make transfers in both directions if it doesn't work or if somebody in the Home Service decides they want to change and try their hand at doing the other - but you have to be a professional service - you can't base yourself on the Home Civil Service. Why do I think it is not a good idea in general to staff the senior posts with people from outside whatever their specialisation? Because if you have a professional service the peak of which is going to be a job of responsibility overseas as an ambassador or as a senior member of an embassy overseas and you start filling those posts with people from outside, you are denying the professionals the opportunity they were recruited to aspire to. I have seen that happen in the American service and I am astonished that some of the really good people stay in despite the fact that they are never going to make it to the top. They might make it to the top in Tashkent. But they are not going to make it to the top in Moscow or any serious places except in very exceptional circumstances like Ray Seitz - and look what a success Ray Seitz was in London. He was one of the best US ambassadors there has ever been. Why US ambassadors are reasonably successful when they are (though sometimes there are disastrous failures), is because there are first class American professionals underneath them. I am not saying that there aren't exceptions. I think there are two or three posts in the world where a professional service can't always be certain of producing the right quality of ambassador and the two posts I think of most are Washington and Paris. Presidential systems. And I think it is right and it makes perfect sense to reserve the right in two or three places like that – the UN may be one and some time in the future Brussels might be one. But, by and large, I think it is a bad policy and I would be very surprised if it would be successful in more than a very few places. I put forward to the Foreign Office the name of one of my colleagues here at Rothschilds – a woman director of Rothschild's who I thought - if they were going to pursue the idea of outside appointees, could be a very good candidate for being an ambassador in a medium sized OECD type post. Her outlook on the world, her approach to both business and politics,

a lot of what she did here had a lot to do with politics, her whole personality and way of thinking about things would have fitted very naturally into a post. She would have been an excellent representative overseas - and so I gave them her name - of course she never heard a word about it. I think they did do it in one or two places.

JS: I don't know about business people but you served under Christopher Soames in Paris, didn't you. Did you find that a successful ambassadorship or not?

DT: Yes, I did, I found it an extremely successful ambassadorship because I was lucky enough to be one of the people he needed.

JS: You were his Financial Counsellor?

DT: Christopher Soames - let me take a step back and look at him from the point of view of representing Britain in France - he was a huge success as ambassador. He was exactly the sort of Englishman the French like and respect. He had gargantuan appetites, I won't go into them all, probably be contrary to all the rules of the game, but he was wealthy, he was a big man physically and in every way. It would not cross Christopher's mind to go and talk to the Permanent Under Secretary or the Director General at the Quai d'Orsay. As far as he was concerned that guy was a flunkey, he was going to go and talk to a minister and if he could not see the President he would speak to the President's Chef de Cabinet who was equivalent to the Prime Minister and that was the way Christopher operated. He was fantastic, he was a great, great success. And turning Pompidou round to an acceptance that Britain could be permitted in to the European Community was to a measurable extent and I don't know whether I'm talking about 50% or 40% or 60% but to a measurable extent was attributable to the work Christopher Soames did there, his personality and of course the two of them, Mary Soames was also a huge success.

I'll give you an example. When the Queen paid a visit to Paris, while he was there - it was the second one she had made during her reign - and I don't think she has made another one since. For most Ambassadors that embassy would be a wholly appropriate place to receive the Queen and put on a do. Not Soames. The place was just altogether too much like a cottage so he had a huge marquee built with a ballroom floor and everything, there was already a ballroom in the embassy and a most memorable Royal ball was given during this

visit and Soames steam-rolled this whole thing through. God knows what it cost, but if you want to impress the French that is the way you have got to do it. So my answer to your question is: Yes, he was a great success. From every point of view except actually running the embassy. He needed Michael Palliser first and then Christopher Ewart-Biggs to be an absolutely first class Minister to take care of all the problems that he left in his wake and actually running the embassy and making it work. He did not use the embassy, he used individuals whose support, whose knowledge, whose contacts he needed to do his work. But the rest he ignored or was horrid to. As an ambassador in that sense I would not like to rate him.

JS: But he was the right man in the right place?

DT: He was the right man. After de Gaulle died and president Pompidou took office, Soames built a crucial relationship with the President's Directeur du Cabinet, Michel Jobert. I'm going back to '70-'71, '72. He would go along to the Elysee, often once or twice a day, and he would be constantly on the telephone to Jobert, maintaining confidence, discussing a whole range of issues that were important to the negotiations. Jobert had Pompidou's complete confidence. So it was that channel that really over time convinced the French that Britain would be a safe partner.

Once the Tories returned to office, Heath's role was of course important, and there was another person in all this whose role should not be underestimated. That was Robert Armstrong, who had been very close to Heath in an earlier incarnation, background in the Treasury, a senior Treasury official who had been a Private Secretary at No 10 and at the time when Heath became Prime Minister, if I remember correctly. He brought Robert in to be the Principal Private Secretary at No 10. And Robert then became a kind of emissary for Heath on these negotiations. He was an enthusiastic European himself and he would spend quite a lot of time in Paris with Soames, with Jobert, filling in the gaps. Whereas Christopher Soames' approach was always very broad brush, he was never much good at the detail. Robert Armstrong had an absolute mastery over all the details of the negotiations and the issues that needed to be resolved. He played a very important part. Of course this was very closely held, very few people knew that these contacts were going on. I knew about them because I was the Treasury's representative in Paris and my role was principally on the financial side of it all but that was a key part of it so I was one of the people in the Embassy

whom Soames drew on in order to inform and keep on the rails as it were his own contacts with the French.

You asked me if Heath was always the driving force. I think Macmillan himself, at least this is very much a worm's eye view from within the Foreign Office but my impression was that after the famous Lee Memorandum had gone to Ministers Macmillan was the main driving force. He had been convinced that our earlier decision to stay out had been wrong - I am of course going back to the earlier stage now when Heath was Minister of State in the Foreign Office. I am talking about the Lee memorandum of the late 1950's, 1959, I think.

Sir Frank Lee was Permanent Secretary at the Department of Trade and Industry. If he was not Permanent Secretary, he looked like it from where I was sitting. He was a very senior official. It was Macmillan when he came into office said: have I got this right about Europe? Are we right about staying out? The Lee memorandum was a response to a whole chunk of questions, which for all I know had been put together by Robert Armstrong at an earlier stage. We needed to address those questions to make sure that our policy of staying out of Europe was the right one and the answer was no, it was the wrong one. We must never separate ourselves from the United States but nor must we separate ourselves from Europe (and this is what is happening at the moment) so we must reengage. We must negotiate a relationship with the Common Market as it was then called which would provide access for Commonwealth products and some of the things we wanted. But at the same time we must get a place with the Six in this arrangement that was developing in Europe, getting away from the Sixes and Sevens, which were a very bad way of conducting business in this new era of relations between European countries. And during that period Ted Heath was indeed very much the driving force, with the Prime Minister's strong support, against all sorts of opposition. I don't know how much opposition there was within the Government in the early 70s. But I imagine that there were many Tories then who would have felt as reticent about strengthening the relationship with Europe as some still do. But Ted Heath from then until he became Prime Minister was very much the driving force among the Tories for the pro-European view. Whether officials were to the same extent pro-European depended, I think, on where you sat. I sat right in the very middle in those days - 61, 62, 63 - of what we called the European Economic Organisations Departments. Or was it one department divided into two? I think it was one department divided into two, half of which was dealing with the Seven, the other half with the Six. I was in the half dealing with the Six but from my

perspective after the Lee Memorandum and the decision by the government that this was the direction we had to go, my impression was that there was a 100% commitment among Foreign Office officials that this was the right course for Britain. It remained like that until I retired in the late 80s. It was from the early 70s, through to the late 80s there would have been very few people questioning the wisdom of our European policy. The one exception that I am aware of was Charles Powell, who became Margaret Thatcher's – can't think of the right term, but anyway

JS: Confidant?

