BDOHP Biographical Details and Interview Index

MUNRO, Colin Andrew CMG (born 24 October 1946)

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

Colin (Andrew) Munro CMG

interviewed by Malcolm McBain at the Reform Club, London on

8 September 2009

Education and induction to the Civil Service

MM May I ask about your education?

CM Yes, I went to school at George Watson's College (GWC) in Edinburgh from the age of 5 to 17. GWC is run by the Company of Merchants of the city of Edinburgh. It was then a direct-grant school. Now it is fully independent.

MM And then you went to Edinburgh University?

CM Yes, and read modern languages – French with subsidiary German. My outside subjects were moral philosophy, sociology and some history.

MM You originally entered the Inland Revenue as an Assistant Principal?

CM That is correct. I took the competition for the Civil Service in 1968. There was the Diplomatic Service (DS), the Home Civil Service and the Tax Inspectorate. In 1968 I had put the DS as my first choice. But I was a narrow miss. I was accepted for the Home Civil Service, so I started as an Assistant Principal at the Board of Inland Revenue at Somerset House in September 1968, somewhat to my surprise, I have to add, because I am not particularly gifted in mathematics or statistics. But I enjoyed my time at Somerset House. The work was intrinsically interesting, and in due course there would have been opportunities to be transferred to the main part of the Treasury. But I thought that it would be worth having another go at the competition for the DS because I'd been such a near miss. So I took part in the competition again in 1969, and this time I was successful, and so I started forty years ago this year in the FCO.

Entrance to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 1969

MM You went to South-East Asia Department?

CM In those days it was called South West Pacific Department, and in fact it was basically a Commonwealth Relations Office Department. The FO and the CRO had merged only recently and SWPD dealt with Commonwealth countries, including Australia, New Zealand and all the Pacific island states, Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei. The add-on from the Foreign Office was Indonesia, and my first job – I was a third room desk officer – was to deal with military aid to Malaysia and Singapore. Why military aid to Malaysia and Singapore? The decision had been taken after the devaluation of 1967 that Britain was going to withdraw from East of Suez by 1971. The idea was to bolster the defence capability of these two countries which had only recently emerged from "confrontation" with Indonesia.

This wasn't actually a very satisfactory job. It had no policy content. It should have been done by the Overseas Development Ministry, but they wouldn't touch it because it was military. And after a while, and after one or two false starts, I became a desk officer for Brunei, which at that time was a British protected state. The UK was responsible for its defence and foreign affairs. That was much more interesting. That was when I cut my teeth on the whole business of negotiations with people who really didn't want to do what we were trying to persuade them to do. And so I worked on that until I got my first overseas posting. It was to have been Poland. I started learning Polish. Then I was told that my performance on military aid to Malaysia and Singapore hadn't been all that brilliant and there was some uncertainty about my future. I did stay in SWPD until Personnel Operations Department (POD) were sure that I was suitable for an overseas posting then POD said: Well, we don't think it's wise to send you to Poland now, because we told the Ambassador that your performance has been a bit wobbly, but we'll line up something equally good.

Posting to British Embassy, Bonn, 1971

That turned out to be Bonn. Rather amusingly when Sir Roger Jackling retired, the Ambassador in Bonn after I'd been there for just under a year was Sir Nicholas

Henderson, who would have been my boss in Warsaw. Nicholas Henderson was the last of the great showmen Ambassadors – a very grand man. He hardly knew who the junior secretaries in Chancery were, but he was extremely nice to me, and my wife. I discovered years later what had actually happened on that Polish posting. He had become rather nervous about having a man with a German wife on the strength of the embassy in Poland, and asked Personnel Department to fix me up with something congenial somewhere else. So that was how I came to be in Bonn. But I never regretted that. It turned out to be a marvellous assignment. My responsibility was internal political affairs. So this meant figuring out how the political parties stood in relation to what was a very ambitious programme of "Ostpolitik" embarked on by Chancellor Brandt after his election in 1969 to achieve a *modus vivendi,* hopefully leading to reconciliation with Germany's former enemies in Eastern Europe, principally Poland and the Soviet Union, and of course, a *modus vivendi* with the other German state, the German Democratic Republic (GDR). We had treated the GDR since 1949 as the Soviet zone of Germany, and not as a recognised international state, rather like our more recent policy on North Korea. Brandt was moving forward rapidly on relations with Poland, the Soviet Union and the GDR. This affected the interests of the Western allies, Britain, France and the United States and indeed the Soviet Union, states that retained, in the jargon, responsibility for Berlin and Germany as a whole. Germany as a whole meant Germany within its frontiers of 1937. Moreover, we had a particular problem in Berlin in that four power management of the city had broken down in 1948 at the time of the airlift. The airlift had transformed the position of the Western powers from occupying powers to protecting powers. It transformed personal relationships between British, French, Americans and Germans. But then of course 'the Wall' had gone up in 1961. The division of the city and the division of Germany had become extreme and acute. And so we realised, and the West Germans themselves realised, that the grand design of a new relationship with Poland, the Soviet Union and the GDR, couldn't take place until there had been some sort of agreement on Berlin. We had a lever in our hands. The Russians had been pressing ever since the mid-1950s for a conference on European security which would, in their estimation -- and this was their objective -- confirm as unalterable, the frontiers that had been established by the victorious armies in 1945, including the Berlin Wall, and including the division of Germany. However, the Russians also wanted to retain a handle, not only on East Germany, which they really did control as

their satellite, but also on West Germany. They wanted to dangle the possibility that maybe, if the world changed completely, the division of Germany might not be for all time and in all circumstances. Our recurring nightmare was that the Russians would say: Okay, you can have a reunified Germany, but only on the basis of neutrality. And that would have meant the end of NATO. The Russians never did make that offer until it was too late. This Soviet objective meant that we had the substance of a decent negotiating position. When I arrived in Bonn in September 1971, an agreement had been reached with the Russians on Berlin which preserved the rights and responsibilities of the four powers; kept the German question open, and provided for greatly improved contacts, mainly, but not exclusively from West to East, between the two Germanies, and greatly improved guaranteed access for transit traffic, between West Germany and the Western Sectors of Berlin. The Russians actually refused to refer to Berlin in this agreement because in their estimation, it only really covered the Western Sectors of the city. So the compromise reached was "the relevant area". Each side understood what was meant by the relevant area and respected the other's positions. The Germans meanwhile – the political situation was such in West Germany – had reached agreement amongst themselves that the treaties that they had negotiated with Poland and the Soviet Union in 1970, were basically renunciation of force treaties – that is to say, frontiers are as they are and they won't be changed, except peacefully and by agreement. This became very important later on. The treaties would not be ratified by the Bundestag until the Berlin Agreement was signed, sealed and delivered. As a newcomer to diplomacy, I was full of admiration for the simply brilliant team of negotiators that had been assembled in the British Embassy at that time. The Ambassador, Sir Roger Jackling, was a distinguished international lawyer who had been responsible for British interests in the Law of the Sea Convention. His chief negotiator, a remarkable man, Sir Christopher Audland, later went off to the European Commission. First of all he was Director for Energy, and later Deputy Secretary General. He had long experience of Germany going back to the late 1940s. His First Secretaries were Nigel Broomfield, later Ambassador to both German states, and Nicholas Bayne, whose last post was as High Commissioner in Canada, Sir Franklin Berman, later Chief Legal Adviser, then after Franklin, David Anderson, and for a while Tony Bishop, the FCO's Russian interpreter. Tony in fact was an extremely important member of the team, because the Russians often attempted – something they're still doing – to claw back in the

Russian version of texts points they had had to surrender in the English or French version of the same text. And Tony it was who nailed the Russians down and told them which words they had to use and so on. This was a great embassy to be in and I felt I had a full part in covering internal politics. Most of the Christian Democrat (CDU) opposition were opposed to the "Eastern" treaties. They felt that Germany was selling something; giving away something that it was not necessary to give away. There were exceptions of course, such as Richard von Weizsäcker, who later became Federal President. In the course of the ratification debate in 1972, Brandt's coalition partners, the Free Democrats, split, and he effectively lost his majority in the Bundestag. But the CDU could not muster enough votes to elect an alternative Chancellor. A few abstentions were obtained in murky circumstances. Then the treaties passed and the Bundestag was dissolved. This was fascinating, because the constitution had been designed to prevent mid-term dissolution of the parliament, which had been one of the weaknesses of the Weimar Republic. Basically you could only remove the Chancellor by a so-called constructive vote of no confidence. It was no good voting down one Chancellor; you had to vote in favour of another one. But when it was clear that neither Brandt nor a successor had a working majority, there was agreement that there would have to be an early election. This turned into a triumph for Brandt and his Free Democrat allies. The turnout for this election in November 1972 was over 90 per cent, and the support for the Social Democrats was the highest it has ever been in German elections – something around 45%. The Free Democrats increased their share of the vote and so there was no doubt; absolutely no doubt that Brandt who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize just before the 1972 election, was on the right track with his Ostpolitik. This experience in Germany reinforced my tremendous interest in central European politics and in East/West relations.

I had a continuing personal interest in this because my wife, whom I met during my student days – I travelled to the Munich carnival with three French friends – comes from the Sudetenland in what is now the Czech Republic. My father-in-law had been a farmer, and had quite a substantial farm, which I have visited several times. The whole family left in a cattle wagon in 1946, so they were *Heimat vertriebene* – refugees, expellees I suppose you could say. Expelled under the provisions of the Benes decrees which imposed collective guilt on the German population of what was

then Czechoslovakia. So, as I say, I have that personal interest in the rights and wrongs of what has happened in Central Europe.

MM Does your wife feel that she's a German?

CM Yes. I used to discuss these issues a lot with my father-in-law before he died in 1981. My father-in-law, I worked out, had five citizenships in his lifetime. He was born in 1902, so he was a citizen of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In 1918 he became a citizen of Czechoslovakia. That's number 2. In 1938 due to the incorporation of the Sudetenland in Germany and the provisions of the Munich Agreement, he became a citizen of the Gross Deutsches Reich (Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia), and my wife born in 1941 has got a swastika on her birth certificate. In 1945 the Sudetenland was returned to Czechoslovakia, and so my father-in-law was technically a Czechoslovak citizen again. Then he was expelled to what became the new West Germany in 1946. So that's five changes. I used to ask him: what about the Czechoslovak army, and so on? He said: Oh well, we Germans were excused that, and anyway farming was regarded as something of a reserved occupation. My father-in-law could have stayed on in Czechoslovakia because he was well-liked by the Czechs and had Czechs working for him. Weighing up his decision to leave, the decisive point was there were no more German schools. Before 1938 people lived in what you might call cultural communities, although there was much inter-marriage, and if you look for example at the telephone directory in Vienna, about a third of the names at least are of Czech origin, anybody with a name like former Chancellor Vranitzky. Communities lived alongside each other, and mostly in reasonable harmony with each other in the Habsburg Empire. The Habsburgs made one big mistake which was that they maintained a hierarchy. At the top of the hierarchy after a deal in 1867 with the Hungarians – were the Austro-Germans and the Hungarians. They were the top dogs and everybody else was in a lesser category. This provoked great resentment amongst Czechs, Croats, Slovaks and Slovenes, those nationalities in particular. The Empire eventually fell apart partly in consequence of this policy. The last Emperor made an offer of a reorganisation in September 1918, by which time it was far too late. But as I say, my fascination with the politics of ethnicity in Central Europe was stimulated by my marriage and by that first posting.

MM A fascinating introduction to Central Europe.

CM Absolutely. I thought I was just getting my feet under the table in Bonn, and really on top of the job, but in those days in the FCO you got moved around rather quickly early in your career.

