

BDOHP Interview Index and Biographical Details

Sir Antony (Arthur) Acland KG GCMG GCVO

Biographical Details with (on right) relevant pages in the interview:

Born 12 March 1930, died 8 September 2021.

Educated at Eton and Christ Church College, Oxford

Married 1956, Clare Anne Verdon (died 1984); married 1987, Jennifer McGougan (née Dyke).

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Sir Antony Acland interviewed by Liz Cox on Monday 23 April 2001 for the British Diplomatic Oral History project.

LC It is very kind of you, Sir Antony, to give us this interview today. You left Oxford and went straight into the Foreign Office, is that right?

AA I did, yes.

LC For any particular reason? Had you always intended to make a career in the Foreign Service?

AA I was always interested in international affairs. My father had been in the Sudan Political Service and he and my mother spent a lot of time in the Middle East. I didn't really know what to do at Oxford. A lot of us put down for the Diplomatic Service and one of my enterprising friends at the time, who subsequently made a lot of money, ran a book on the likely outcome. He gave the rather unflattering odds of 17 to 1 against Acland. But he had a sort of premonition perhaps, or an idea that I might be a dark horse, and he got a friend of his to put what was called 10 shillings in those days on me on his book in his own name. When I got in he won £8 10 shillings and we went out to dinner at the Bear at Woodstock and had a champagne dinner for two.

LC What subject did you do at Oxford?

AA I did PPE.

LC So you could have gone in any direction.

AA I suppose so. I didn't know really what to do. I had wondered about law and then I was interested in international affairs; I was interested in the Middle East and decided to have a go at it. To my surprise I got in and went on from there.

LC And you said you had an interest in the Middle East. Does that mean you asked to be put on the Arab side. Did the Arab side seem to be the way to great things?

AA I don't think so at all. I think, in a way, I was conned into it. There was a very persuasive character, - he is still alive, - John Henniker, Lord Henniker, who was Head of Personnel Department, and he interviewed us individually when we got in. He was very suave and a real diplomat. A good example to us all, and I remember him saying "It's a strange service that you have come into and we require some of the people to learn hard languages and there is a whole range of extraordinary hard languages, Aramaic, Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, Mongolian, and so on. Hypothetically speaking, if we thought it a good thing for you to learn a hard language, would any of those appeal to you any more than others?" I fell for it and, knowing that my father and mother both spoke Arabic, I said that, hypothetically speaking, I didn't know if I really wanted to learn a hard language but perhaps, if I had to, Arabic would be the one. A light came into his eye and he said, 'Arabic, did you say Mr Acland.' I was put down as an enthusiastic volunteer for Arabic.

LC And that was that.

AA That was that.

LC I know it has been said that in those days the Middle East was such a crucial area that it was seen as somewhere where, if you were hoping to go places in the Foreign Office, it might be somewhere to start.

AA That certainly didn't enter my calculations. I think it was coincidence that quite a lot of senior people were so-called Arabists. I rather rapidly became a lapsed Arabist, because I only served in the Arab world after learning Arabic and then in Kuwait until 1958 and never actually went back to an Arab-speaking post, although I was Head of the Arabian Department. I think it was coincidence that people like myself and Patrick Wright and others, John Coles, all got to the top of the service, but, of course, the truth is that the service needed more Arabists than any other

hard language. There are 14 Arab speaking countries, but there is only one China, or one Japan, or one Ethiopia (Amharic). So they were training more Arabists than probably any other group of hard language students. It just happened that they bubbled up to the top.

LC Tell me some of your experiences in the early days. You went out as a Third Secretary to Dubai, or a Second Secretary? It doesn't really matter.