DT: More than that, almost driving force. Anyway I could not tell you whether there were policy differences - no doubt there were - between Selwyn Lloyd, Howe, Macmillan. I was too far removed from the political discussions to know that. What were my impressions of Heath? In the early 60's I was working very closely with Ted Heath. I was not part of his Private Office but I was very much part of the team that was writing briefs, writing speeches for him, answering letters to the public which he was very particular about. My impression of him was that - and I think this is not with hindsight, I think this is what I felt at the time - that he was a hugely tough determined self-confident man who knew that he was right but he was such a driving force, he would not take no for an answer. He would try to steamroller his way through any resistance and I think in the end - my observation in Brussels - was that this was counterproductive. It produced too many enemies and gave too much concern about what the future might be like with this man as part of the scene. The other aspect was that either it had never occurred to him or he could not accept that there was any possibility of failure, so there was no sort of laying off of future risks built into his policies. When de Gaulle shut the door, it was a complete collapse instead of parrying and no sense of where to go - it was extraordinary, it was an extraordinary feeling. I remember going to a meeting of WEU after the negotiations broke down in 1963: immediately there was a ministerial meeting of Western European Union called in London and the French Minister didn't come. They sent an official. All other members of WEU, which was identical with EC, the Common Market plus Britain, which is why this vehicle was chosen as a meeting in which Britain fully participated. It was not really a WEU agenda at all. It was: what do we do now? and nobody had an idea – it was an extraordinary meeting. And that was an illustration of how little thought had been given to what to do if the negotiations failed. And then it was ten years later that I found myself back

again in Paris this time, at the other end. Sorry I mixed up there two things but Ted Heath was of course common to both periods.

JS: And how did you get on, what opinion did you think the French had of Ted Heath?

DT: That is quite difficult to say. I think they respected his integrity and he and Pompidou got on quite well together. But he's a strange man in many ways, Ted Heath. I mean, he insisted that when the negotiations came to an end - I forget whether the dinner was just before or just after - but everybody knew it was going to work out all right and we were all going to live happily ever after - and the President gave a dinner at the Elysée Palace and Ted Heath was the guest of honour and he really felt he had to make a speech in French as a politesse to the French, and it did not matter how much people tried to dissuade him from doing it in his schoolboy French. It is something you can do in some countries and people will feel touched that you are trying but it does not work in France and it was excruciating. It really was - but done with the best of intentions. I have to say I greatly respected Ted Heath and I got very fond of him in a way but he was a man with extraordinarily little grace. He never said thank you for anything. You put an idea to him and he would sort of scoop it up and take it away as if it was his own. He was a difficult man. But certainly he gave Britain a sense of direction with regard to European affairs. He was driven by absolute conviction and I think the greatest tragedy in our European policy is that Margaret Thatcher saw it all from such a different perspective and shared so little of that commitment to build something worth building in Europe that she lost the great opportunity of the 1980s. When in 1983 the Thatcher government was re-elected with a massive majority, it was an opportunity. She was the most respected and the most experienced politician in Europe. And at that point if she had had even a tenth of Ted Heath's commitment to build relationships in Europe that would really stand the test of time, instead of what her own instinct was which was what are we doing this for, why are we in here, we should not be here, it isn't where we belong. And you know she was going to have her pound of flesh for all the things that she required and if not she would not be worried about pulling out. So she could go to the n'th degree in pushing Britain's case and would feel she had won the day, she had done the great thing for Britain, which of course in a way is true. But she sadly missed, I think, a great opportunity to shape the direction that Europe was going in, and it was left to Delors and the French to go down a route which meant much closer integration, which meant finishing up with something like the European Monetary Policy, well ahead of when it made sense in my view. I felt she could

have diverted the course of Europe if she had committed herself to it. But by holding back - holding Britain back - just complaining at every step, she in the end completely undermined our ability to carry the day on matters of real importance to us where the direction Europe was going was concerned. It's a great pity and that was from 1983 onwards, we lost more and more of the authority that we had in Brussels. We're still picking up the pieces from that.

You asked about Kissinger and the Year of Europe. What did we think about it? I am not sure, I remember the Year of Europe much at the time: it did not seem have much impact when I was in Paris. I remember after I got back from Paris when Tom Brimelow was Permanent Under Secretary and I was Head of North American Department. Tom Brimelow asked me to do a paper on why the Year of Europe hadn't worked and that's the first time I ever started to think about the Year of Europe. It hadn't made much impact on me before. But I think what was driving Kissinger then was the sense that there was what he called one ball of wax, there were so many issues that were so mixed up in one kind of core, and he tried to tackle them all together. There was the defence issue, the agricultural issue, the industrial protection issue, the relationships between currencies issues and no doubt dozen of others that I can't remember now. But his approach was say we have to get together and this is going to be the year of Europe and we're going to solve all these problems. They're all part of one ball of wax and they have got to be tackled together. And the answer was that you couldn't take all those things. You had to separate out the defence issue, the agricultural, you couldn't trade off lower agricultural protection in return for a higher American input into European defence. That was the way Kissinger's mind seemed to be working - I'm probably grossly misrepresenting what he was really trying to do - but the way I saw it was that he was trying to put all those things together and trade off one against another rather like you do in a round of international trade negotiations but it wasn't going to work that way. In the end the Year of Europe didn't have any impact in fact because that was not how it was done. What happened was that in each of the relevant forums, in NATO, in Europe, in Brussels, in the GATT, in WEU, that I was talking about earlier, in OECD, in each of those forums the problems between the United States and Europe were addressed separately and gradually one after the other, *modus vivendi* were found. And so - over the period of a couple of years the issues that had seemed so acute in 1973 following the collapse of Bretton Woods system and the first of the big oil price increases, they gradually began to be resolved and relations became better again.

JS: Can I ask you about how Watergate was viewed in France?

DT: Watergate – the French never understood Watergate at all

JS: The Russians didn't either I understand.

DT: I shouldn't think they did. I think you have to be American to understand Watergate. I don't think it had any great impact. What did we all feel in Paris in those days? We were madly keen and enthusiastic, the Government had set the objectives and we were there to help achieve them, and we were hugely enthusiastic, I don't know anybody who wasn't. The French were as always a bit hesitant about receiving Britain in for a number of reasons. I think they were always worried about the Trojan horse. I think at a deeper level they were worried that the French dominance in European institutions would be undermined. At the level of the Quai d'Orsay there was that. But in the end I think they came to the conclusion that they wouldn't be able to prevent us from coming in this time around, there was too much support in the rest of Europe and there was too little that we were asking for that couldn't be granted. I think they came to the conclusion that provided they got a number of things set up in advance in such a way that they couldn't be changed once we got in - the Common Agricultural Policy was the principal one of those – they could live with Britain in. I think they felt they had got as much in place as they could, to suit their interest which is exactly what they should have been doing. We shouldn't criticise them for that. It's what we would have been doing if it had been the other way round.

Going back to the Treasury. That had a great impact on my own career. I spent 15 months at the Treasury.

JS: Did you volunteer?

DT: No, I was asked when I was in Ottawa. I went to Ottawa for four years after having been in Bulgaria. After I had been there for 18 months, the High Commissioner asked me to go and see him and said that the Foreign Office wanted me to come back to go and take a job in the Treasury. He couldn't tell me why but he thought it was a very good opportunity and I ought to consider it. So I went to see my boss, who was Robin Gray, who was the Commercial Counsellor. My job there was Commercial First Secretary and my boss was

Robin Gray and I told him what was proposed. He had heard about it from the High Commissioner. I told him I had asked the High Commissioner why me, what was this about, why would I go to the Treasury for 18 months. I think I had been told there would be – if it worked – an interesting posting abroad afterwards, nobody could say where to. And so I told Robin Gray this and he said oh that's ridiculous, I'll find out. So he got on the telephone to London and spoke to various people and came back and he said it's Paris. And he told me I'd be a xxxx - I can't tell you the word he used but it was an extremely rude word - not to take it. But I said I have only been here for 18 months and he said well forget this. This is the opportunity of your life and you'd better go if you have got any sense. I talked to my wife about it and we were both very sad to leave Canada because we loved it and the children liked it. But eventually I said OK and I arrived at the Treasury. I was working for a wonderful Treasury official called Mary Hedley-Miller. You asked me about the difference between the way the Foreign Office did things and the way the Treasury did things. Now I would bet that if a young Foreign Office chap – or rather a young Treasury chap walked into the Foreign Office, he would be put in some rather second rate department somewhere "he's not going to be able to do anything useful" – so we'll put him in Western Organisations Department where he cannot do much harm and ...

JS: Re-write the War book...