But before we come to the next move a couple of anecdotes about the time in Bonn. After Jackling, as I say, came Sir Nicholas Henderson. The Minister, the Number 2 when I arrived was Brooks Richards, a perfect gent, a diplomat of the old school, he was the father of Francis Richards, who also joined the FCO in 1969. He employed the best chef in Bonn. His residence was famous for its food. But after Brooks Richards came Reg Hibbert, who fired the chef whom he thought too expensive. Reg was of a completely different stripe altogether. Reg was a terror really. He was greatly appreciated by what I suppose in the army would be called "the other ranks". But he really did bully what he called the "junior secretaries" in Chancery. Reg used to take the morning meeting. Sir Nicholas used to slump in an armchair hiding behind an old copy of *Punch* and only occasionally intervening, when he would look over *Punch* and say: What was that Reg? What's going on? The convention was that "junior secretaries" in Chancery weren't really supposed to participate in the discussion. They could only answer questions if they were spoken to. But on this particular day, a question had arisen about German policy in the Middle East and none of our seniors knew anything about it. One of the "junior" secretaries did. Sophia Lambert piped up: "Well I think" (she had a rather high-pitched voice) ... Whereupon Reg took off his spectacles -- so we knew there was trouble -- and said: "Second secretaries are not paid to think." At this point Nico appeared from behind *Punch* and said: What was that Reg? Anyway, that was the embassy in Bonn.

Posting to Commonwealth Coordination Department of the FCO, 1973

I was told that my next posting was going to be Malaysia. So back to the realm of South West Pacific Department, but with an interlude in Commonwealth Coordination Department (CCD) for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) that was due to take place in that year; in the summer of 1973, in

Ottawa. CCD wasn't – how shall I put it – one of the FCO's stronger Departments, and it certainly needed reinforcement when it had a CHOGM to run. It was popularly known as Commonwealth Confusion Department. Anyway, Ted Heath, who was Prime Minister, was absolutely infuriated by the whole thing. The Meeting was going to coincide with sailing during Cowes Week, and the star of the Meeting was going to be Idi Amin. Idi Amin was busy throwing people out of Uganda. So, first of all it was uncertain as to who would lead the British Delegation. If it was going to be Heath, he was going to say something like: We found Uganda in a pretty primitive state. It was a splendid going concern when we left it, and now look at it. Sir Alec Douglas Home, who was Foreign Secretary, wanted on the other hand to be altogether more conciliatory. Every brief on the key issues, and the texts of speeches had to be written twice, once in the supposed style of Edward Heath, and once in the style of Sir Alec. And then there was a moment of great hilarity when a telegram arrived in Buckingham Palace from Kampala. In it Idi Amin said he had the greatest respect for the Queen and he looked forward to meeting her at this Conference, but he wasn't very sure about his security, so would Her Majesty kindly send a regiment of her "Scotch" Guards to protect him. We debated how to reply to this, and in the end we came down with a deadpan reply that Her Majesty herself was entirely satisfied with the arrangements that her Canadian Ministers – because of course she is Head of State in Canada – were making for her security, and she recommended Amin to do the same. So that put paid to Amin's participation in the Conference, and Heath decided that he had better give up Cowes Week for once. He did go. So, I had a couple of months on that which was quite good preparation for my assignment to Malaysia.

Posting to British High Commission Kuala Lumpur, 1973-77

Travelling to Malaysia was a great joy, because 1973 was the last year when you could still travel to such a posting by sea, and it counted as work. You got paid a ship-board allowance, and so we ambled out to Malaysia on a Ben Line steamer – the Ben Lomond. It was wonderful. The food was fantastic and we were very well looked after. It was a very happy experience. Then we arrived in Port Klang in November.

MM So what did you make of Malaysia?

CM Well, when I look back, I think probably the posting to Malaysia was the one in which I had the most fun in my Diplomatic Service career. Again my job was to cover the internal political scene, and a subsidiary item was defence and security policy in South East Asia. This meant that I had to cover Sarawak, and Sabah, where our Deputy High Commissioner posts had been closed in one or t'other of the rounds of cuts in Departmental expenditure. It was tremendously exotic, and I spent nights in longhouses and so on. I love sport. Not terribly good at it, except hockey. So I had my fill of hockey, cricket and golf. We had an amusing Commonwealth Diplomats Cricket Society and I was its captain for a while. And I went on a cricket tour of Australia with the Royal Selangor Club of which I am a life member, and in between times got to grips with the fascinating world of politics in Malaysia.

Politics in Malaysia were about race, or at least were dominated by race then. Malay suspicion of the Chinese had been fuelled by the communist terrorist insurgency – a largely Chinese affair – which still rumbled on in the early 1970s. The deal at the time of independence in 1957 was that the Malays would run the country, the Chinese would make the money, and the Indians would do the best they could. The deal broke down after the end of confrontation with Indonesia when there was no more external threat. Well, it broke down earlier in a way when Lee Kuan Yew was expelled from the Federation. Lee Kuan Yew was too assertive and with Singapore in the Federation, I think that the Malays, the Bumiputras, the sons of the soil, were actually a minority in their own land, or what they regarded as their own land. There was trouble in May 1969 as after elections Chinese based parties were going to take over the government of the state of Selangor, in which the capital Kuala Lumpur was located. There were race riots, and parliamentary government was suspended. A so-called New Economic Policy was introduced, the essence of which was that the share of the Malays in the national wealth of the country was to increase from 2 or 3% to 30% over a twenty year period, and this was to be done by substantial state intervention to discriminate in favour of Malays to create companies and so on, and shares would be held in trust for the Malay community. At the same time, very controversially, there was a change to the language policy. The official language and the so-called national language of the country had been deemed at independence to be the Malay language, known as Bahasa Malaysia, which just means Malay language or

the language of Malaysia. But English had continued to be used as a working language, and it had status in the education system. At primary level there were government supported state schools in Malay, English, Chinese and Tamil, and at the secondary level there were English and Malay medium schools, and there were private, and still are private Chinese schools. I don't think there are any Tamil secondary schools. Now, during the colonial period the British built up a really excellent public education system, particularly in the urban centres. We also established schools for the Malay aristocracy and the administrator class. There was Malay College Kuala Kangsa, which could only be attended by Malays and it was run like an English public school. Again the main medium of instruction was English. The preference for English was felt to be unfair. One of the reasons why the Chinese were so successful was because they lived mainly, but not exclusively, in the urban centres, and had profited more from the English medium education system than had the rural Malays. There was a further complication in that many of the schools were run by religious denominations of one kind or another – Methodists, Anglicans, etc. The best school in Ipoh was the Methodists Boys School for example. Malays did attend these schools, and the rule was that the Christian religion was not to be imposed on Muslim Malays. All Malays are Muslim – a sort of circular definition – but many a Malay will tell you that one of the first things he or she learned at school in colonial times was how to recite the Lord's Prayer. There was some sensitivity there. So the idea was that progressively the English medium schools would be converted to Malay, and the same thing was to happen at university level. By the time I left Malaysia in 1977, I think, the last sixth form of these English medium schools had just finished. Of course it is possible, only with extreme difficulty, to teach a subject such as physics in the Malay language. There were no, or very few, Malay textbooks. So you had a situation in which in fact the Malays were being more seriously disadvantaged than before, but nonetheless people put up with it because there were penalties for disagreeing. There was a Sedition Act. There was a great deal of dissatisfaction and tension below the surface, and there was a great deal of discrimination in the selection of students for places – it was affirmative action for Malay students – at the University of Malaya, one of the top universities in the Commonwealth. Standards began to go down except for a small number of Chinese and Indian students. The small number of them who were successful in gaining admission were absolutely outstanding, and so the Malay sense of inferiority was

reinforced if anything. And the next thing that happened was that the Chinese turned out to be even better at Malay language exams than Malays were themselves. The "national" university that was established for Malay students only taught in only one language, English. The man who had driven this forward was Dr Mahathir Mohamed. He had written a book which, when I arrived, was still banned in Malaysia – it was called *The Malay Dilemma* written in English of course. Mahathir was a doctor who had studied in Singapore. The Malay aristocracy looked down on him as a Pakistani immigrant. And his book was only unbanned when he became Deputy Prime Minister. His basic argument was that the British were greatly to blame for Malay poverty. The Malays just had to have discrimination in their favour to enable them to compete at all.

The situation now is that scientific subjects and mathematics and so on, are only taught in English. The wheel has turned round. Now why didn't this cause more trouble than it did? The answer is that the Malays did, notwithstanding the discrimination and so on, keep the country business-friendly, friendly to foreign investment, and basically the dynamism of the economy, propelled largely but not exclusively by the Chinese, continued. So they had something like an 8% growth rate for twenty years. They were fortunate of course. Malaysia has great natural resources; tin, natural rubber, tropical hardwoods, palm oil, self-sufficiency in oil, and they made an early and successful start in micro-electronics and so on, all aided and abetted by the still good education system. The population is quite small.

I remember talking to some British investors who were producing semi-conductors in an enterprise zone near Malacca and they said: This is wonderful. All our employees have got "A" levels. They never strike. They never take sick leave. They are obliging. They are courteous. Malaysians are industrious, and I personally am really delighted by the success that Malaysia has had over the years.

MM A great place.

CM A great place, yes.

MM You went from there back to the FCO and joined the Defence Department?

Return to Defence Department in the FCO, 1977-79

CM That's right. This was a large sprawling amalgamation of several Departments. What had been Western Organisations – basically the NATO Department – and what had been Defence Departments dealing with security co-operation with the Commonwealth. My job was desk officer for Defence Policy outside the NATO area, and this meant the colonies – or dependent territories as they were now called – such as Hong Kong and Belize. A territorial dispute with Guatemala over Belize was pretty hot at this time. Notwithstanding the Argentinean claim to the Falklands, MoD were trying to scrap HMS Endurance, or at least to get the FCO to pay for its upkeep. This job also involved responsibility for Service Assisted Evacuations, and for our residual defence commitments to independent countries such as Malaysia and Singapore under the Five Power (the other two were Australia and New Zealand) Defence Arrangements that had, in 1971, replaced the Anglo-Malaysian Defence Agreement (AMDA), originally concluded when Malaya achieved independence in 1957. Under AMDA an attack on Malaysia was an attack on Britain. The Central Treaty Organisation, of which Iran was a member at that time, was another responsibility. The two great dramas that I remember from that posting were the Iranian Revolution, preceded by mayhem in Zaire, when Ministers discovered that we could not deploy paratroopers in a hostile environment. They had abolished this capability in the 1974 Defence Review. The French and the Americans could do this, but we could not. We did good work in the Emergency Rooms (for which Defence Department was responsible) located next to the resident clerks. But David Owen declined to allow appreciative visitors to visit us, because he was ashamed of our scruffy working conditions. Early 1979 was the winter of discontent. The weather was appalling and there were train strikes on Tuesdays and Thursdays. So I spent a couple of weeks in the FCO garrets. The paradox of the situation at that time, which was to be brought into sharp relief later by the Falklands War, was that although 95% of our military assets were committed to a NATO role, all the action was outside the NATO area in places such as Belize and Zaire. There were Argentinean threats to the Falklands, and very worrying developments in the Indian Ocean, from which the Royal Navy had effectively withdrawn. The Soviet Union was filling the vacuum. I also got involved, as everybody did in that Department, with NATO exercises.

I got a good general understanding of arms control and security policy issues during my time in Defence Department. Paul Lever was a distinguished member of it for a while. Initially the Head of Department was John Wilberforce. I don't think his later career flourished quite as much as he hoped it would. He was very good at handling David Owen, who was then Foreign Secretary, very skilful at that, and that was very difficult, because Owen was champing at the bit to sort out Rhodesia. That was to be his place in history. Then came David Gillmore. David was really inspiring. I thought he was marvellous. I was coming up to the end of a two year stint and Personnel Department's idea was that I should take advantage of a secondment to industry, or to a bank, and that was what was next in my career plan to the extent that one had a career plan in those days.

Appointment as Private Secretary to Minister of State in the FCO, 1979

With a change of government there was a reshuffle among the Private Secretaries and I was interviewed by a new Minister of State, Peter (later Lord) Blaker (who died recently). I became his Private Secretary in May 1979. He had a portfolio which suited my interests and experience pretty well because he dealt with east/west relations, the countries of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. He was also responsible for the British Council, Sport (which meant South Africa, apartheid, rugby tours, and boycotting the Moscow Olympics after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan), the BBC External Services – including difficulties over funding - and he also dealt with South-East Asia, the Pacific, the Far East and the Commonwealth. It was a great job. Peter Blaker had been a member of the DS. His last post had been as PS/Minister of State. I sometimes felt he was even better at my job than he was as a politician. He was very brainy with first class honours degrees in classics, PPE and Law. We had fascinating discussions about many issues on our long flights to the Far East and the Pacific. He predicted devolution to Scotland.