AA I went first, of course, to the Middle East Centre of Arab Studies in Lebanon. All I would say about that is that I think it was a very good way of teaching students a hard language. You were absolutely immersed in it for a year or 18 months, but not just immersed in the language. You were immersed in the culture and the history, and you were able to travel around the area which in 1953 was a time of peace, unlike the ghastly troubles that followed. With my first car, a Ford Consul, I could drive into Syria, go to Aleppo and Damascus, Homs and Hama, drive down to Amman, go to Petra. One learnt about the area and the people and you went to live with an Arab family in the summer break. I went round with the Ministry of Agriculture of Jordan and they would try to delineate the farm holdings, interviewing the farmers and trying to register property. That was a good way of hearing colloquial Arabic. It was a very good system and it was fun and you picked up more than just the language, which I think is important. And then I went to Dubai. It still had the titles and regime of the old Government of India, because it used to be administered from Delhi, the Persian Gulf, as it was then called. It became the Gulf and then perhaps the Arabian Gulf, but the head man was the Political Resident. My boss was the Political Agent and I was his Assistant Political Agent, and then you had a Political Officer. It was a quasi, almost colonial, appointment because we were technically responsible for the defence of the Trucial States. There were 7 sheikhdoms with the Political Agency in Dubai responsible for their defence and the conduct, though not necessarily the content, of their foreign affairs. We also interfered monstrously in their internal affairs as well and we exiled wicked sheikhs, wicked uncles, we fought little wars against insurgents, we fought a war against the Saudis in Buraimi using the Trucial Oman Levies and it was an exciting time. A good experience for a young Assistant Political Agent.

LC You were single then at that time were you?

AA Yes I was, at that time in Dubai, and then I came home on leave and was posted to Kuwait and was on my own in Kuwait then came back and got married at the height of the Suez crisis on November the 6th, 1956. I got out of Kuwait on the last plane that got through the Arab airfields. In those days there weren't long haul planes and you had to stop at Amman and Beirut then Athens and London. As I got through Amman and Beirut they clanged shut with the Suez war starting. Then my wife and I went back to Kuwait, wondering whether it would be up in flames, up in arms against the British. It was different. I think basically the Kuwaitis wanted to remain friends with Britain but they didn't want to be seen to be too friendly to the representatives of Britain after the Suez affair. It was extraordinary how little one knew about it. In my innocence I remember, the day I was leaving, John Moberley, who was a great Arabist and ended up as Ambassador in Iraq, came in and said, 'The Israelis have walked into Egypt.' I thought, 'How wonderful, that's marvellous news. We, the British, and perhaps with the help of the Americans, will stop them, push them back, establish peace and then delineate the frontiers of Israel and get the whole thing sorted out. It's a great opportunity, the whole thing's in the melting pot.' I had absolutely no idea of the collusion that went on behind the scenes. I learnt more about it when I became assistant Private Secretary to Selwyn Lloyd. He went to Villacoubray and met the French and the Israelis. But it was a terrible mistake, I think. And an awful lot of people in the Foreign Office, I'm sure, thought it was...

LC Even before it happened...

AA Well they didn't know it was going to happen. Even Pierson Dixon, who was in New York at the time as the Ambassador to the United Nations, I don't think he had been told. Nobody was told and nobody was prepared and there was no information effort to try and explain at the time, or even in advance, what was happening. It was a very secretive affair and I think it had a very long-term impact on our relations with the Arab states.

LC Do you think that it made them trust us less or feel that we were less powerful?

AA Both I think. I think it made them feel we were devious and certainly less powerful. The

disastrous thing about it was that it should never have been started. But if it was started, as it was, then it had to be taken to a successful conclusion. To start and fail and have to pull out and actually to be seen to be beaten by Nasser was a disaster. It showed that we were something of a toothless tiger.

LC And when you went back to Kuwait then did you have to spend a lot of time trying to... what was your brief when you went back? Was it decidedly different? Did it have a Suez edge to it to try and get back to the state...

AA Yes, I think it was really to keep your head down and quietly to try to re-build bridges and re-establish normal business. It didn't take terribly long. They were very nice people, the Kuwaitis, and we all had good friends among the ruling family and senior people in the administration and it had hurt them. They were obviously very conscious of the Arab nationalism and the importance of Nasser and they had a big Palestinian and Egyptian group in Kuwait and they obviously, politically, had to take account of them. But also Britain had been a trusted friend for a long time and it hurt them that they felt we had done the wrong thing.