DT: But at the Treasury Mary Hedley-Miller asked me to come in to her office, and she closed the door and she said, now the first thing I want you to do is be secretary of an extremely sensitive group that we have just set up today - and I think you are just the chap to do it. Its code word is something - and I can't even remember what the code was - but this was in - where are we – it was in 1969 – this was still in the great days of Bretton Woods and currencies tied to gold and fixed exchange rates and all that, and any whisper of devaluation of sterling was absolute dynamite. And she said this is a working group between the Treasury and the Bank of England to consider the possibility of devaluing sterling. Now I nearly fell off my chair at the thought that the Treasury was inviting a complete outsider to join in this group to work on these papers and send back recommendations direct to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I was secretary of this group and I was sitting in on the meetings not opening my mouth not saying anything, just taking the record and producing whatever paperwork needed to be done for the meetings, but eventually of course becoming part of the working group. And this was under Mary Hedley-Miller who was the Assistant Under Secretary (in our

terms) responsible for international monetary affairs. I was her dog's body and so you know, she used me. But it would have been inconceivable the other way around. When that job was done and we did not devalue sterling but it happened later, I was – I became the IMF desk officer and anything to do with International Monetary Fund from whom we were having quarterly visits and we were preparing great documents for them to go through and investigate what's happening to our balance of payments, whether we were running our economy right and so on and it was a fascinating job. I learned a huge amount about the way anybody runs their economy. I learned a great deal about how to present papers that appeared to be saying one thing, appearing to be presenting a very complete picture, but concealing all the things we did not want the IMF to know were going on. It was a fascinating exercise in both financial policy and in international financial diplomacy and western politics. I learned a great deal. I was there for 18 months and it brought me into contact with all – the whole hierarchy in the Treasury from the Chancellor who was Roy Jenkins right the way through the Under Secretaries, Deputy Secretaries, all the various bits of the Treasury. It is a small department, a much more open community than the Foreign Office in my experience. In those days when I worked in the Foreign Office, you know, the First Secretary could only submit his papers to the next guy up who then passed them on to the next guy and so it went right up the ladder and took ages. And any work that one had done at the bottom would get sort of overlaid on the way and it was very rare that anyone working at that sort of level would find that their name was known to the Minister. Whereas in the Treasury, if I submitted something to my Assistant Secretary, or my Under Secretary, he would say, well is this right, why do you put it to me, why don't you put it to the Chancellor's office, straight, perfectly simple. It was a much more direct process and it taught me to take much more responsibility for what I was doing. This was sort of stage two. I think I mentioned earlier that in Bulgaria I had an ambassador who just took what I did - that was the first thing I learned about responsibility. In the Treasury it was the same kind of lesson but of a different order. If I thought I knew - I knew I would get criticised if I was not sufficiently confident to put my views direct to the Chancellor's office.

JS: Probably it also taught you the importance of giving responsibility?

DT: I didn't have anybody to give it to. In my later career perhaps, yes certainly. It certainly taught me – and I shall never forget Mary telling me she wanted – on day one she wanted me to do this highly sensitive job and that was taking me on trust in a way which

never happened to me before, but I remembered afterwards when having – and I can't think of an example now – but it did colour my whole approach to having people in from outside. It certainly coloured my approach – lateral thinking – in a funny way to talking to journalists. Because I found, particularly when I was - later on – Political Director that the only way I could get journalists to write the sort of positive things I wanted them to write was by telling them A) the truth and B) the whole truth and I was never let down. Nobody ever leaked a story, nobody ever quoted my name, I don't think I ever – they certainly never passed on anything that turned out to be a leak, in the way that happens nowadays - but that kind of openness in the Treasury coloured a lot of the way in which I worked in later years.

JS: Do you think the Foreign Office is unnecessarily closed in that way?

DT: I think it used to be. I'm not sure why it was in the culture of the place. I think it became much more open later on. I think I was the only person to have those experiences outside, and I think I was the first implant into the Treasury but subsequently I think there has always been a Foreign Office person there. Nicholas Bayne was the next one, Michael Jay went and John Kerr did it and went straight into the Chancellor's Private Office. So there was this extraordinary sequence of people and I was the first experiment. But it was a great experience. Maybe not for some of the others but it was a great experience for me. But actually what I meant when I said to you last time that it had affected my career was that I think the Treasury must have sent a very positive report on me when I went back to the Foreign Office and moved on to Paris, and that apart from – did I tell you about Christopher Soames' first speech to me – no – when I arrived in Paris to succeed a man called John Aston, who was a Treasury official. He had been there for about four years and he was regarded by the French as a genuine Treasury person. The Ministry of Finance treated him almost as one of their own. He was very successful, he went on to be all kinds of other things. He was British Executive Director at the IMF and then went on and became Permanent Secretary somewhere. But when he left Paris, Christopher Soames had wanted another man from the Treasury to do this job on the grounds that it took one to know one and the French would never accept anyone who wasn't a genuine Treasury official and talk to him on equal terms. But the Treasury couldn't produce anybody because none of the Treasury officials really wanted to go and live abroad because of schooling problems and all that. So it was Patrick Reilly who had said why don't you get a good person from the Foreign Office and that was why somebody was recruited and it turned out to be me, to go to the Treasury for 18 months

and then go to Paris as the Treasury's representative having been sort of baptised with Treasury fire. The Foreign Office in its wisdom thought that the French would swallow this and think he was a real Conseiller Financier, which was what all their people were. Christopher Soames did not think this was possible. When I arrived in Paris and I went to see him after lunch and went into his office, his Private Office in Paris and he blew in through the communicating door of the Residence with the fumes from an extremely good lunch and a cigar still burning and came and plonked himself down behind his desk and he said to me, Well he said, I might as well be perfectly straight, I don't think you will be able to do this job. So I said: Well I am not at all sure that I can either but suppose we give me a chance. And I said I had spent 15 months at the Treasury and I had learned a great deal, and my French is passable, and I am very keen to give it a try. That was the start of our relationship, and the next morning I opened my *Le Monde* or whatever it was, and I saw that the French Ministry of Finance had completely restructured French interest rates - an extremely complicated manoeuvre, and before the morning meeting, I rang around everybody I could think of ringing including my friends in the Treasury in London and the Bank of England to find out what they thought the French had been up to. Then I checked it out with two French people I had met on various excursions out there to look at this job and found out what they thought was happening. So when the morning meeting came along Christopher's bloodshot eyes swept around the table and came to me and he said, well so what's all this about interest rates? thinking I wouldn't have a word to say and I'd have been bowled into the aisle, and so I gave him five minutes on what had happened and what was going to happen next. And all drawn from what other people had said to me - I hadn't a clue myself - and after that meeting Michael Palliser who was the Minister kept me back and he said: Well done! So that was evidently a test and after that I found myself more and more drawn into the little coterie of people who were working around Christopher Soames, principally on this whole question of Europe and it worked very well from then on. So when I went back from Paris, Christopher had gone by then - four and a half years later Eddie Tomkins had arrived and Michael Palliser had gone as Minister and Christopher Ewart-Biggs came who became a great life-long friend until he was assassinated by the IRA. And I think that the reports that got sent back to London from me in Paris coloured the whole of the rest of my career. And the reason for that was that having had this sort of special experience in the Treasury and doing this job in Paris that nobody else could do I was in a kind of unique position. Whereas almost all the other Counsellors in Paris had lots of competitors around doing slightly similar jobs in conventional areas of foreign policy, I was sort of on my own, in this empire. That's why I said I thought it

had completely altered my career, put me in a different sort of bracket for a while. And indeed I wondered whether at the end of that time in Paris whether I should do one of three things, either go back to the Foreign Office, or go back to the Treasury where I seemed to have built up a sort of good character, or go outside into one of the merchant banks, which a lot of people had a mind to do at that point. The age of 44 seemed an ideal moment to get out into the City and see if I could make a career there. In the end I decided to stay where I was because it seemed to me that having sort of got on to a ladder, as it were, as distinct from a snake - if I went outside, or even if I went back to the Treasury, I couldn't be certain that I wouldn't find myself stuck so I decided to stay with the Foreign Office and that is when I went to become Head of North American Department. I did not know what they were going to do with me. I had no idea what I was going to do. You can imagine, I had done three economic jobs on the trot and I therefore wanted to go back to a straight political job and the Foreign Office accepted that. But they did not have anywhere for me to go. First of all they thought they would send me to Southern European Department which I knew nothing whatever about, Spain or Portugal or anything like those, and you know one feels it was lunacy for that 'first off' job as Head of Department to be put in an area one simply didn't know, so I said no and went back to gardening. The next thing was a telephone call to say would I would like to be Head of Northern American Department. I had been in Canada so I knew something about North America and they said, how about that? So, I was getting a bit bored by then. I think I had been home for a couple of months doing nothing, and it did not seem the most encouraging way to start, so I said all right, yes, I'll do that. So I think I was the first and possibly only Head of North American Department who had never served in the United States. Which is a strange thing. However, this was a straight political job and the first thing I discovered on taking up my post as Head of Northern American Department was that the Treasury were about to denounce the Anglo-US Double Taxation Agreement without consulting anybody. So I rang up my friends in the Treasury and said what on earth are you up to? You can't do that. And then I sent a note to the Secretary of State to say that the Chancellor of the Exchequer was about to ring his colleague in Washington and denounce the Double Taxation Agreement for the following reasons. I suggested that there were half a dozen arguments that ought to be put to him. I think this was done and fortunately another way was found of dealing with the problem. But it was an interesting example of how, you know, you think you are going to change your course and go and do something to show that you can be a straight political officer, and get away from all this economics that you were tagged with, and the first thing that happens is a straight forward bit of economics that is

going wrong. But it was an early example to me of the way in which foreign policy is really so much made up of basically economics on the one hand and defence on the other. And that is what North American Department was all about. Now, you wanted me to say something about – I don't think I've anything to offer on that one. At the Treasury I was only ever under Roy Jenkins who I thought was a great Chancellor in many ways.