To begin with the big issue was the Vietnamese Boat People. Refugees, many of whom were of Chinese origin were ending up, not only in places like Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand, but also in Hong Kong, where had been born. His father had been very successful in business and banking there. Peter Blaker was really strong on

Hong Kong. The Governor was a grand Scotsman, Murray MacLehose, and his political adviser was David Wilson, now Lord Wilson. Hong Kong had to participate in all the conferences as part of the British Delegation. Peter Blaker was usually the leader of the British Delegation with Messrs MacLehose and Wilson at his elbow, together with Donald Murray or Hugh Cortazzi, a powerful team. It was during that time, actually, that we began to think about 1997. The first issue in that connection was that a whole lot of commercial leases were due for renewal for fifteen years in 1982. What to do? And so we started tentatively explaining to the Chinese this particular problem, and the Chinese were absolutely mystified.

But it was nonetheless a very exciting time to be dealing with China. Deng Xiao-Ping had taken over in 1978 and the opening up of that amazing country was underway. We found ourselves in thunderous agreement with the Chinese over a remarkable range of issues, in particular as to what to do about the Soviet Union.

The contacts between the European Community as it then was, and ASEAN were just getting into their stride. I had the pleasure of attending a number of these meetings. There was also a memorable visit to Thailand focused on refugees from Vietnam and Cambodia. The Vietnamese had driven out Pol Pot, by their full scale invasion of Cambodia which began on Christmas day 1979, but some of his followers were mingling with refugees in camps inside Thailand. Pol Pot, aided by China, still controlled parts of the border area on the Cambodian side. I was impressed by the way the Thais were handling a volatile situation, balancing their relations with China, Vietnam, Cambodia, the US and the Europeans. A country such as the UK also had a difficult balancing act to perform. The Khmer Rouge were dreadful, but the Cambodians were also afraid of the Vietnamese. Nor could we approve of them. The King hosted a dinner for Peter in Chiang Mai. I was seated between the two Princesses whose knowledge of the issues under discussion, of languages, and of my CV, was impressive. Lord Carrington was only intermittently involved in these issues. He was busy with Rhodesia and the looming battles over the UK's contribution to the EC budget. It was also the case that he believed in letting his ministers lead on their issues. Unlike David Owen, he did not grab subjects when they became interesting. He was a team player who knew how to get on with

foreigners – an excellent Foreign Secretary, just about the best during my forty years. Geoffrey Howe, of whom more later, ran him quite close in my view.

On Christmas Eve 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. To Peter Blaker's disappointment Lord Carrington asked Douglas Hurd to lead on this issue, ostensibly because of the link with Middle East issues which were in Douglas Hurd's portfolio. There were also issues of EC and NATO coordination, also parts of his portfolio. In fact, I think Carrington sensed that Douglas Hurd was the more capable Minister. And there was another problem. Peter Blaker had been mauled by the BBC in the summer of 1979 over cuts to the budget of the External Services. He had also been made to carry the can for a misguided decision to charge full price fees to students from Commonwealth countries such as Malaysia. When No 10 and the Treasury wanted FCO agreement to measures such as this, Nicholas Ridley, the PM's leading supporter in the distrusted FCO, was consulted. But poor Peter had to pick up the pieces. I think Carrington reckoned Douglas Hurd was the safer pair of hands. Nonetheless Peter Blaker did a really excellent job that autumn on east/west issues, to which I shall return after recounting a state visit and the independence of the New Hebrides – now Vanuatu.

The state visit was to Switzerland at the end of April 1980. Carrington had to drop out at the last minute because of other business. Peter Blaker was the stand in. Apart from taking the record at a round of talks with the foreign minister, and keeping in touch with developments, my job was to be decorative as a member of the Royal Suite, making polite conversation at meals etc. I arrived in my hotel room on the first evening anxious that there was not enough time to sort out my luggage, have a shower and climb into my DJ. I had been told that there was only one rule on state visits. Never, but never miss your place in the motorcade. No need to worry. I had a valet who had run a bath, pressed my clothes, even putting in the cuff links. So that is how the other half live. One issue however. I found out that most of the embassy's work for this visit had been done by a lady sent out by Protocol Department several months in advance. But only the embassy staff got gongs. Peter Blaker stirred things up when we got home, but to no avail. We were told that Victorian order gongs were in the personal gift of the sovereign who made up her own mind. Not so, I would submit. One excellent public servant was denied a gong, which she had really earned.

The independence of the New Hebrides is an interesting footnote to the end of empire. The background is well described in the BDOHP interview with our last Resident Commissioner, Andrew Stuart, later ambassador to Finland and headmaster of Atlantic College. The Franco-British Condominion – Pandemonium is a more accurate description – lasted from 1906 until 1980 when the islands, so named by Captain Cook in 1774 in view of their resemblance to the Scottish Hebrides, became the independent state of Vanuatu. In the 1960s the French opposed independence because they wanted to hang on to mineral rich New Caledonia, also populated by Melanesians, next door. But by the late 1970s they were ready, albeit reluctantly, to contemplate change. Pandemonium describes the place and the negotiations. The place because it was a cauldron of rivalries between the British, the French, and the locals who could claim to be tried under three different systems of justice – English common law, French law, or native customary law. There were three languages of course – French, English, and Pidgin – and by my count five brands of Christianity, plus local animist traditions. There were a few well educated Anglophone locals and even fewer educated Francophones. The country had suffered from depopulation by "blackbirding" – indentured labour shipped off to Australian sugar cane plantations. It was poor. The arbiter in case of dispute between the British and the French, was the king of Spain, until Franco's revolt began in 1936. The Spanish thought a Condominium of Gibraltar would be just the ticket. The two Resident Commissioners were straight out of central casting. Andrew Stuart was tall, elegant, athletic, and proconsular. Jean Jacques Robert was short and tough. He had been a good rugby player in his day. Peter Blaker's opposite number was Paul Dijoud, a very clever Enarche who had a distinguished political (supporter of Giscard d'Estaing) and diplomatic career. He could talk the hind legs off a donkey without notes, and was very slippery. The French engineered a last minute revolt by their *ressortissants* which was to be repressed by combined Franco British military action. Andrew Stuart, who lived on an island off shore was to receive instructions to join Robert on the mainland, to coordinate it locally. Telegrams were sent from London and Paris. But no sign of Andrew for a couple of hours. The French became suspicious. As it turned out Andrew's boatman had gone walkabout. Andrew pushed off, but the outboard failed to fire. The boat drifted out into the lagoon. So our intrepid Commissioner jumped overboard, and swam for the shore. Hence the late launch of

the operation. The revolt was eventually squashed by troops from Papua New Guinea. The independence celebrations experienced a number of glitches. Andrew's Jaguar broke down. I drove Peter Blaker to the French reception in a Toyota Corolla. Some eloquence on my part was needed to gain us admission. We arrived just as a French Minister was greeting the Duke of Kent – the duty Royal. There was a power failure. Fortunately the French had laid on plenty of food and drink. Champagne was preferable to the local *vin d'honneur* – the truly alcoholic, but disgusting kava which is pounded root, and water spiced up with tribal chief's spit.

This dossier consumed a large proportion of Peter Blaker's time from May 1979 until August 1980. After the summer break it was time to pick up the threads of east-west relations. I step back in time at this point. After the (West) Germans had concluded treaties with the GDR, Poland, the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia, both German states joined the UN in 1973. What next? I mentioned earlier that the Russians had long had ambitions for a European Security Conference, which would confirm the 1945 frontiers. In the 1950s they proposed such a conference without the participation of the United States and Canada – completely unacceptable to NATO. Now they were ready for one including the US and Canada. At the same time they began to, how should I say, show interest in modernising the notion of peaceful coexistence. NATO had adjusted its own strategy as far back as 1967 before the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 in the so-called Harmel doctrine. NATO doctrine was: Strong defence, but combined with co-operation and *détente* where that proved to be possible. And so all these things came together, and after the German treaties were out of the way, NATO took the decision that it was ready to embark on preliminary negotiations with the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact designed to lead up to a conference on European security. And at the same time it was agreed that there should be an effort at arms control. This went under the name of MBFR (Mutual & Balanced Force Reductions) – mutual because the two sides would be involved – the two alliances – balanced because, if you had equivalent reductions on the two sides, then NATO would quickly be left with nothing, and the Warsaw Pact with a huge conventional preponderance over NATO. Negotiations started in early 1973. I'll concentrate on the CSCE.

In the course of the CSCE preliminary negotiations, we hit upon what can only be described as a brilliant idea. The Russians said: This is about frontiers and so-called hard security, and they also proposed economic and scientific and technical co-operation, which basically meant that they wanted to get their hands on western money and know-how. So then people thought, well, wait a minute what do we want out of all this? And the answer was that we wanted more on the human rights side – freedom of movement, exchange of information, cultural dialogue. So we began to put forward proposals.

Here I must also mention that the European Community, which Britain had joined in 1973, had invented something called European political co-operation (EPC). This was initially a matter of vapid declarations and statements that didn't amount to a row of beans. So somebody thought, let's do something operational. Let's try our hand at European political co-operation on these human rights, cultural dialogue issues and so on. We're not treading on anybody's toes. Henry Kissinger was not interested in human rights. US interest in these issues really got going during Carter's time. Focus on human rights doesn't get in the way of NATO and it's something that, shall we say, a neutral country like Ireland can join quite happily. And also it's a means by which we, the Community, can co-operate with countries like Sweden, Austria, Switzerland that share our values but are outside the Community and outside NATO.

EPC on these issues turned out to be highly effective. One person who deserves great credit on the British side is the late Michael Alexander. Michael Alexander, together with Rodric Braithwaite and Andrew Burns turned out to be masters of this negotiation which they regarded as judicious political warfare. The neutral and non-aligned countries played a very important part, and a man I'm still friendly with in Vienna, Ambassador Helmut Liederman, turned out to be very skilful at negotiating with the Russians. He was able to sell to obdurate Russians, proposals which actually emanated from the pens of Burns, Braithwaite and Alexander, as though they were his own, from inoffensive, neutral, Austria. And the Russians by this time were so keen on having a conference that in the end they made important concessions.

One was about having the so-called Basket III (human rights) in the Helsinki Final Act at all. It was not part of their original plan. Then they made what turned out to be

an absolutely crucial concession. It had been agreed that the Helsinki Final Act would have ten principles, several of which are actually in conflict with each other, but that's the nature of negotiations. It was agreed in one of the principles – the first concerning the sovereign equality of states - the frontiers of states shall be "inviolable", a word picked up from the treaties between West Germany, Poland and the Soviet Union. No force shall be employed to change frontiers. But – and here was the killer punch – it was also agreed that frontiers could be changed in accordance with international law, peacefully, and by agreement. There were plenty of people, as we now know, on the Soviet side saying: don't make this concession, for heaven's sake. But the alternative (Brezhnev's) view prevailed. The alternative view was that states such as the Soviet Union were never going to agree to frontier change. So we're safe. This clause went into Principle No 1. It was also agreed that we would not create bureaucratic institutions, but we would have so-called review conferences. At these review conferences all the participating states, not member states, because the CSCE was not (and the OSCE still is not) an organisation, and it's not a legally binding agreement – would get together every so often to see how they were getting on. Were we living up to our commitments e.g. on free media and free travel? Commitments such as these proved to be a marvellous tool for the oppressed in Eastern Europe because it was agreed that the Helsinki Final Act would be published in the media of all the participating states. So suddenly you could read on the front page of *Pravda* that Brezhnev had signed up to respect human rights, and freedom of movement. So-called Helsinki monitors sprang up in the Soviet Union and Charter 77 sprang up in Czechoslovakia.