JS: Perhaps we can move on as we have already started talking about financial matters instead of North America Department, and as I mentioned here this coincided with the end of the Vietnam war. Do you have anything to say about the relations between the Ford and Wilson governments?

DT: The aspect of all that that I saw most was the relationship between Kissinger and Callaghan, which was extremely close. Kissinger would fly into London airport on his way somewhere and Callaghan would whizz out there in a car with a few key officials of whom I was lucky enough sometimes to be one and there would be there in the VIP lounge a sort of quick bilateral meeting covering the whole range of international relations. I think Kissinger was very artful. He would flatter Callaghan enormously and could then go away and say oh we've got the Brits onboard for this one, but the strange thing is - your question - I find very illuminating in a way because I can't remember that Vietnam issues figured very much and it must have done, but it didn't - it hasn't kind of stuck in my mind. I think there were – the sort of big European game was, you know whether Europe was one, whether so to speak NATO was an issue, the relations with the Soviet Union was a big issue, how détente was getting along, but I don't remember - the British public opposition to Vietnam it certainly was very clear - my recollection is that on the whole throughout that period the official British Government position was on the whole rather supportive of what the Americans were doing.

JS: Exactly that is my point, and I wondered - in view of the support they received - if the Americans felt that the relationship was particularly close in the same way perhaps that Mrs Thatcher was very warm towards Reagan and Pinochet because of their support in the Falklands?

DT: Yes, I think there was a - I am not sure that Wilson and Ford had any sort of relationship. Certainly Callaghan and Kissinger were absolutely keen to hold all that together, I think that –

JS: So that was a good personal relationship. What did you think of Callaghan as Foreign Secretary?

DT: I think he was very good. He was – I don't think he was really a man who – who had a great vision for foreign policy but he was a very, very good practitioner as was Kissinger, as was his French opposite number, at sort of keeping relationships warm, addressing problems and getting them straight. I am not sure that he had a great vision but the closest I sort of got to this Kissinger relationship was after I had stopped being Head of North American Department and I went on to be Under Secretary of Economic Affairs, and when Michael Butler was the Deputy Secretary and Michael did all the European stuff but the rest he left to me. So when Callaghan went off to be Prime Minister, I did the North-South dialogue with David Owen. In fact my mind's a bit blurred about the difference between Callaghan as Foreign Secretary and Callaghan as Prime Minister when he still remained very close to the Americans and did a lot of that himself.

But as the Assistant Under Secretary for Economic Affairs, just before the 1979 election, I went with Callaghan on a trip to the sub-continent, to India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. He was very impressive in his relations with the political leaders in those times, even though from a very different cultural background and so on. He had a kind of natural talent for winning confidence and appearing to speak very frankly and Callaghan had very open hands and great gifts being handed out and it was in terms of relationship building he was very impressive but as I say I am not sure that he was someone with a great vision. He was not a Ted Heath in the sense that he – he did not have a great vision about where we should be in Europe. He wanted to strengthen Britain's position in the whole world but I think his main purpose was establishing what he regarded as good strong relationship with the Americans and the Commonwealth.

JS: Do you have any sort of recollection of Crosland ..

DT: Crosland - I am not sure I served under Crosland. I don't think I was at the Foreign Office when Crosland was there - was I just?

JS: I think you went to America in 1979

DT: Maybe before I got there, I certainly – let's see

JS: Yes, Crosland was 76 to 77 and Owen was 77 to 79.

DT: Ah yes, you see I didn't get back from Paris until 76, 75, maybe just. And I must have overlapped with Crosland then but I certainly was not in his office - but Owen, yes certainly. I didn't take to him then at all, he didn't trust officials and when one would go to a meeting in his office, one would get an opportunity to say one's piece, but when one went out one felt he knew much better than we did what he wanted to do and didn't want our advice at all. And that lasted until I became an Under Secretary, which I did in I think 1976 and I took over the job of Economic Under Secretary. I think I was only in North American Department about a year. And then I became an Under Secretary. That's right, because I was offered the job of Minister in Moscow and I said, yes, I'd love to do that and the Russians wouldn't give me a visa. So I was not able to do that and so I was going to go back to being a Counsellor until I was offered this economic job, which meant going back to economics, but actually the Moscow job would have been about economics too. The reason they wanted me to do that was because I was almost the only person in the office who had both Russian and economics and they wanted to strengthen the economic side of the Embassy in Moscow. But that was not to be so I took over from John Mason as Economic Under Secretary in the middle of the famous North-South dialogue which was one of the end pieces from Kissinger's 'ball of wax' - it was tackling the problems of the 77, the developing countries as they were then called and their relationships with the 8 or the OECD countries, The North-South dialogue was an idea of Giscard d'Estaing's to try to address the problems provoked by the oil crisis when oil prices were quintupled and started off the whole process of inflation in the Western economies. It caused endless problems and Giscard said the only way we could get on top of these things was to have a conference at which we would address all the problems of the emerging world. So they had this huge conference, which was divided up into 4 basic areas. There was oil and energy. There were aid flows. There were trade issues, and there was I don't remember what it was now - but there were these four groups each of which had a co-chairman, one from the industrialised world and one from the developing world, and all the participating countries had large delegations – staying in Paris – and it lasted for about 18 months. We'd just started that in 1976 when John Mason was the UK bit of it, and he was posted off to be Ambassador in Israel when Anthony Elliott suddenly drowned. And I was

drafted in to take over in the middle of this conference, which was a fascinating experience and the only conference, I think, ever where the European Community spoke with one voice through a joint presence of the Presidency and the Commission. And so before the European Delegation could open its mouth at these meetings there had to be a meeting of all the EU delegations and an agreed line worked out for the Presidency and the Commission to speak together, which was an extraordinary exercise. The other OECD countries used to get enraged by the EU because they couldn't come out and speak until we'd agreed a position. Sometimes it took hours of debate and argument to agree a position. That was a fascinating experience because it taught me for the first time the beginnings of the arts of multilateral diplomacy. It was going on at every level. First of all we had the UK Delegation, which had Treasury, Department of Trade, Department of Agriculture, all the economic departments sort of represented in it, and UK Delegation had to agree a position, which I then had to take to the EU where we then had to have exactly the same set of arguments we'd had with the UK Delegation with the hard line view from the Treasury represented by the Germans, the soft line view represented by the Aid Department being represented by Benelux, the sort of crafty view that we'd got from the Department of Trade and Industry represented by the French and so on. We went round exactly the same set of arguments again in the EU and had to come up with an agreed position for that. Then we'd move to the next debate, which was the OECD countries and had exactly the same set of arguments there between the Americans and the Swiss, and the EU, and the Australians and who ever else – I can't remember who all the 8 were. The EU was one voice and then at the end of that whole process we had to negotiate with the 77. It was an extraordinary exercise, and it went on all those months. And if you look at the records you will find all the academics and all the newspapers pronounced it a great failure, but I don't think it was. I think it was an extraordinary achievement. It put an end to the conflict between the oil producers and the OECD, which was where the origins of the whole thing lay. It began a process of beginning to address absurd problems that were caused by Western aid and debt policies towards the emerging countries. I remember at the end of the process, in a conversation with David Owen about this, it was perfectly clear that we'd got to effectively let the emerging countries off masses of old debts, which had accumulated. Obviously they were supposed to be paying interest for all kinds of borrowing, which, nowadays, and I am going back now to the late 70s, those would be grants - they should never have been loans in the first place, but because they'd started off as loans, none of the Ministries of Finance would let them off the interest rates for the reason that, had they done so, then the whole structure of international debt would be in jeopardy. If you start

letting off one category of borrower, where do you stop? So the Treasuries of the world all insisted that this had to go on and they had to go through the motion of paying off their debts. But that began a process of rethinking and led to – its still going on. Look at Gordon Brown's most recent Treasury statements, where they take the view where we've actually got to let in the long-term interest of the world's economy, we've got to forgive them debts, forget them.

JS: So was David Owen a voice in the wilderness?

DT: He was a voice in the wilderness in London I think but I am not sure how hard he pushed it. He was prepared to agree – privately - this all made sense but I found him there in that conference maybe he'd learned a lot in the intervening time. I remember when I first met him in London when he was so distrustful. By the time we got to that conference it was a rather different kind of David Owen and I got to like him in this respect very much. I thought in the end he was a rather good Foreign Secretary. Gosh, was it really 1979?

JS: Yes, so then you actually went to America. The events I described like the fall of the Shah, advent of Khomeini, the US hostages and the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, must have occurred while you were in Washington?

DT: Yes

JS: Initially you went as Financial Counsellor, didn't you?

DT: No, I went as Minister (Commercial) and I succeeded Lord Bridges there. But the commercial job in Washington is not what commercial jobs usually are. It was not about promoting exports although there was a commercial department inside the Embassy that did that. The Minister's job was about bilateral and international trade disputes and, you know, if the Americans launched a steel anti dumping action, which would effect our industries or if there was a new double taxation treaty to be negotiated, or if there was a new aviation treaty to be negotiated. These things were going on all the time, then that was the job of the Minister (Commercial) as it then was called, as distinct from the Minister (Economic) who was the UK Executive Director at the IMF and who in my time was first John Aston, whom I'd succeeded in Paris, and then Bill Ryrie, and then it became Nigel Wicks, of more recent considerable fame, and I worked with all three of them. But their side of it was the financial.

Their team in the Embassy reported on the US economy. But my team were all sorts of trade, agriculture, aviation people and we were of course closely linked into the trade delegations in New York which did all the export and commercial stuff. So the job was a strange one, but very much affected by things like the US hostage crisis. Of the two things in your list that I think most affected my life, were first of all the hostage crisis in Tehran which effectively brought Carter down, that's why he finished up as a one term President, and the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, which created problems like the Siberian pipeline crisis, when the American Administration was by then led by Reagan not Carter.

JS: Reagan was 1981.

DT: One of the early decisions of the Reagan administration and Congress at that time was to pass retrospective legislation – of an extraterritorial kind. Extraterritoriality was one of the big issues in those days, and the Americans were always trying to do things which impacted on other peoples' jurisdictions. They would pass laws, which had a direct effect on companies working in France or in Britain. Our governments were aside from, you know, quite separately from the special relationship and all the good relations we had with the United States, the Brits were always in the lead in trying to hold on to the tails of the Americans and prevent them from legislating something which actually purported to apply American law in other countries you see. And the Siberian pipeline crisis was a very direct result of this. What they did was to pass legislation which made it illegal for any company using American patented technology to sell any products to the Soviet Union that were affected by American patents. American goods and American patents could not be used for trading with the Soviet Union. This wasn't a law that applied from the day on which it was passed to the future, leaving whatever contracts might be using American technology in a Soviet contract before then in force, it was retrospective. So John Brown which was supplying turbines to the Soviet Union using turbine blades that were using American technology both in the metal of which the blades were constructed, and also in the design of the blades - those contracts were rendered illegal, which meant that John Brown faced two choices. They were one of half a dozen European companies that were in the same situation – two big German companies, a French and an Italian company and others, and either they carried out the contracts and risked being taken to court in the USA – having all their assets in the United States seized, and, you know, the sanctions were horrendous against that sort of situation - or they would cease to carry out the contract in the Soviet Union and have an

action brought against them in UK courts or in French courts. The Soviets would certainly have brought an action for breach of contract. So either way they were likely to be bankrupted. So we fought a tremendous battle in Washington with the American Administration, and with Congress, to try to get them to reverse this and in the end we succeeded. It was an EU joint effort to do this. I think it was the time when the Danes were in the Chair and there was an absolutely brilliant Danish ambassador in Washington who was a kind of leader of this whole team but there were three or four of us who were core-members of the group and it was a fascinating example of – and rather a rare example – of a country outside the United States that actually by diplomacy overturned American legislation, American Ministerial decisions, and in the end they backed off. That was one of the direct effects of the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. Looked at from my funny angle on the commercial side of the Embassy, although I think by then I was Minister, I can't quite remember, when it all started. My main job when I was Commercial Minister was dealing with another of these American extraterritorial legislations, which was the Westinghouse case, an uranium litigation against UK and other European firms - a hugely complicated business. I am not sure, off the top of my head, that without going back and doing some home work that I can explain now what it was all about. But it was another case where a big American company, Westinghouse, were bringing actions in US courts against big UK and other European firms which again would have bankrupted them, and this was for taking action which in their own countries was perfectly legal but which in the United States was illegal. The Westinghouse case was to do with trading uranium, not with the enemy but among themselves, and at a time when it was to do with price fixing. It was at a time when uranium prices were extremely low - and if the companies concerned hadn't engaged in some kind of mutual support they would have gone bust. British Nuclear Fuels as they are now was the British end of this, and a number of other European companies were involved. They organised a sort of ring of mutual support to tide them through the time when uranium prices were low and they could hope, by mutual support, to survive through to a time when prices had become better – things were not so difficult. Westinghouse brought an action against them in the US courts for taking action, which in the US was illegal. It was a hugely complicated case, involving the most expensive lawyers, and in the end it was settled out of court. Half or three quarters of my time in the Embassy in Washington was spent on that kind of issue. I don't think that there is any another country where Foreign Office officials get drawn into that kind of business other than in the United States.

JS: You mentioned the other event, which impacted in particular on your job – the hostage problem.

DT: Well mainly in the sense that it brought Carter down, I thought prematurely. I liked the Carter administration. They worked extremely effectively, they were very collegiate, they were very punctilious and precise, and they were very internationally minded. We had been working with them on all those things arising out of the North South dialogue and addressing problems like the ideas that were coming from the 77 for a new world international order, which really would have overturned the world's capitalist trading structure - the open market economic structure - and put in place what would have appeared to be a much more socialist organised kind of thing. We worked very closely with the Carter Administration in all those areas and I found them, certainly from my perspective, extremely constructive and good people. And then, of course, as a result of the hostage crisis among other things, there were other factors including the unpopularity of Carter's rather tight budgetary policy, which really continued in the event, but which made Carter very unpopular at the time because of his early battle helped by the health and education at trying to reach a budget balance. And that was fairly obvious. So they were pursuing the right economic policy. But it came at a bad moment for him and it hadn't begun to produce the good economic results that eventually it did under Reagan in time to influence Carter's election campaign. It wasn't a good campaign. All those things happened but the Teheran hostage crisis was really the killer and brought that to an end. Then in came the Reagan people who, by comparison, were a very much less well organised and well structured group. It took months for them to understand what they were doing. There were many outside appointees who came in, more than there had ever been before, and at quite a senior level in the Administration, and it took six months to a year before one could find interlocutors who were really on top of their jobs. It was a very peculiar time. I was sorry to see the Carter era go. I thought relations, I don't suppose relations between Margaret Thatcher and Carter were very close – they were like chalk and cheese - and she had already by then got to know Ronald Reagan. She didn't know he was going to be the next president, but she knew him when he was the Governor of California and they had a real kindred spirit for that era. Although his way of working drove Margaret Thatcher mad at times, she would never let on, but you could see she was absolutely bursting at the seams. He had a point that she raised and he had to find the right idiot card and then read off two sentences. That was the end of his contribution. And she would then launch in and say "Yes, but Ron..." and then she used her Euro-technique of speaking for half an hour, and at the end