Then something marvellous happened. In 1978 a Polish Pope got elected. As he said at various times he resolved to give the whole communist system an almighty shake-up. This he did. Human rights commitments in the Final Act had already made their impact in a review conference in Belgrade in 1977. This was known as the battle of Belgrade. Nothing was agreed except that there would be another review conference and it was going to be held in 1980 in Madrid. Spain had only just emerged from fascism in 1975. So we convened in Madrid in November 1980, when Solidarity was just getting into its stride. There was a great deal of evidence that the Russians were going to invade Poland, and so we spent a lot of time considering what we were going to do about that eventuality. Do we walk out? Do we make a statement then walk

out? Or do we carry on? One thing I remember vividly. Christopher Mallaby, who was Head of Soviet Department at the time, drafted a brilliant speech for Peter Blaker saying that the Soviet Union had broken all 10 principles of the Final Act. Then somebody said: We had better clear this with the Home Office, and back came the Home Office saying: We can't say all that because we've broken some of these principles too. Who signed this document? The answer was Harold Wilson as Prime Minister. The Home Office equivocated. But we got round that, and the Russians didn't invade Poland. I was there with the Minister for the opening stages. The proceedings in the conference were pretty sterile. However, the meetings in the corridors, including with the official delegations of countries such as Hungary and Poland were fascinating, as of course were meetings with the various émigré associations and journalists associations and so on. This was really one great information bazaar and you could see how this instrument that we had devised was beginning to work.

Posting to British Embassy, Bucharest, 1981-82

I learned more about how it was beginning to work when I moved from that job with Peter Blaker to Romania at the beginning of 1981. Romania, where I served for two years, was a truly brutal, awful, dictatorship. Although I was never posted to Moscow, so cannot compare the two accurately, I think Romania was much worse, because ordinary people were humiliated at every turn, and a potentially rich country was impoverished by economic policies that were absolutely mad.

MM What were you doing there?

CM I was Head of Chancery. The set-up in the Embassy in those days was that the Ambassador's Number 2 was a Counsellor Commercial. We had notions that we were going to do a lot of business with Romania. We'd had Ceausescu on a State Visit in 1978, and officially relations were quite good. Ceausescu had his so-called independent foreign policy. The origin of which was that Ceausescu had been afraid the Russians would invade Romania after they had invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968. The common belief was that the Russians were annoyed by Ceausescu, and would deal with him in their usual fashion. There was a period in the early 1970s when there

was a certain amount of opening to the West and living conditions began to get better. The *Securitate* were not quite so oppressive. But things began to go very badly wrong when the oil price went up after 1973. Because Romania had its own oil, it had never participated in the COMECON system. The COMECON system provided cheap Soviet oil at below world market prices. The Romanians had not deigned to participate, because they felt that they didn't need to. If they were a bit short, they could just top up with imports from their Arab friends. But part of Ceausescu's madness was that Romania had built a huge petrochemical industry, the viability of which depended on running at full capacity on oil supplied at pre-1973 prices. When they had to import oil priced at post-1973 levels, and there was another price shock in 1979, at higher prices, their refineries were not profitable. They also went in for three other industrial projects, none of which turned out to be a success. They bought cars from the French, aeroplanes from us, and a nuclear power plant from the Canadians.

The BAC (now BAe Systems) contract turned out to be disastrous for the Romanians for the following reason. The BAC 1-11 was powered by Rolls Royce Spey engines. The same engines were used in the RAF's Phantoms, and they were noisy. New regulations came into force regarding noise reduction at airports, and Rolls Royce said: Well, yes. We can make these engines quiet. They need what is known as a "hush-kit", and the Romanians said: You just tell us how to do it. Not on your life: said Rolls Royce. We look after these engines. Their power and thrust are NATO secrets. And so the BAC 1-11 was never the export success that Romanians had hoped it was going to be. I vividly remember the tremendous arguments. The idea was that air frame manufacture was going to be transferred progressively to Romania, and so there were teams of BAC engineers in Romania. At one point the BAC engineers were shut out of their own factory. The Romanians insisted – this was common in Eastern Europe at the time – on something that was known as compensation trading, that is to say – you buy what we have, while we buy what you have. So what did the Romanians have? Their industrial products were of poor quality, and those that were any good anyway, they could sell commercially. So BAC soon had a division that was selling jam to the Sudan, and various other nonsenses. And of course, everything has a price and this meant that the aircraft cost about 20% more than it might otherwise have done. I learned something else about how the communists ran their economies. They had a plan for everything. So they figured out

what they needed to import – be it pepper, oil, or lemons or whatever – then they exported until they'd earned enough to pay for the imports without regard to the internal cost of production. So this meant that the economy was hopelessly distorted. And then Ceausescu took a decision that Romania was not going to be in hock to Western bankers or the International Monetary Fund. The large debt that had been accumulated was going to be paid off, and there was only one way of doing this. What did Romania have that was internationally competitive? Food. So this meant that the only foods that weren't rationed were those that weren't available at all. And for us diplomats, well we used to import long-life milk from Denmark. You had to bribe for everything, and it was a criminal offence for a Romanian to be found with a pound, or a mark or a dollar in his pocket, so something had to take its place, and it was Kent cigarettes. You go into a bar and ask for a beer. There was no beer. Produce a packet of Kent – the gold pack preferably – what would you like, Pilsner Urquell, Youngs, Dortmunder? That was how it worked. Of course diplomats could import these cigarettes duty-free and I think that some of the less reputable South American embassies were importing them by the vanload. It had its funny side for us, but for ordinary Romanians without access to Kent, it wasn't funny at all. You had to bribe to go to the doctor. This was really terrible. Our son had suspected appendicitis. We had to bribe our way past the admissions people to get into the hospital. It was awful.

MM What a tragedy.

CM Our Ambassador in Bucharest, Paul Holmer, didn't mind Romania, actually. Paul had had a terrible thing happen to him in his life. He'd been Number 2 at our Delegation to NATO, and the IRA had decided that the Ambassador was too hard a target so they decided to gun him down instead. But they got his Belgian next door neighbour by mistake, and Paul was riven with feelings of regret and guilt. He was quite comfortable to be in a country where his personal security was absolute, and he lived in, what was for Ambassadors, a rather agreeable cocoon. At the time a lot of ambassadors really enjoyed themselves. The Politburo and ministers looked after them pretty well. And there was some interest in Romania's foreign policy. But the closer you were to ordinary people the less good things looked. My wife is a very talented linguist and partly because our young son was so often ill with one thing after

another, her medical Romanian became really good. She also used to stand and listen to what people were saying in the queues. One of the most common complaints was that the current situation was worse than the war.

We were closer to the reality of Romanian life than were our Ambassadors. This was where I learnt how useful potentially the CSCE commitments were. This was the benchmark against which we increasingly judged this regime. The shine went off foreign policy, and human rights abuses rose up the scale.

MM That was an interesting experience.

CM That was certainly one of the most interesting postings I had. But because our young son had so much illness, life was pretty difficult for us. We were rather remote from London, and the cost of travel for getting breaks out of Romania was quite high because we were surrounded by Communist countries. At that time there was a system called "difficult post allowance." Category 5 was somewhere like Vienna or Geneva, and category 1 would be somewhere like Beirut where there was danger to life and limb. When I arrived in Romania, Bucharest was in the same category as Vienna. Living in a Communist environment with all the various rules, some of them self-imposed according to Security Department's requirements, made life difficult and isolated, especially for the junior staff who couldn't afford breaks away from Romania. I felt that this was really quite an injustice. I also noticed that the previous Inspectors had come during the early summer when the place was at its best. Then we had an inspection scheduled for May in 1982. We thought: This is no good. You should come here in November. But oh, no, no, they came in May. But we did manage to get the post into the "difficult post allowance" scheme. I think I got a bit of a bad reputation in London as being some sort of barrack room lawyer, because I felt that it was my job to make representations.

MM You were sticking up for your staff.

CM I was sticking up for my staff. I found that it was important, if you want to lead a squad, to be sympathetic towards them and support their reasonable complaints. And I thought it was one of my jobs to use my silver pen, to the extent that it is silver,

to try and get them a better deal. So I don't regret what I did, but I think I may have annoyed a few people in London at the time.

MM Anyhow, you came back to London. Were you still a First Secretary?

CM Yes. I was originally supposed to be in Romania for three years, but by the middle of 1982 it was clear that we couldn't possibly justify the size of the Commercial Section. We had a Commercial Counsellor who dealt mainly with debt collection. That was all there was. What we needed was somebody who could do economic analysis and find his/her way through bogus economic statistics. We strengthened the Chancery on that side. A First Secretary was replaced by somebody who'd got pretty good economic training, and then the inspection came, as I say in May 1982. The big question was what to do about the Commercial Section. The decision was taken to slim it down, and to make the Number 2 Head of Chancery, which was the usual pattern in these Eastern European countries at that time. You had a Grade 3 Ambassador and a Grade 4 Number 2 Head of Chancery. As I was 35, I couldn't be promoted *sur place*. The conclusion was that both John Willson (Commercial Counsellor) and I would leave and that we would both be replaced by Maureen MacGlashan, who came out and took over my job. As I mentioned it was a difficult posting and our son was constantly being ill, and so okay – back to London.

Posting to Western European Department, FCO, 1983-84

In fact what I had rather hoped for was some connection with the CSCE Review Conference, which was still going on in Madrid. I had heard that the delegation needed reinforcing, and I hoped that I would get something like a 6-month or a year assignment to CSCE. Then I would be in the age frame to go back to London as an Assistant, which had been the original plan. But then the desk officer in Western European Department responsible for the Federal Republic was fed-up with the job, and wanted to do something different. They needed somebody with German experience and fluent German quickly and that was me. I did what turned out to be a four and a half year stint in this Department, initially as Desk Officer for West Germany and then as Assistant for the whole Department.

Assistant Head of WED, FCO, 1985-87

Western European Department was originally the German Department. That was the core of its business. It dealt with the two German States, Berlin issues, France, Benelux, Italy, the Holy See, Austria, Nordic countries and it dealt with the Council of Europe – a relic of Western Organisations Department. But it didn't actually deal with the Council of Europe properly. That was one of its problems. It was a real ragbag of a department, and it had fallen on rather hard times. I don't think it was the fault really of the people in WED, because the big issues, particularly the Community issues, were being run by the European Integration Departments, people like Stephen Wall and Robin Renwick, David Hannay, and other glitterati. And there had been some very bad mistakes. One that I'd heard about involved a visit by the Prime Minister to Bonn. The ambassador was the host at a lunch and the briefing for this lunch, and for the Prime Minister's remarks, had fallen between several stools. The net result was that the Prime Minister greeted people who weren't in the room. WED were made to carry the can for that.

So the decision had been taken that WED needed a boost. Andrew Wood was brought in as the new Head of Department with Rob Young as Assistant. I think I was also regarded as an accretion of strength. Rob Young, who knew an awful lot about France, and me who knew a lot about Germany, and Andrew Wood who knew a lot about everything, as far as I could see. We could take charge of bilateral summits. So this was the set-up that I encountered. I also found it actually very enjoyable working with many of the embassies including the German Embassy. I made life-long friends there. The German Embassy was having a difficult time because the Prime Minister didn't like the Ambassador, Rüdiger von Wechmar. He was always being kept out of meetings. It was quite difficult.