he would agree. Although their methods of working were totally different, and she would find him quite exasperating in some ways, nevertheless the sort of underlying philosophy between the two of them was extraordinarily close, so that was a good relationship. But it had this down side in my view. For the whole of the Thatcher years it created the impression that the special relationship was back, and that what mattered for Britain most of all was this relationship with the United States. And that coupled with her great reticence about relations with the other Europeans, who had been put in their place twice in her life time and, you know, that made it quite clear what kind of people they were. With the Americans you could always count on them when the chips were down and they would come in and support us. We spoke the same language, we really understood one another and the Reagan/Thatcher bond sort of spread out and gave everybody the feeling that this was a much stronger relationship than really common sense supports and when push came to shove – moments like the Bluestreak withdrawal, moments like the invasion of Grenada, and moments like major trade issues, or major decisions on defence projects, first, second and third in importance for the United States was what mattered for the United States. and as far as, you know, the presence of England was concerned, or anything like that, we would sort that out afterwards. When I was living there, and while the Thatcher/Reagan relationship was giving us some wonderful impressions of an over-arching relationship, underneath all that, when one went out into the United States, into the business world and talked to an international relations group in Cleveland or Arkansas, and they knew about Germany and maybe about Japan, poor old Britain. Whatever happened to Britain? This was the underlying sense. OK the Falklands War changed that perception for a while. Once all that was over and done, long after I had left Washington, we noticed a return of that sort of underlying sense of disappointment. Why weren't you getting involved in Europe and playing your part in EMU and that sort of business? 9 Americans out of 10 who were interested in this country - and that is a very small proportion - those who were interested couldn't understand why we were sort of mooning across the Atlantic at the United States and not getting on with getting the Europeans sorted out. And so in a funny way the Reagan/Thatcher relationship was an illusion. It was close, and it wasn't uncritical. Of course, during the Falklands War - yes we couldn't have done without US support. I don't know what would have happened if it hadn't been for Weinberger in the Pentagon who was busy handing out aid and weapons and so on before the Administration made up its mind what it was going to do. Yet to begin with Reagan was very confused. He had Jean Kirkpatrick on one side telling him relations in the hemisphere were all that mattered, forget Britain and its old imperialism, they've got no business to be out here;

it's a bunch of rocks in the South Atlantic. Who needs that? On the other side, there were the pro-Europeans like Eagleburger who was saying we've got to support the Brits and so on. But it was touch and go in the beginning – it really was. What Alexander Haig was trying to do in the early stages was to negotiate an arrangement under which ultimately sovereignty would pass to Argentina. What he was looking for was something that the Brits could just about swallow for now, but it would start a process that would perfectly clearly lead to ultimate Argentinian sovereignty after a finite period. It wasn't until at the third attempt of going down to Buenos Aires, he found all the generals drunk, and clearly it wasn't going to work, that Haig finally changed his mind and from that moment on the Administration was 100% supportive. But it took – it took – weeks before we reached that point and in the meantime Nicko Henderson was doing a fantastic job on television dealing with the press and so on, and bringing the American public on our side. He had a great instinct for what were the values that would really ring true, you know, to the Americans and he would talk on television about the rights of a citizen. It was a very small group of islands of no great importance perhaps, but historically he would explain that Argentina had no claim, that the rights of the individual islanders were absolutely paramount, and Britain was going to defend those rights with our blood, even though there was no interest in it for us. This was not about imperialism. He got all this across amazingly effectively and eventually it worked. But we would not have succeeded there had it not been for the help we got from the American military on refuelling and weapons assistance. So that was a fascinating time in my life – to be involved in – Nicko did all the public sort of work, the Defence Staff on our side were very much involved with the day to day requirements finding how they could be met. It was very interesting.

JS: You served as Political Director in London under Geoffrey Howe. Can you explain what exactly is the role of the Political Director?

DT: Well, it's several things, or it was in those days. It was the – it's a peculiar expression it's a Frenchism which we've imported – Le Directeur des Affaires Politiques. What it means is Director of Political Affairs as distinct from Director of European Affairs, which would have been a better name for it. He was a Deputy Under Secretary who brought together all political relationships as far as Europe and NATO were concerned. In other words, the Political Director was not directly concerned with relations with America, or relations with Africa or relations with the Middle East. But when there was a discussion taking place in any

of the international bodies, first of all in the European Union where we were beginning to build economic and political co-operation, or in NATO where the Political Directors of NATO would meet every quarter or every six months, or on various of the UN occasions, my job as Political Director would be to absorb all that was important about our relations in those other areas so that when in discussing European political co-operation a Latin American issue came up, I would know what I was talking about. I wouldn't have to get the Under Secretary from London out to deal with it. Once in a while I did, but normally, I would be expected to deal with it myself. So in a way, the Deputy Under Secretary was 'primus inter pares' of the Deputy Under Secretaries. But his special role was to represent Britain in European Political Co-operation and in meetings of Political Directors wherever that arose.

JS: I think we'll perhaps just quickly move on to your time in Rome - just briefly, so that we have time to run through the final fine points I mentioned. You arrived in Rome when Italy was recovering from the Red Brigade and embarking on the battle to eliminate organised crime. This might sound a strange question but would you regard this as an heroic time in recent Italian history?

DT: No I don't think so. By the time I got there it was OK. I still had a bodyguard – believe it or not - who was an absolutely indispensable man from all sorts of points of view but not as a bodyguard. People were afraid, yes, they had all sorts of worries but in recent years the Red Brigade had been dealt with. Organised crime was rather a different matter but it did not impinge very directly on life in the Embassy I don't think.

JS: But this was the time of trials, wasn't it, in Palermo, did this not happen at the time when you were Ambassador?

DT: Yes it was and we were no doubt sending back reports about all that, but I had a strange time as Ambassador in Italy. First of all, I didn't know Italy at all. I went there as a complete stranger and I had to learn Italian and that is not as easy as it sounds.

JS: Before, or while you were there?

DT: I started with it before and continued while I was there. Having started out as a linguist and arriving in a country where I couldn't speak the language, was difficult. By the time I left

I had almost overcome that problem but it took a while and gave me personally some difficulties. But it is a complicated country to live in. It is a palimpsest. It is a jigsaw puzzle. There is no one part of it that lives like any other part, although there is a common language throughout more or less. I mean, Sicily lives a different way from Rome, and Rome from Milan, and Milan from Genoa, and you had to get around it to begin to understand. The Italians are most mistrustful of anybody who does not come from their village or who doesn't come from their own background, so although they are very charming and appear to be very open they won't actually say a thing of any importance until they get to know you and trust you. It all sounds lovely, it's all beautifully elegant but means absolutely nothing until they really feel they know who you are and where you're coming from and can trust you. And that was quite difficult, representing Margaret Thatcher's Britain at a time when the Italians were more enthusiastic about the development of Europe than anything else, apart from their own special relationship with the United States. They saw the development of Federal Europe as absolutely natural and continuous and not unlike what they had in Italy, and the likelihood would be that the Government in Brussels wouldn't be vastly different from the Government in Rome, which all the Italians except the Romans hate. It took a long time to go around Italy and begin to understand what made the place tick, and I knew from day one that barring some extraordinary accident my time in Italy as HM Ambassador was going to be a year and ten months, which is what it was, and, of course, all the Embassy staff knew it was going to be a year and ten months. Why was it so sure? Because

JS: Because of your retirement?

DT: Yes, I turned 60 in October 1989. But why didn't I go before? Well partly because I was doing a job in London, I suppose and there wasn't any obvious successor for me in my job, partly because there were not too many attractive looking jobs coming up either side and of the two that I would have wanted most, one of which would have been Paris and the other would have been UKREP Brussels, which by that time I knew quite well because, you know, I was used to working Whitehall and I was used to working with the Commission, I was used to working with the other Europeans and I got on with them quite well. But Margaret Thatcher by then had taken seriously against me personally, I think, and certainly wouldn't have had me there, and I'm not sure Geoffrey Howe would have proposed me even if he'd thought that I would have been the right choice.

JS: May I ask why she took against you or would you rather not say anything?

DT: I'll come to that presently. No, I don't mind saying it at all. Basically she didn't like the Foreign Office. She didn't like what she thought the Foreign Office was about, which was, in the way she might put it, giving away Britain's interests in order to preserve nice relationships with foreigners. That was how she interpreted the process that we all had to go through of conciliating differing sets of interests and finding a solution that gave everybody something – including ourselves. If at any of those meetings of the Europeans or NATO, if I had come back with my objectives secured but leaving other people enough for them to think that they'd also received something, this would be the an agreement that would stick.

Whereas if I had come back having absolutely scored off everybody, which I wouldn't have been very good at anyway – I'm not that kind of animal – and anyway you know the enemy would have been left sort of bleeding in the trenches, that's what she would want to see. If you wanted to be a success with Margaret Thatcher, you would have to come back appearing to have won outright. I'm oversimplifying it, but the job of the Political Director is above all about reconciling conflict and coming out with something that was going to work that everybody could subscribe to. Margaret Thatcher hated consensus. She just wasn't - she didn't feel this was a worthwhile thing to do. If something was right, you went for that in all its purity of objective. I remember her saying to a journalist she was giving an interview to, he said to her, Mrs Thatcher, you see things very much in black and white. She said, no, not at all, that is a complete misconception. She said, I don't look at it for me, I look at it from every point of view, what's right about it, what's wrong about it, and if in the end I feel that this is the right way to go, then there is no point in my going on television and saying, on the one hand, on the other hand I think we might as well try this because it looks better than the alternative. What I have to do is to come out and say this is what we have to do for this, this and this reason, everything else is completely worthless. So there are no compromises, no conciliation, that's the only way my policies can command support, and that is how she worked. And so the sort of job the Political Director was doing, I think that Julian Bullard was regarded by her in much the same light as I was, but you know we were conciliators. So when – that's not the only reason. There were a number of unpleasant incidents like when we had been in European Political Co-operation we'd had a lot of discussion about the Middle East, it seemed pretty clear, even then in the early to mid-80s that sooner or later a dialogue was going to have to begin with the Palestinians. The PLO was a terrorist group, but for a long-term solution to emerge between the Arabs and Israel, the Palestinians had to be brought

into the process. So the European Political Co-operation process produced a draft declaration for the Heads of Government to make on the Middle East at a meeting of Heads of Government at the European Council meeting in Dublin. This would be in '85, '86, and the draft had certainly been over to No 10. We knew that Palestine was an absolutely grade A sensitive topic for Margaret Thatcher partly because of her constituency in Hampstead, and so we always had to look at angles of that kind if we were doing anything or saying anything about the Middle East. This very gingery reference to one day a contact with the Palestinians, direct contact with the European statesmen in certain circumstances, I mean it was all hedged about with very careful conditions and so on, and that was in this draft declaration. As I say, it had been over to Number 10 and cleared by the Foreign Secretary, and so it was in the pack of papers that went to her before she went to Dublin. She got to Dublin, and she got through various meetings, and it seems there were a lot of difficulties concerning agriculture etc. and late in the day they got to this declaration on the Middle East and she blew a fuse and stormed into everybody at the meeting, what a disgraceful suggestion where on earth did this idea come from and she refused to sign it and the whole thing was torn up. She came out then to have a de-briefing with her team and wanted to know who was responsible for this absolutely preposterous suggestion of talking to terrorists. Well, it was me - and I struggled to get across that this had been cleared with No 10. But that was brushed aside and there was I, sort of tagged as being the sort of person who talked to terrorists. The next issue was a different one, this was about the Strategic Defence Initiative, Reagan's Star Wars. There had been a long discussion at various levels including Thatcher/Reagan, including Under Secretaries, Secretaries of Defence and Foreign Secretaries and so on. The MOD and the Foreign Office were extremely cautious about this idea. (a) Would it work? And (b), if it did work, what would it provoke the Russians into doing? And you know there were grave reservations about it. And Margaret Thatcher on the whole was rather in favour and Ronald Reagan decided to send someone over to London to talk to the Cabinet about it and there was quite a lot of enthusiastic support. It sounded fantastic, there was an action man kind of scheme if it could be made to work and it appealed to Margaret Thatcher's scientific mind. She was all in favour - but a bit cautious. What she was most in favour of was maintaining the special relationship and not having the Brits go out in public and say anything that appeared critical while gradually more sense could be worked into the process. So at a certain point it was decreed that Geoffrey Howe would touch on SDI in a big speech he was due to make, and so, you know, very often policy gets made on the basis of a speech that's got to be made. What's going to be said in a speech gets set down and all of a sudden a new policy emerges. So he

was going to make this speech, SDI was going to be one part of it, and Michael Pakenham who was the Assistant Head of the Department dealing with those things was the principal drafter, and it went through, as every speech did with Geoffrey Howe, 10, 15, 20 drafts – every stage recast, rewritten, and then towards the end, the last draft was being sent across to No 10 and came back with some suggestions in a letter from Charles Powell saying that the Prime Minister would like to see certain changes made but on that assumption the speech was acceptable. What it was doing, was saying SDI was all very well, but four very important principles had to be observed. If you looked at each one – this is like the five tests for Monetary Union, you know - look at each one of them and it's actually a concealed block on going ahead with the policy. I can't remember what the conditions were now - but there were four, sort of principles that had to be settled. It was all couched in the most emollient terms. The Americans reading it would in due course have seen that this was a very polite European, and in this case British, expression of caution about the SDI vision. So what happened? They were going somewhere, Margaret Thatcher and Geoffrey Howe were going somewhere together and we all said, have you actually got her chop on this? Does she know what you are going to be saying? And he said, there'll be an opportunity to talk to her on the plane. So when he came back we said did you talk to her? Oh, there was not really an opportunity to talk to her. But we'd got No 10's reply, so that was all right. So she knew what he was going to say. Anyway it was not contentious. So the speech was made and the next day there was a blistering editorial in 'The Times' attacking Geoffrey Howe on every conceivable ground for this preposterous objection, this series of objections to President Reagan's brilliant initiative. And the language made it pretty clear to some of us that if it hadn't been dictated by Richard Perle in the Pentagon it would certainly have been inspired by him. Somehow, you know, word had got back to Washington, somebody had said something to 'The Times' or somebody had, and here was this absolutely blistering attack. The line at the end was that it was impossible to believe that this was done with Margaret Thatcher's support so what did Geoffrey Howe think he was doing? There was a big internal inquiry at that point and Margaret Thatcher was roaring with rage about it and I happened to be telephoned by Ray Whitney, who was an MP and a former colleague in the Foreign Office, he was a former Head of Information Department, saying how on earth could Geoffrey Howe have made that speech without it being cleared with No 10, and I said, well you know better than I how these things work. Can you imagine that it wasn't cleared? And he said are you telling me that it was cleared by No 10? I said all I'm telling you is that I saw a letter from Number 10 suggesting some amendments to a final draft after which the Prime Minister

should be content. So the next day I was on a plane with Margaret Thatcher to Brussels - for some reason Geoffrey wasn't there – probably he was somewhere else and was coming to Brussels to meet us, and at a certain point as we were coming down, I all of a sudden realised the Prime Minister was standing next to me in the aisle. I was buckled in still and she said, Ray Whitney tells me that you told him that the abominable speech the Foreign Secretary made last week had been approved by me. How dare you say such a thing? I had never seen the speech before it was made. I said I am very sorry if I gave the wrong impression by saying that I had seen a letter from your Private Secretary in No 10 giving your, purporting to give your, consent to the draft which is why I told him that as far as I was concerned it was approved by No 10. She said, it wasn't, it never would have been and it should never have been made and stormed off down the plane. We were touching down at this point. She stormed away and no serious conversation was made about it. So that was reason number 2, and the third one was - I had another row with her of a similar kind – I wouldn't say row – I didn't have rows with Prime Ministers, she had a row with me, blasted me out of sight over something I had done, so she would not have regarded me as someone she wanted to see in many places, which is how I got Rome.

Anyway, I only got Rome as I was going to tell you with a year and ten months to go and so it was quite difficult. So I thought if I'm going to make any sense

JS: So you only went there rather It would not have been your particular choice obviously and

DT: It wouldn't have been my first choice. I was offered three posts to choose from. I was offered Canada. And I thought after four and a half years in Washington and I had loved being in Canada and I had loved and I would have had a wonderful year and ten months in Canada – two years – but I knew what the Canadian job was about, the Canadian job was about trying to convince the Canadians that the Brits were still important and trying to convince the Brits that the Canadians were still worth talking to. And we would have had a lovely two years, but I felt that after four and a half years in Washington doing some of the things that I was telling you about earlier that Canada would have been a very strange end to my career and would have been a disappointment, I think. I would have enjoyed it, I don't doubt in the least. And the second one was The Hague. I knew exactly what the big issues were going to be with The Hague in the next two years. It was all going to be with William

III, William and Mary, anniversary celebrations. And you know that plus always agreeing with the Dutch about everything that's going on in Brussels, and then finding them voting on the other side when push came to shove, and you know my wife is Dutch so it was a very difficult choice. I didn't know how easy it would be for her. She was terribly disappointed when I decided. I mean we decided together. I'm not aware that I take all the decisions and she just agrees. She was very disappointed but I persuaded her that Rome would be a better choice. We had never been there, Italy was an important country, exciting, learn a lot of new things and in the end that is what we agreed to do – but I don't think she has ever quite got over it. It was a chance. We had asked to go to The Hague when I was a First Secretary but in those days the Foreign Office said no you can't go because your wife is Dutch and we've got something better for you. But I was not at all sure about it now.