I was told that one of my jobs would be to interpret on the telephone for the Prime Minister. Chancellor Kohl had taken over from Helmut Schmidt just before I arrived in October 1982. Whereas Schmidt and the Prime Minister could chat away in English, Kohl didn't speak a word. My predecessor had also been a very good German speaker and so he'd done this a few times, and I was told that this was part of the job. So I did do my best for a while. But it was extremely difficult because the

professional way of doing this would be that I would translate the Prime Minister into German, but this was reckoned to be a bridge too far for a non-professional interpreter. Perhaps it indeed was. I translated Kohl into English. Kohl rambles. I had to keep interrupting all the time, and he would never answer the Prime Minister's questions of course. I think she became quite irritated. She would make points about the Community budget and he would say: I'll get my officials to send you a letter about that. There was one famous moment when I was told they were going to talk about the Community budget, so I phoned up the Embassy in Bonn and said: The big issue according to the brief I've got is the VAT share expenditure gap – what's the German for that? Shrieks of laughter at the other end of the line. Oh, Kohl doesn't know anything about it. The Germans don't recognise the concept as existing! Just say she's on about that again if Kohl's interpreter asks you (laughter). Shortly after that they decided to rely on Charles Powell, who also speaks German, and Kohl's own interpreters, who included his wife. I think part of the reason for this was that they didn't want the FCO actually listening into these conversations, but that is supposition on my part. So this part of the job didn't last very long. But I could see even then that they were talking past each other; that they weren't really on a common wavelength.

I did the German desk for a couple of years and then got promoted to Assistant. In retrospect it was a great time really. I got to visit and to get to grips with a large number of countries, including the Nordic countries, and Italy and I got a good understanding of the Council of Europe, the Strasbourg based organisation responsible for the European Court of Human Rights; the Human Rights Convention, which fitted in very well with my CSCE interests. It was at that time that I first formed the notion that if ever I got the chance I would bring responsibility for the CSCE and the Council of Europe, which overlap a lot together in one department.

One of the highlights of this time was that in July 1986 we had a State Visit by President von Weizsäcker, whom I mentioned earlier. He made a truly great speech in Westminster Hall to both Houses of Parliament. As we were walking back towards the Foreign Office and Number 10, I heard the Prime Minister say that this was one of the greatest speeches that had been made in Parliament since Churchill's time. I was present at an informal conversation with Geoffrey Howe. Our briefs had been the

usual Community fare, but they cast the briefs aside and von Weizsäcker started explaining how the European Community could never just be a common market for Germans. They really believed in uniting Europe and overcoming the division of Europe, and thereby overcoming the division of their own country. I never heard a better expression of ideas that had originally been worked up by Brandt and his allies, than by the Christian Democrat President, who had also been, in an earlier incarnation, Mayor of Berlin. This was a fascinating time to see the relationship between Kohl and Mitterrand develop. Craxi was also at the height of his powers in Italy. It was good preparation for the posting that came next. I was responsible for the GDR. It was also a good management job in the sense that Western European Department was large with desk officers of very variable quality. Some were absolutely outstanding; two or three new entrants; one or two who weren't quite making the grade and so on. And so quality control was taken very seriously. So I had a lot of that to do. I had a lot of people to manage, and I also had marvellous Heads of Department – Andrew Wood and then Michael Llewellyn-Smith and then David Dain. They were very good at giving me subjects that were mine. So I was not just dotting the "i's" and crossing the "t's" on other people's work.

My main job was, apart from the German issues, the relationship between Britain, France and Germany. How could we somehow get into our relations with these countries the fact that there was more to them than just European Community issues. We were trying to convert the Franco-German motor into a triangle. At one of the first meetings between the Prime Minister and Mitterrand after his election as President, the Prime Minister had been briefed, literally, to raise the question of the price of fish.

I finished there in the middle of 1987. I was actually asked if I was interested in doing the job of the FCO secondee in Northern Ireland. I thought about that for a time. It would have meant earlier promotion. But for family reasons I put that on one side. I went to East Berlin in June 1987.

Posting as Deputy Head of Mission, East Berlin, 1987-90

MM What were you doing there?

CM I was the Number 2 – Deputy Head of Mission – in the Embassy to the GDR which was in East Berlin. You couldn't be based in West Berlin or you would never have had an East German round to your house. The theology was as follows: although the Embassy to the GDR was in East Berlin, which was its geographical address, that did not mean that we recognised East Berlin as part of the GDR, still less as its capital. And so one of my tasks was to make sure that all these Berlinology issues were dealt with correctly. There was quite a large trade component – we were trying to boost our trade with this difficult country. I suppose there were really three jobs: trade, keeping an eye on the German issues, and then the whole business of promoting peaceful evolutionary change in the Warsaw Pact, a subject of great interest to Geoffrey Howe. Trying to loosen the ties that bound them to Moscow, and to loosen and undermine the rigidities of this tough regime. So those were the three components of the job.

MM A pretty interesting job. Did you have problems with the German Democratic Republic ministers over the fact that we didn't quite recognise East Berlin?

CM Endlessly.

MM And they really resented that?

CM They did. It had become a circus. You would ask the taxi driver to take you to Berlin please, and he'd say: Berlin capital. And we'd say: No, and so on. It was quite burdensome for some of our visitors for the following reason. The East Germans issued us, the diplomats, with their identity cards, diplomatic ID, and if you wanted to cross into West Berlin you just showed this and there was a diplomatic channel. But the last thing you could do was allow your passport to be stamped with an East German stamp at a crossing point in Berlin – Checkpoint Charlie – no, no, no. Suppose somebody was coming from London with an East German visa (we all had to have visas). He would arrive in West Berlin and then he would exit West Berlin into the GDR and go all the way round the ring to end up more or less back where he started on the other side of the Wall. A lot of people got very impatient with this, including Geoffrey Howe. But we were very insistent that this Berlinology should be

complied with. We were often compared with medieval school men, devoting time and attention to issues which were of no practical importance any more. But we stuck to it and in the end it bore fruit, because Berlin theology turned out to be the basis on which the country was eventually reunited.

Just after I arrived, President Reagan arrived in West Berlin and made his famous speech in front of the Brandenburg Gate.

MM Tear down this Wall?

CM Tear down this Wall, Mr Gorbachev! He certainly got the right person. Although at the time Gorbachev gave him a very dusty answer, which was: Well, history will decide all this maybe in a hundred years. Some people in West Germany thought a hundred years was progress on never – the Brezhnev line.

A more important event occurred a couple of months later. Honecker, the leader of East Germany, who had been very instrumental in building the Wall in 1961 and had taken over from Ulbricht ten years later. One of Honecker's great ambitions was to be received in Western capitals, above all in West Germany. This was going to be the zenith of his career. There had been various false starts when the Russians had told him eg. in 1984 that he was not allowed to go. Eventually a visit was agreed for September 1987 and the West Germans wrestled with how they should get the protocol right for somebody who was not in their perspective head of a foreign country. The deal was they didn't exchange embassies. They had permanent representations and the West German concept of law was that East Germany was not *Ausland* – it was not a foreign country. So eventually they decided to deal with Honecker by offering him even grander protocol than would have been available for a Head of State, because he was a German Head of State. And they also screwed one concession out of him, as the price for being allowed to make this visit. That was that there had to be greatly increased opportunities for young people of below pensionable age to travel to the West on so-called family issues. Honecker gave way because by now the GDR was heavily dependent on West German economic assistance. After his visit the birthday business boomed, and people were given permission to go to the second marriage of a third cousin, fourth cousin removed and so on. We reckoned

that in the first year after the visit a million people below 65 actually made it to the West. A husband and wife were never allowed to go together, and you would hear quite young children saying: I want to go to the West, and the older brother would say: You don't understand. We're the deposit. We've got to stay here so that Mum comes back. And so, people came back from these visits – the first and over-riding impression was that West Germany was a much nicer place than it appeared to be from West German television, which nearly all of them could see. And people would say: You know I got out of the train and there was a porter. I walked into a shop and everything was there. And so a ferment started as a result of these visits. The pensioners could always travel. They were not such a factor. It was amongst young people that it was really interesting. And at the same time, how shall I put it – dissidence was not as strong in East Germany as say in Poland or Hungary, but the Protestant church had been accepted as a sort of respectable factor in East Germany and they were big on peace, rather like the peace movements in Britain or West Germany. And so dissidents and Protestant church converged on peace. It was very difficult for the regime to be opposed to that.

Then the dissidents picked up another issue which turned out to be very sensitive. That was the pollution of the environment. East Germany was stinking because their power was generated by brown coal (lignite). There was no flue gas desulphurisation, and the place was really crumbling. So the dissidents began to make a noise about these issues and established environmental libraries in the crypts of churches. The polluted environment and peace began to converge. But none of this seemed to us decisive, even early in 1989 when it became clear that things were changing very rapidly in Hungary and Poland. The Hungarians announced in February that they were going to introduce a multi-party system. By now Solidarity and Jaruzelski were in talks. Martial law was coming to an end. East Germany had only one reliable neighbour, Czechoslovakia. Soviet publications such as *Sputnik* were now banned in East Germany, because Gorbachev's policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika* were taking hold. Gorbachev had lit the blue touch paper without realising it. If you take away communism from Poland or Hungary, it's still Poland or Hungary. If you take communism away from East Germany what are you left with? Just Germany. It's an ideology state or no state. And if the Russians no longer regard East Germany in the Warsaw Pact as a bulwark of their defence system, then the game is up.

But notwithstanding all these changes that I've just mentioned, the internal ferment in Hungary, Poland, and the Soviet Union. The Warsaw Pact still seemed to be there as immovable and unchanging factors. And the most that we thought possible was that there would be a progressive loosening of the oppressiveness of the regime. But then the Hungarians decided that they didn't need the Iron Curtain any more, because any Hungarian could travel wherever he wanted. We learned later on that they told Gorbachev in March 1989 that they were going to start dismantling the Iron Curtain. Did he mind? No, he replied. This is a matter for you. And the Hungarian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister – Miklos Nemeth and Gyula Horn – said you know the comrades in East Berlin won't like this very much. So what? seems to have been Gorbachev's answer. The fact was that East Germans could not go to West Germany or the West freely, but they could travel freely within the Warsaw Pact. The favourite holiday destination of East Germans was Hungary because it was liberal and there was plenty in the shops. It was a nice place, and it was where they used to meet their friends and relatives from West Germany.

The Warsaw Pact countries all had secret bilateral treaties with each other not to allow each other's nationals to travel to the West without an exit visa issued by the sending state. The Hungarians, who were fed up with the East Germans for a variety of reasons, reneged on this agreement, finally cancelling it in August 1989. They decided on an experiment. Otto von Habsburg organised a "pan-European picnic" on the frontier between Hungary and Austria on 23 August 1989. On the occasion of this picnic the Hungarian border guards opened the gates to Austria for three hours with a view to seeing what the East Germans did, and how the Russians reacted. About 500 East Germans walked into Austria and the Russians did nothing. The Hungarians decided at this point that Gorbachev had meant what he said to Nemeth in March. Of course controls were re-imposed after this three hour opening. People began to camp near the border and tried to sneak across. All this got a bit difficult, and eventually people decided not to bother trying their luck at the frontier. Instead, they just camped in the West German Embassy in Budapest. There were frantic negotiations, and eventually on 10 September 1989 the Hungarians declared that anybody could go anywhere. One year later the Unification Treaty was signed. What the Hungarians had done was in effect to destroy the Wall that had been built in 1961 to prevent the

East German state bleeding to death. Now you could just walk round it. So in many ways that event was at least as important as the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November.

MM Well, it led directly to it. Incidentally, may I mention at this point your very influential paper published by the German Historical Institute in London, which is attached to this transcript. It is valuable for a slightly fuller account of these events.

CM Thank you for the mention of my paper for the GHIL. But to return to the narrative here. Yes, what the Hungarians did led directly to the fall of the Wall. In fact there was a moment when the revolution was underway in October 1989 when Honecker's regime decided to try to plug the hole. They imposed a visa requirement for Hungary and Czechoslovakia. This was before the Velvet Revolution which began in Prague on 17 November. The Czechs wouldn't let people go at first. So what then happened was that thousands crammed into the West German Embassy in Prague. At its height I think there were about four thousand people milling in and around the Embassy. Genscher negotiated their release. In October people had a feeling of panic that they were being walled in all over again. That indicates the extraordinary importance of the events in Hungary, and – oh yes – in Poland.

The Poles had a partly free election, which was won by Solidarity on 4 June 1989. That was the day of the massive crack-down by the Chinese authorities in Tiananmen Square. The East German authorities – Honecker, Krenz, and all those people – said: Of course. The comrades are just restoring good order and discipline. They have done the right thing. This provoked outrage in East Germany and also a sense of panic. East Germans thought they were at risk of being mowed down by tanks as indeed they had been in 1953. In June 1989 Gorbachev made a visit to West Germany. He had just been in China before Tiananmen Square, and this was when 'Gorby-mania' reached its apotheosis in West Germany. It was certainly a great moment for Gorbachev, as he records in his memoirs. He realised that what some of his advisers had been telling him was true. If he wanted to see an efficient functioning social German state he only needed to go to West Germany to find it. There is no doubt that a relationship of some trust and confidence, and also a financial relationship, was established during that visit. Kohl, if you remember, had actually

got off to a very bad start by comparing Gorbachev to Josef Goebbels at a time when Mrs Thatcher was already doing business with him. So by the time that the Hungarians made their momentous decision, the relationship between West Germany and the then existing Soviet Union was a pretty good one. And it was after the Hungarians took this decision, and the exodus speeded up, that the reform movement in East Germany sprang into life.

An outfit called *Neues Forum* tried to register, unsuccessfully at first, and then what had been originally been peace meetings at the Nikolaikirche in Leipzig each Monday, began to grow. The Social Democratic Party was re-established in the GDR. And so whereas in September you had perhaps eight thousand meeting and doing a little march round the Ring in Leipzig - that would be September – a month later you had 150,000 people participating in these demonstrations. Meanwhile the East German regime was gearing up for its 40th anniversary of the founding of the GDR, with 'Gorby' as the guest of honour. Honecker had been taken ill at a Warsaw Pact meeting in July and was out of action during all these dramas. This Warsaw Pact meeting in Bucharest, buried the Brezhnev Doctrine of the limited sovereignty of the Socialist countries. So Honecker reappeared for the birthday party. This was the one where while he was making this surreal speech about onwards and upwards to socialism in the Palace of the Republic and Gorbachev was staring at the ceiling, demonstrators were being beaten up outside. That was 7 October. By 18 October Honecker was out. You can really say that there was then a massive increase in demonstrations, especially in Leipzig, but all over East Germany, calling for reform. There was a lack of authority and will-power on the part of the regime. They were constantly trying to catch up with events instead of getting out in front of them, and unwilling to give up the leading role of the party, and so on. And then this very difficult business of the release of the people from Prague on 24 October who were allowed to go to West Germany in sealed trains through East Germany. The regime thought that they were asserting their control one last time. This was actually a disastrous move, because sealed trains have a terrible resonance in Central Europe. Imagine, sealed trains took people to the gas chambers – just awful! And this was then the high point of the reformers. People wanted to turn the GDR into a sort of German Sweden and their zenith was a demonstration on the Alexanderplatz in East Berlin on 4 November. By some estimates there were a million people there. They

were still calling for a reformed GDR but they were also calling for complete freedom of travel. I should add that the artistic creative community were in the van. The banners were clever and often very funny.

Fast-forward to the famous announcement made by Gunter Schabowski, a Member of the Politburo, on the evening of 9 November. He was asked at the end of a boring press conference about freedom of travel and said: Yes, yes, and shuffled through his papers. He scratched his head and said: Yes, we've agreed something new on travel, and it's basically people can do what they like. The next question was when does this come into effect? Schabowski said that as far as he knew, now. And that was it. The Wall fell. There followed a miraculous weekend. Berlin was reunited. Turning the GDR into a German Sweden became impractical.

As you can imagine, reporting all this and providing advice was quite challenging. We were a fairly small Embassy, although a reasonably capable one. I was Chargé d'Affaires in September when the Hungarians had made their decision. The President of the Academy of Sciences – a sort of chief ideologue – was asked by the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, a famous West German newspaper, about the future of the GDR and he replied: Well, what justification for existence would a capitalist GDR have alongside a capitalist Federal Republic? Answer: none. So that was the point at which I sent a telegram advising that we had better dust off our German reunification dossiers. That was not very well received in London.

MM Why?

CM Mrs Thatcher had been reading up on Germany during the summer. She had had a meeting with Mitterrand on 1 September. I know this because we are publishing documents next month on British policy overseas covering all this time. The French record has her saying to Mitterrand on 1 September 1989: "It would be intolerable if Germany were reunited, and we had a single currency as well." Now the interesting point about this is that François Mitterrand was at least as hesitant about German reunification as Margaret Thatcher, but, if it was going to happen, he had an answer to it. Mitterrand's answer was to bind the larger more powerful Germany into the

European family via the Euro. For Mrs Thatcher the medicine was even worse than the disease – if you like to look at it that way.

MM Mitterrand had the sense to keep quiet about it.

CM Yes, but he fired up the PM who could not keep quiet. I think Percy Cradock puts it very well in his book: the Prime Minister lacked guile. You could say that this was a virtue. But Mitterrand had guile in spades. Mrs Thatcher did indeed say in public things that she ought not to have said, however much she believed in them. The posts in Germany – the British Military Government in Berlin, ourselves, and particularly Christopher Mallaby in Bonn – had quite a difficult time. I recall (but this recollection is not shared by others involved, so my memory may be playing tricks on me) that we were actually discouraged from reporting the slogans that we were seeing on the demonstrations. After the fall of the Wall, the idea of a reformed GDR as a separate state collapsed very quickly. Instead of the demonstrators saying *Wir sind das Volk* they started saying *Wir sind ein Volk*. When I was talking to Charles Powell, he said: What Mrs Thatcher saw was "*Ein Volk, Ein Reich, ein Fuehrer"*.

Helmut Kohl said the thing about revolutions of course is that they happen very fast. That's the essence of them, and Kohl himself recalls in his memoirs that he made a visit to Dresden on 19 December 1989. This was his first visit to East Germany and he was met by Modrow, the man who was then in charge. When he saw the crowds and the whole set-up, he could sense that this place didn't really have any future as a separate state and that something would have to be done. And he made, I think, a marvellous speech to the crowds in front of the ruined Frauenkirche. They were all shouting: "*Helmut, Helmut, Du bist unser Kanzler"*. *You are our Chancellor.* And so he said: Well, calm down everybody. Not yet. You have to be patient. We've got to sort this out. And this was the moment when he really could have tipped things over into chaos, and gone for unification fast and the state would just have collapsed, and goodness knows what the Russians would have done. There might have been a panic. There might have been a putsch in Moscow. Anything might have happened. But the West Germans did decide, as I heard later, on the way back to Bonn, that they would have to introduce the Westmark in East Germany somehow or other. They began

work on hasty plans for German economic and monetary union. Of course as soon as that was announced, which was on 5 February 1992, much to the fury of the Governor of the Bundesbank, that meant that the GDR was history. The collapsing economy was run from Frankfurt, from the moment.

MM Fascinating.

CM Personally and professionally this was just about the greatest moment of my life. Wonderful. And to see it all happening peacefully. It was a marvellous example of what von Weizäcker had said three, four years earlier. The European Community was more than just a Common Market.

MM After that you went to Frankfurt?

CM Yes.

Posting as HM Consul General, Frankfurt am Main, 1990-93

MM Was that an anti-climax in some ways?

CM No. First of all it was very satisfying to have a post of my own to run, albeit a subordinate one. Frankfurt at that time was at the centre of events. First of all there was the whole business of paying for German reunification. Secondly, preparations for the Euro were getting into high gear. The UK joined the Exchange Rate Mechanism. The Consulate General was a commercial post. We were supposed to concentrate on trade. The Consul General was not really supposed to have much to do with the Bundesbank. This was reserved for the top brains in the Embassy in Bonn, the Bank of England, and the Treasury. I thought this was not really on. I'm a Rotarian. I discovered in one of the Frankfurt Rotary Clubs that Tietmeyer, the Deputy Governor of the Bundesbank, was a member. I discussed things with the Embassy in Bonn, the Bank of England, and the Treasury, and it was agreed that I could at least be a facilitator, able to keep an eye on things, step up economic and financial reporting, and help when there were visitors. Each of the German Provinces or *Länder,* had a Central Bank, and the Bundesbank started out as the Bank for the

German Provinces. Each provincial bank had a governor who was a distinguished central banker in his own right. I became very friendly with the governor of the Central Bank of Land Hesse in which Frankfurt is located, and with two or three of his clever advisers. I was able on the basis of my discussions with these people to prove to people in Bonn and London that I had a grasp of the issues. Fruitful traditional diplomatic work developed.

Drama arose when Britain had to leave the Exchange Rate Mechanism in 1992 in humiliating circumstances. That really was a bad day. I'm not the expert on the rights and wrongs of all that. But it is certainly true that the Bank of England's and the Treasury's links with the Bundesbank were not as close as London thought they were. The Bundesbank were aggrieved at the lack of consultation over the GBP/DM rate at which we joined the ERM.

In the following year, 1993, we persuaded Ken Clarke, when he was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer, to come to Frankfurt as one of his first overseas visits. The Bundesbank dusted off their dossiers and discovered that no serving Chancellor had ever visited them. They rolled out the red carpet. We went over all the events of the previous year. That gives you an illustration of how interesting it was to be in Frankfurt at that time. I also found that I could develop a talent for cultural diplomacy with bankers, theatre people, and wine producers by organising events. The Royal Ballet performed Swan Lake with Darcy Bussell. I got the Queen Victoria Vineyard to provide the wine. We had a Swan Lake supper at the Frankfurter Hof. It was just tremendous fun, and just up the road from my wife's home near Heidelberg. So Frankfurt was almost a home posting.

MM How pleasing.

CM Famous newspaper editors, interesting politicians. I got to know Hans Eichel, when he was Mayor of Kassel. Later he was Minister President of Land Hesse and after that Federal Finance Minister. So Frankfurt gave me great scope. It is rather a pity we closed that post.

MM Have we?

CM Yes. I don't think you need a large staff. But we should have someone on that spot with the title and status of Consul-General, a bit of infrastructure and ability to talk to leading people in the European Central Bank. I think it's crazy for a country such as Britain outside the Euro to have no one on the spot in Frankfurt.

MM Oh dear, another disastrous economy.

Head of CSCE Unit, FCO, 1993-97

CM Anyway I was Consul General in Frankfurt until 1993 and then I went back to London as Head of what was at that time called the CSCE Unit, because it was quite small. I was there from 1993 to 1997. This was when we had transformed the CSCE from a series of conferences into an organisation. The CSCE had provided the stage for the great summit, which closed down the Cold War in 1990. Margaret Thatcher was attending it when she learned that the Conservative Party weren't going to support her as Prime Minister any longer. She was actually on the steps of the British Embassy in Paris getting ready to go to the closing dinner at Versailles, I think. There was some poetic justice in that the Iron Lady had closed down the Cold War and then, a little bit like Churchill in 1945, had lost office. In this case her Party had turned its back on her. Of course the issues in her case were all those European issues. She had fired Geoffrey Howe and she had lost her Chancellor of the Exchequer as well.

MM And Ken Clarke as well.

CM Yes, yes. By 1993 the Cold War was over, but Yugoslav wars were upon us. Not only was there fighting in Yugoslavia, but all the ethnic nationalist tensions that had been suppressed by Communism between Hungarians and Romanians, Slovaks and the Hungarians, Georgians and Russians and so on; these problems were back on the agenda. It was also clear that countries such as Hungary and Poland aspired to join the European Union. But it was going to take some time, because their economies were in such poor shape. There was a very interesting issue as to how we should use the newly institutionalised CSCE to try to cope with these issues. Some rather useful institutions were established. Originally an Office for Free Elections

became known as the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). ODIHR does a splendid job to this day. I have in fact just been leading an ODIHR election observation mission in Bulgaria. There is a High Commissioner on – not for – but on National Minorities to look at trouble brewing between minorities and majority communities to try to prevent future Yugoslavias, and an Economic and Environmental Coordinator who is perhaps less operationally useful. And close cooperation, at least now, it wasn't too good to begin with, with the Council of Europe based in Strasbourg, particularly the European Human Rights Convention. Trying to put flesh on the bones of all these commitments, first made in 1975, and then reinforced in 1990 was fascinating.