So we went to Rome and I went with great enthusiasm but it was jolly difficult and it was very short. And I decided that if I was to make any sense of it I would have to pick my priorities very very carefully. When I looked at the commercial relationships it seemed to me that we could do a whole lot more from within government to raise the level of British trade and investment both ways and so that is what I concentrated on. I wasn't focussing much on the political trials in Sicily. I was busy trying to getting alongside the big Italian firms and restart the dialogue between the CBI and its Italian equivalent, Confindustria, and promote the Anglo-Italian helicopter with Westland, which is now the EH101, which is a great success story. I saw it in its first military application when I visited one of HM ships the other day. The EH101 was being tested out using different weapons systems. The first thing I did when I arrived in Rome was to go and fly on the first flyable EH10 prototype. Quite interesting, 15 years later to go and see – you know it showed me how long it takes those projects to mature. That was the sort of thing I thought our Ambassador in Italy could do which had impact whereas the press reports much more fully than I could do or we could do on Italian politics and Italian economics, so I didn't put too much stress on political or economic reporting.

JS: You've been very generous with your time but if I could just ask you one final question: I quote this for the sake of the tape recorder "John Coles wrote recently that the defining role of Britain in the world is something that has eluded Mr Blair's predecessors for generations". Do you agree? Have you experienced a really consistent foreign policy under any Government, Labour or Conservative or is policy mostly a reaction to events?

DT: I think – to take the last one first, I think if I have one criticism of British foreign policy it has been that we tend to react to events. I think that was true almost the whole of my time, and partly I think it was due – this is a fairly deep question, it is not one I think I should really answer off the top of my head without further thought, but I think part of the answer lies in the traumatic experience of the Suez crisis. At that point, all of a sudden, people in Britain, at least people working in this sector in Britain, came to the realisation that we didn't have the clout any more to run an independent foreign policy that would involve us in deciding what we would do in looking after our own interests. The Suez crisis demonstrated that at the stroke of a pen or even with a threat the United States could effectively stop us from doing what we wanted to do. If we wanted to do anything from then on we would have to be doing it through our relationship with the United States. From then on, there was always that concern to maintain and develop that relationship, that being the best way to achieve our objectives. I mentioned earlier the Lee Memorandum and the thesis that - OK - we could not afford to allow our relationship with the United States to fall into a decline where it had been in the 1930's for example. We had to sustain and maintain that at all costs, but nor could we afford to let our relationships with the Europeans fall apart. We had to work on that as well. And from then on British foreign policy was an amalgam of those two sets of parallel, comparable interests but ones which were sometimes in conflict. It was a very complicated and difficult amalgam to maintain. It almost excludes the possibility of having a pro-active policy, it is almost always going to be responsive. It certainly was all my time, but every time we, every time the Planning Staff, or one of those groups tried to write a piece on how we could be more pro-active. Sometimes it was cast in terms of how could we be more like the French. We always came to the conclusion that because of these constraints, we could not really be – but having said that I think that the policy I was trying to describe earlier towards Eastern Europe was in a way a British initiative. I don't think that came from anywhere else. I think that that was a pro-active foreign policy. Doesn't look like one because everybody else was doing it but because we persuaded them to. I think the ideas for that twin pronged approach to the communist countries other than Russia, of trying to persuade the Governments to be more democratic and trying to get a dialogue going with the opposition to encourage them to stand up and be counted, that was a British policy. It was invented, made in Great Britain. But it was sold as a western policy.

In finding a role for Britain in the world, I am trying to say something about this, I think it is very difficult for a middle sized 'post Imperial power' to find a defining role. I am not sure if

it is something we ought to be looking for. We have a very important role, we have a lot of experience in international affairs, we have over time I think conducted ourselves pretty respectably and I think the whole process of decolonisation was extraordinarily well done. I think that history has not yet recognised, the history books have not yet recognised, the way in which the withdrawal of Britain from colonies was done with minimum damage and maximum thought for what was left behind. We didn't always get it absolutely right, but if I compare the way we withdrew, the way the Belgians withdrew, the way the Portuguese withdrew, with the way the French withdrew, being themselves, trying to leave themselves still in a dominant position through the Franc Zone, through various measures, but we withdrew and continued to try to support through political initiatives, through trade and so on, in other words to sort of preserve relationships. That was a kind of defining role but one that was sort of taking us out rather than pushing us in. I'm rambling now – it is very difficult. As I say, the two things that made it difficult to perceive what was going on were the constraints imposed by our two key relationships with the United States and Europe. There was no escape from those constraints. They're still there, and will be, and the sense one has working in London that the only way to project our interests effectively, internationally in a political way is through membership of a wider organisation, either NATO or the EU or sometimes wider negotiating forums like the World Trade Organisation. We are not going to be, and since the end of the Victorian age we have not been, a nation that could have a defining role. It's vain thinking we ought to have one. We have to look for another way of pursuing our interests – of giving British values everywhere. It's a vain idea that we should have a defining role. Margaret Thatcher thought that was totally defeatist. She would say well we had a defining role in the Falklands and we did. We should never have got there in my view. We should have found a way, indeed we were quite close to finding a way of resolving the Falklands through economic and joint sovereignty. None of Haig's ideas were new; we had been through them all. But why didn't that happen? It didn't happen because we have this peculiar political system. Whenever the Tories are in power, we try to find a solution to the Falklands problem. Labour would be out there protecting the interests of the islanders: why were these disgraceful Tories letting them down etc etc. And then you'd get all that in the House of Commons and then Labour would get into office and start trying to work out a solution to the Falklands problem and the Tories would be doing the same thing. So it never had a chance.

Luce was very close, right at the end, to doing a deal, then the generals got drunk and launched their attack, but we should never have been in that situation. In a way, yes, I mean I greatly respected Margaret Thatcher for what she did. I thought if she had not taken the decision that she took – and that was a defining role to go and get the Falklands back, I think Britain's standing in the world would have declined catastrophically. I think that was her biggest worry and I thought she was absolutely right to do what she did. She rejected all the cautious advice she was getting from the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Defence, and she went ahead and she did it and thanks to Weinberger and eventually the whole American Administration it worked with a great loss of life but for the time being Britain's standing in the world was preserved.

Did I ever feel that my own principles were seriously challenged? I would have had great difficulties if I had been, if I had been anywhere like in a position of authority at the time of the Suez Crisis. Because I do remember being pretty shocked and having terrible arguments with my father who thought this was exactly the right thing, which I certainly didn't. But during my own career, or what I regard as my career after that, no, I didn't feel challenged. I think even in something like Vietnam after my time in the Soviet Union I knew very well what the Russians were trying to do in Vietnam and I thought the Americans were exactly right to go in and support the Vietnamese. But this was in the beginning when you remember, what they were doing was sending in quote volunteers unquote to support the anti communists and when those volunteers turned into troops, then the troops became more troops and they started bombing and then they started bombing neighbours and it got worse and worse. In the beginning I certainly supported the Americans and I think that was perhaps towards the end and that was perhaps the nearest I got to - no, I never found my principles challenged partly because as a public servant one accepted the rules of the game.

When I grew up, the British political system involved having governments first of one political colour and then of another. The job of the Public Service was to provide the ballast, the administrative abilities, which would enable whichever government was in office to put its policies into effect having listened to all the advice that was going around. The job of the civil servant was just get on and provide that advice. You could disagree with what the governments were doing but by and large I didn't have any difficulty because I think I was right in the middle of the political spectrum. I wasn't a passionate Tory and I wasn't a passionate Labour supporter. I had found that when ministers from one government went and

when Ministers from another government came in they very quickly understood that somewhere in the middle there were a set of policies that made sense and British foreign policy in those days was pretty much about working by political consensus. They didn't disagree very radically on big issues. It wasn't until the '80s when the European issue really began to divide the two parties very much and it was then to divide the Tory party itself that those issues became important. But of course then the Foreign Secretary in those days was very strongly pro-European, the Foreign Office was usually pro-European.

JS: Thank you very much.

DT: You've made me think about a lot of things.