The disappointment has been that we now have in Russia an assertive, nationalistic and very corrupt country. I would say if there is one abiding menace which lies at the root of so many of the problems that we have today, it is corruption.

Corruption, as I say, fuels trafficking in human beings, drugs, small arms and light weapons. Three main commodities are trafficked – drugs, weapons and human beings – and some people say that the trafficking in human beings is as valuable as the other two. I became intensely interested and involved in these issues during my time in London. It was also a very interesting time in terms of the development of the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy. I mentioned earlier how in the 1970s political cooperation got going on CSCE issues. It really took off in the 1990s in relation to these issues that I've just mentioned. To move a bit further forward, the difficulty now is that there is a tendency on the part of the European Union to say: Oh well, we can do it all ourselves. We don't really need all these other organisations. I think personally this is a bit of a mistake. Especially in the Balkans where there is an advantage, when you are trying to build democracy and the rule of law, of doing it through an organisation of which the country concerned is itself a member. A country such as Albania is a stakeholder in the OSCE or the Council of Europe in a way it is not when it's something imposed by the European Union. But that is to anticipate events a bit. I spent three and a half very interesting years during which I began to acquire a lot of knowledge about Central and South-East Europe. So then we come up to my first Embassy.

Appointment as HM Ambassador, Republic of Croatia, 1997-2000

I succeeded Gavin Hewitt, who had been at school with me. He was a year ahead of me at GWC.

MM Isn't he a BBC man?

CM No. There is a Gavin Hewitt who works for the BBC, but it's not the same one. Gavin Hewitt now has the dream job of Secretary-General of the Scotch Whisky Association. [laughter]

MM The same man?

CM Who was Ambassador in Croatia. After Croatia, Gavin went to Finland and then to Belgium. Earlier in his career he had a lot to do with EU issues. He was also very well connected in Scotland and got a wonderful job. Apparently there were numerous applications for that job when it was advertised.

I arrived in Croatia on 1 September 1997. The first thing I had to do was to open the condolence book for Princess Diana.

MM Did many sign it?

CM Yes. Absolutely. She was very popular in former Yugoslavia because of her interest in de-mining and she was much appreciated for that reason.

Robin Cook had set me up in a rather difficult way for this new assignment of mine. The Labour Government had been elected in May 1997 and the former Yugoslavia was still high on the agenda. Our relationship with Croatia's President Tudjman was not an easy one. Tudjman was very authoritarian, and he tended to crack down on the press; not as badly as in the old days of communism, but he was still pretty authoritarian. Robin Cook came out on I suppose you would say was a familiarisation visit in late July, and had a meeting with Tudjman. Tudjman said: People say I don't

allow a free press in this country. I tell you I do, and he produced a copy of *Feral Tribune* that was the equivalent of a cross between the *Canard Enchainé* and *Private Eye*. There was an extremely disobliging cartoon of Tudjman with some apposite copy, and Tudjman said to Robin: Is this the truth? Isn't this disgusting? And so Robin Cook quick as a flash said: Yes, but the truth sometimes is. So you can imagine what that did for Her Majesty's new Ambassador. I actually knew Robin Cook quite well. He was my exact contemporary at university, together with Malcolm Rifkind. I was in the same school batch as Malcolm Rifkind. Yes, we were in the same class for years. Robin and Malcolm used to go at each other like fighting cocks at the student union debates. The debating was quite something in those days. Robin Cook was very sharp and amusing and so on, but he didn't do me a great service initially with that particular sally of his. But I was very pleased about the posting. I'd always been fascinated by Slavonic languages. I learned some Russian at school and I started to learn Polish. But now I'd got my chance and I had four months of language training, including an idyllic month of immersion in Dubrovnik before I started work. I acquired enough Croatian to follow pretty well in conversation. And I improved gradually as I went along. It was tremendously interesting. There was the whole business of what to do about de-mining; the reintegration of the Serbs; would the refugees and displaced persons be allowed to return; the role of the Roman Catholic Church. Tudjman's line was: We have been blessed by the Pope – who did indeed make a number of visits to Croatia. Pope John Paul was known in Croatia as the world's greatest living Croat. Tudjman said that the Pope had blessed us, so we are Western, Christian, democratic and civilised by definition. Who were we in the EU to criticise? That was pretty much Tudjman's line. Pretty rich for an ex-communist general, I always thought.

So there were two fairly tough years, including a European Union Presidency in 1998 when we managed to threaten the Croatians that if they didn't make some moves on refugee return and human rights, not only would their chances of ever joining the EU be severely damaged, but we would hit their trade preferences and so on. I don't think we would actually have carried out this threat, but we managed to make it credible, which I thought was quite good, and they did make some moves on refugees. And then, in a way, the Almighty intervened, and Tudjman died in December 1999, just after an electioneering visit to the Vatican. Elections had been scheduled to the

Parliament and we weren't quite sure whether they would be fair and above-board. But the death of Tudjman meant that there was going to be a Presidential Election as well.

Then what one might call new political forces flourished. Tudjman having been rather difficult I had found the opposition leaders quite congenial. And here I have to sing Robin Cook's praises. I was in touch with him and said: There are some rather good people coming up here. Let's give them some attention. Robin agreed to this and we laid out the red carpet for the man who became Prime Minister in January 2000, and indeed for the then leader of one of the liberal parties who wasn't so successful. Cook took a real shine to these people. They met Tony Blair, and Tony Blair also took a shine to them. So having had two really tough years, my last year was a sort of *annus mirabilis*. It all then began to go wrong again because they had extreme difficulty in divi-ing up their war criminals. I don't think they were entirely to blame for this, but it turned out that Ivica Racan, who has now, like Robin Cook, passed away, was really good at coalition building. He wasn't decisive enough on war criminals, or indeed on various economic issues. Things rather drifted after my time. But I felt a certain sense of achievement by the time I left.

It was also quite difficult in the embassy. The person who should have been my deputy was another Edinburgh GWC connection – Hugh MacPherson. Hugh was a very talented man. He was a poet, who had published a number of books. He'd taken time out from the Diplomatic Service and then come back in. His brother was a great school friend of mine, but Hugh was diagnosed with some rare form of cancer just before he was about to start in Zagreb. They thought they could treat it and so I was asked, would I wait? And so I said: Yes. And various stop gap officers arrived. I was the only A-stream officer in the post and so it was really very hard. When Hugh arrived, he found that his treatment was such that he couldn't do a day's work, go out in the evening and be back on deck the next morning. And so he gave up after about four months. And then in May 2001 he died. Very sad. Anyway, that was one difficulty, and there was another difficulty towards the end in late 1999, Tudjman's last days.

We were having endless trouble with bogus asylum seekers, so a visa regime was imposed on Croatia. It was extremely badly handled. Or at least it would have been if we hadn't made do and mend at the post. This was another occasion when I got on the wrong side of London. The premises of the Embassy – the Chancery building – were a real tip, cramped, noisy, awful. And there had been talk about a new Embassy, but we hadn't been able to find anything. The usual business. And then they were going to set up this visa operation, so whole squads came out from London, and it was clear that they were going to set up the visa operation in a separate building, which compared with the Chancery office was a gin palace. And I said: No. You've got to do it differently. I asked about the needs assessment report from the architect who had visited us in the previous January? Silence. And I said: If you're going to do this, you can't introduce a postal regime only. This is impossible. I said: What is happening in the Czech Republic? There are many more bogus asylum seekers from there than there are from Croatia. Ah! – the answer was – We don't care about annoying Tudjman, but we do care about Vaclav Havel. Anyway, it was very badly handled, and during one of the last planning meetings, I said I think I had better come to London to discuss it there. But they would not let me visit London for that purpose. Then we managed to get hold of a Visa Officer who had been involved in an equivalent shambles in Slovakia; they didn't like Meciar either. And so we opened a visa office in a sweetie shop round the corner from the Embassy, and there we dealt with personal applications and all the rest of it. We imposed it just as Tudjman died – terrible timing – but by January I was receiving plaudits for a marvellous operation; tremendous improvisation; well done sunshine, and so on. I really had to grind my teeth at that, I must say.

MM How typical.

CM Very typical. It turned out that the architect I had been complaining about was actually fired. He never did a report on his visit to Zagreb. Nothing happened, and eventually they rumbled him.

MM Better late than never.

CM I suppose so. Then there was a slight delay over my successor, who was Nicholas Jarrold, because it turned out that he was ill, and there was uncertainty over the time he was arriving. So I stayed on a little bit until the beginning of November. By this time the old system whereby POD fixed your posting for you had gone. You had to bid with your mission statement. What would you do with an embassy etc? I was beginning to be very dispirited. The officer who had looked after Heads of Mission in POD had been Richard Dalton. He had thought that an ideal career move for me after Croatia would be the Czech Republic, and it looked as though the timing would be right. I could have a few months for conversion from Croatian to Czech and all the rest of it, and then it turned out that people who went to posts like that needed to be experts on the inner workings of the European Union, and anyway it turned out that I didn't feature in the PUS's plans for the Czech Republic. I heard that Richard had some disagreement with John Kerr about all that. I bid for various things, but they didn't have anything, and so I left Zagreb in October 2000 not knowing what I would do next. I was rather disappointed by that, because I had had overall very good reports. Anyway, Charles Crawford, whom I knew well, had been Ambassador in Sarajevo, and by this time he'd been my line manager in London, and he'd been tipped off by his successor in Sarajevo, Graham Hand, that there was a very interesting job coming up in Mostar. The set up from the time of the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995 was that there was a High Representative, a job done later with great distinction by Paddy Ashdown, responsible for civilian implementation of Dayton. The High Rep had two Deputies. One in Mostar in the Croat/Muslim federation, and one in the Republika Srpska, Banja Luka. The job of Deputy High Representative in Mostar was becoming vacant. The present office holder was a Norwegian lawyer; quite a distinguished judge. But they thought what was needed was somebody with a bigger political picture. So, would I be interested in this? The idea also was that I was knowledgeable about the Croats, and had dealt with Tudjman. The main problem in that half of Bosnia was that the Bosniacs, (Muslims) and Croats, didn't get along. In fact, the war in Mostar and the war between Bosniacs and Croats was as vicious as anything that happened with the Serbs. And indeed Mostar at the time I was there still looked like a mini-Stalingrad. It was terrible. And so would I have a go at this? I was interviewed by the then High Representative, Paddy Ashdown's predecessor, the Austrian Wolfgang Petritsch, and so I was appointed. I started in very early January 2001.

My area of responsibility was quite large. I had a multi-national staff of 80 in the Deputy High Representative's Office in Mostar, and I had subordinate offices in other parts of the country. I was also a sort *primus inter pares.* I was responsible for chairing and coordinating the work of the international community based in Mostar. This included a multi-national SFOR division, MND SE, commanded by a French General – a remarkable man. Then there was UNHCR. There was a UN civilian police organisation. There was an OSCE Mission. There was the International Organisation for Migration. There was the European Commission, and there was the International Committee of the Red Cross. Their involvement in coordination was quite sensitive because of confidentiality. Of course all of these organisations were autonomous. They had their own chains of command, made up their own minds and were supposed to pull together. That was my job. There were some amazing characters. The head of the UN on the civilian side – mainly their role was police supervision – was Rubina Khan, who is the sister of Imran Khan, the famous Pakistani cricketer, and she was a marvellous character - chain smoking, hard drinking, amusing. I don't know how she would go down with the Taliban – I can tell you that. [laughter] She used to say to me: Ambassador, you've got to realise the number one problem in this country is corruption – Pakistan! You know! This was great. [laughter] But she was a lady of great charisma and high principle. I had great admiration for her and her Chief of Police who was a colonel from the French *Gendarmerie.* I had the highest regard for the *Gendarmerie* and the *Caribinieri*. They were the people who really could operate at the interface between police work and military work, because of course that is their role. They were people of action and they were very effective and I will tell you why in a minute. Corruption indeed was massive. We had a fraud department and we'd fingered a bank that seemed to be operating dubiously, preparing to finance a breakaway by the Croats from the country of Bosnia Herzegovina. They wanted to join their brethren in Croatia. They didn't consider themselves as Bosnian citizens at all. They had portraits of Tudjman all over the place, that sort of thing. A cloak and dagger operation was worked out to conduct an inspection of the headquarters and about a dozen branches of this bank, and my deputy was actually assigned to lead one of the inspections – he was a lawyer from Spain. To cut a long story short, the security arrangements went wrong, and news of the inspection leaked. The inspectors did their work and they'd just about finished,

and we were actually holding a press conference to express satisfaction, when riots started. My deputy (not in Mostar), was taken hostage and subjected to mock execution – it was terrible. We were ejected from our offices in Mostar and at one point we had to hand back the documents we'd just seized to get our hostages back. It was all pretty humiliating. There had been a lack of communication with the French General. In the area where the Brits and the Canadians had deployed their forces there was no trouble. You see the French and Spanish military were not allowed by their national rules of engagement to get mixed up with civilians at all. So what you had to do was to position them to look threatening. That was enough to scare people off. But mistakes were made at headquarters in Sarajevo. We couldn't have any meetings or anything in Mostar because the whole place leaked like a sieve. So the thing had to be done again. This time the British Army took charge. They happened to have a *roulement* (change over of forces) – so they had twice as many troops in the country as they normally did. They descended on Mostar one night – sixty light tanks and went into the headquarters of the Herzegovina Bank, dynamited the safes and took everything we needed. This was represented as scandalous: a NATO raid on hard working, peace-loving Croat peasants. There was a horrendous article in the *Spectator* claiming as much. I was depicted as curling my upper lip, and speaking pompously to the natives in a posh Morningside accent like some latter day imperial governor, and so on afterwards. After that I had bodyguards – Royal Military Police – eight of them. Of course, they were great people. But life was fairly difficult and especially tense with the Croats on whom I was supposed to be sprinkling magic dust. I'd been hoping that my wife could join me, but that was then out of the question, because you're only as strong as your weakest link, and the RMP couldn't guard her full time. This drama happened at the beginning of April. In May, I went back to London and had a discussion with the FCO and it was agreed that I would do just one year in Bosnia, instead of the two that had been planned. It would have been terrible to pull me out right there and then, because that would have looked like cutting and running. But it was expensive to keep me there. Guarding me cost well over a million: eight people, Military Policemen, round the clock. They were superb, I must say. I did this for a year. I was rather disappointed in a way with Wolfgang Petritsch. He is a brilliant man. Nobody knows more about Bosnia than he does. He's written a very good book about it. He is of Slovene origin, so he speaks the language perfectly, but he wasn't in the same category of leadership and management as, shall we say,

Paddy Ashdown. And also I found the way the whole thing was set up was unsatisfactory. It was a so-called matrix organisation. That is to say, I would have a head of press and public affairs, but that person was actually being managed in Sarajevo. To begin with I was told I even had to clear my press lines with Sarajevo. In fact all that stopped once I got my military policemen, because they weren't going to be managed from Sarajevo, by anyone. They wouldn't take it. The OSCE and most of the international organisations run like this, and I think it's a weakness. I think the system that we operate is much better. For example, when I was Consul-General in Frankfurt, of course the Ambassador was my boss for the purpose of general supervision, but as a highly paid civil servant I could use my own judgment and manage people. That's what you're paid for. 80 people here I thought, I'm managing them. In fact, I got it so that it worked pretty well and they did indeed look to me. I managed to build up relations of trust and confidence with my staff. But I think you need to get the structure right. I'm 100% against these matrixes, but that's perhaps an incidental item.

Towards the end of the year, when I was wondering what might come next, I got a 'phone call with two nice offers – one was of a CMG and the other was, would I like to spend a year at the Royal College of Defence Studies (RCDS)? The original idea, which had been mentioned to me in May, was that I could be the Foreign Office member of the Directing Staff at the RCDS. I'd always expressed interest in doing something on the academic side. But then it turned out that Nicholas Browne, a great friend of mine of my intake who had been our Ambassador in Teheran, was suffering from Parkinson's disease and this had just begun to take hold. They wanted a comfortable billet for him while they decided on his next posting. So would I be willing to go as a student, although normally this was a counsellor posting. I said I would love to do that, and I was very lucky, because this was the second year of the opportunity to do a King's College London MA in International Studies. So I grabbed that as well. It was a tremendous way of doing an MA because of all these fantastic lecturers that you would never get at a university. I decided to keep the work load within limits by writing on subjects that I knew. So it didn't mean that I had a year bent over my books at the RCDS. I think that was absolutely one of the best years of my life.

MM Then on to this rather exciting final post?

Ambassador and UK Permanent Representative to the OSCE, 2003-7

CM Then the final posting. It was exciting. It was the job, in a sense, that I'd always wanted, or at least I'd always wanted since about the mid-1970s. I felt myself very privileged to get it. I had thought that I was going to be time out for that job. One idea had been that I could go from being a Head of Department (1993-97) to being Head of Delegation in Vienna. Simon Fuller who took up the job when it became one requiring a full-time Ambassador in 1993, just before I took over the Department, had not been successful in getting other jobs. In those days you were able to stay put. In fact Simon stayed in Vienna for six years, until 1999 when he got his Geneva posting. John de Fonblanque was posted to the job in 1999 and he was due to run until the end of 2003, by which time I would be past my 57th birthday. I thought I would be caught by the 3-year rule. But Alan Charlton, who was the chap who was arranging these postings at the time, first of all thought I was the right person for the job, and that we could adjust the 3-year rule a bit. In the end that didn't matter because the rules were changed. If you were born after the 1st October 1946, you didn't have to retire on your 60th birthday. Both John Macgregor, who was a bilateral Ambassador in Vienna and I, benefited from that. We each did an extra year in our respective posts. But then something else happened. The axe was being passed around and economies were supposed to be made, and the administration thought the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe was really past its sell-by date. Then the Minister of State, Denis McShane asked why we had so many ambassadors in Vienna? Let's amalgamate them, he said. There was a plan to amalgamate the job that I had just been appointed to with the bilateral Embassy. But that was stopped by Peter Ricketts, who was still Political Director, who said: Just because Ministers haven't been visiting the OSCE recently, that doesn't mean to say that it's lost importance. What is more, our Presidency of the EU is coming up in 2005 and combining this job with the bilateral one would then be impossible. And combining it with the UN job would also be impossible, because you can't be in two places at once. So my posting went ahead and the job proved to be every bit as interesting as I had expected.

There were problems though. One was, indeed that Ministers' interest had more or less collapsed. They thought that OSCE really didn't have much of a role anymore, and certainly not in the Balkans. They wanted the EU to be the chosen vehicle, and so I had some disagreements with London about that. Also by this time they kept cutting the staff, and they also sent me people who on the face of it weren't quite suitable. But I had learned in the course of my career, that everybody is good at something. Find out what it is and set them to it, and then compensate yourself for their weaknesses. I found that my four years in Vienna in terms of relations with the staff and so on, were really the happiest in many ways, of my life. We were able to get a tremendous team spirit going, and our running of EU coordination was admired by everybody. We were always being asked …

MM What exactly was your assignment?

MM I was Head of Delegation as Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the OSCE in Vienna. The EU was trying to develop its Common Foreign and Security Policy, coordinating common positions in international organisations. There are strict limits on this in the UN because Britain and France are permanent members of the Security Council. But in the OSCE the EU was supposed to have a common position on almost everything. So the Russians invade Georgia: What's our position? What do we say in the Permanent Council? The answer is that there is a huge difference of views between countries such as Britain on the one hand, and Spain on the other. And for some people it's just important to have a common position – silence is the worst thing. I didn't take that view, and so I actually used brinkmanship quite often to get a position, which might not otherwise have been possible. Also Vienna is the seat of arms control negotiations. The Russians for example have got a separate Arms Control Delegation headed by an Ambassador. They have four Ambassadors in Vienna. Most delegations have got far larger arms control components than we have. So, I was also an arms control negotiator on the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe; various Vienna documents about confidence and security building measures; notice of manoeuvres, and all the rest of it. We were also dealing with some fascinating issues such as smuggling of small arms and light weapons. For example, Ukrainian transport aircraft to take a consignment of weapons to somewhere in Central Africa, and then the same Ukrainian aircraft get the contract to transport the

UN troops to clear up the mess. What are we going to do about it? Then the OSCE has organised preventative diplomacy missions, trying to bring peace, human rights and so on in various places, including a large 500 people mission in Kosovo. There's still a large mission in Bosnia Herzegovina, where I was last year as a "strategy consultant." And then the whole business of election observation, and the various minority issues. A fascinating range of subjects which commanded perhaps not quite as much attention in London as it ought to have done.

MM Did you have many Foreign Office staff?

CM It was a small Delegation. We were a Delegation of a dozen UK based, apart from my driver. We had one office building and all the management section functions were common to the three missions, as in Brussels. As I say, I was lucky to have no weak links.

MM So how many Ambassadors are there en poste?

CM During my time there were indeed three. One bilateral ambassador, one OSCE ambassador and one UN ambassador. My Deputy was a Grade 4 and we had an MoD Counsellor who was doing the arms control job.

The MoD said they didn't need to have a Counsellor in Vienna anymore. But it was agreed that Andrew Brentnall would stay on until after our EU Presidency ended, because he did all sorts of other things. He'd been in Bosnia, and he was a very effective political officer. But then he got another job. I would never stand in anybody's way over promotion, or a new appointment. So Andrew left just at the wrong moment. But we managed. And then this business of going down from three Ambassadors to two, just wouldn't go away. I think John Macgregor, who'd been Ambassador to Poland and Director Wider Europe, felt he could do a more ambitious job than being just a bilateral Ambassador, and so it was decided to amalgamate the UN job and the job of bilateral Ambassador. A number of countries do do that; the Dutch for example. And so it was agreed that this would take effect when Peter Jenkins (UN) left. Simon Smith, John's successor, tells me that he spends about 80% of his time on UN issues. The UN job has grown tremendously in importance in

recent years. Iran nuclear, for example, that is in Vienna where all that is all negotiated at the seat of the IAEA. What am I to say about this? I think the answer would be actually to have three Ambassadors, because the Austrians are quite a protocol, status-conscious people, and they don't want to deal with a Deputy. Meanwhile in international negotiations you've got to be padding round the corridors, cutting the deals and all the rest of it, all the time, and so I think probably our interests in Austria may be suffering a bit, but that's just my view. But the OSCE has retained a fulltime senior grade Ambassador and what goes round comes round. The Foreign Secretary went to the last meeting of Ministers, the first time a cabinet minister has attended an OSCE meeting for ten years. The Russians have tabled some new controversial proposals on European security, and interest has stepped up a lot.

MM Was that really a rather satisfactory post?

CM It was very satisfactory, and it was also very enjoyable, and so I've bought a flat in Vienna and that's where I live now, and I still do some assignments from time to time.

MM Do you come across the Austrian Diplomatic Training School?

CM Oh, the Diplomatic Academy? Yes, absolutely. I know the new Director of it quite well. The previous Director was the famous Czech dissident and writer, Jiri Grusa, who has just stepped down and now it's a chap called Winkler who had been State Secretary in the Foreign Ministry. The Diplomatic Academy is very good.

MM There was a British Director there until not so long ago.

CM They do cooperate closely with the Foreign Service Course at Oxford, the outfit now run by Alan Hunt.

CM I had hoped that I might have had a bit more success than I've had in post-retirement jobs, but it's been enough to keep me going and balance out the plunging pound, which was initially quite alarming. We thought we'd made a bad move, but we've managed to sort it out.

MM I think the pound's probably coming back.

CM A bit, a bit.

MM Is your main residence in Vienna?

CM Yes, yes. We've kept a small house in Croydon. We had a larger one. We've now got a little one, and in fact we've taken out a mortgage on that to make sure that we could pay off everything in Vienna, and just have some ready cash. And we've let it out. That's all going quite well, I think, and Vienna is a very interesting place. I can keep going on the Balkans and various other activities.

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