LC I get the impression that a lot of people, British diplomats and businessmen, personally thought that they were letting friends down very much by this action and of course that led on to a withdrawal, more of a retreat, from the Middle East, but we will come on to that. And you then went back to London from Kuwait and you became the assistant Private Secretary to, first, Selwyn Lloyd and then to Alec Douglas-Home. And we are looking at the sort of period when Kennedy was elected in the States and the Berlin wall going up. It was also the time when Macmillan is supposed to have very much run the Foreign Office himself, and, with all those ideas in mind, what were your experiences there? You were presumably one of several assistants?

AA The Private Office in those days consisted of the Private Secretary to Selwyn Lloyd, two assistant private secretaries and an administrative assistant. I went back for a short time to what was called the Permanent Under-Secretary's Department and then I was summoned by the Personnel Department and told that I was a candidate to be interviewed for the assistant Private

Secretary-ship to Selwyn Lloyd. It was still John Henniker, I think, or perhaps his successor. He said very kindly, 'These jobs very much depend on personal chemistry, and the Secretary of State is not the easiest of men, (which indeed he wasn't), and if he chooses you and you start and you don't get on well and he doesn't like you and kicks you out, there will be no hard feelings because it may not be your fault.' So I was quite glad to be told that. I was chosen and Denis Laskey, was the principal Private Secretary, and then there was a senior assistant Private Secretary, who was Brooks Richards then Michael Wilford, and then me as the third secretary and then there was a sort of fourth who really did the diary and administration. I started with Selwyn Lloyd and he wasn't always easy but I got to like him very much and we got on, I think, really pretty well. He was a strange man. He was I think mesmerised by Anthony Eden, who was everything he wasn't in a way. Eden was elegant and moderately aristocratic and suave and experienced in foreign affairs. Selwyn was rather awkward and gauche, his marriage was falling apart at the time which hurt him tremendously. He had the one little daughter, Joanna, whom he adored. As a result he was thoughtful about weekends when one was on duty and he happened to know Anne's, my late wife's family, they were in Liverpool together, he was at Cambridge with her uncle, and he used to invite her to come for weekends at Chequers and with our son, our first child, because he was fond of small children.

LC He was very family friendly.

AA That was very nice, but he was extremely competitive over games, he hated losing. There was one evening when Anne, my wife, beat him decisively at Scrabble and I thought that I had lost my name, I was going to be sacked for her victory, he said, 'All right Anne, I will take you on at croquet tomorrow morning after breakfast.' He took her on at croquet and didn't let her get through the first hoop. He was a very good croquet player. On the substance, of course, with Selwyn Lloyd the most important issue was the future of the two Germanys. There was an important conference in Geneva of the representatives of the victorious powers, Russia represented by Gromyko and France by Couve de Murville and America by Chris Herter and Britain by Selwyn Lloyd. It is extraordinary to think of; it was 1959 I suppose; we went to Geneva and settled in. We took a house in the old town, No 10 Rue de Senebier; the others took villas. I think we were there for 6 or 8 weeks, I would need to look up the dates, but a long time.

Imagine the Foreign Secretary today able to be at a conference, however important, for that length of time. And it was very important, it was deciding the future of, and the relationship between, the two Germanys. We used to have time off and Selwyn used to use Prince Aly Khan's little chateau on the lake at Geneva and go swimming. I think he went back once to report to Parliament and I used to have to draft telegrams to Macmillan on his behalf saying how the negotiations were going. But it does show how the speed of international affairs has quickened, how the merry-go-round is going round faster and faster. I think that is a pity. As John Coles said in his book recently there is hardly enough time for senior officials and ministers to think and to plan for the future and to work out really where British interests lie and what the main thrust of policies should be. Then he was made Chancellor of the Exchequer and Alec Home inherited the existing Private Office. Ian Samuel took over from Dennis Laskey and I stayed on. It was the start of the happiest possible association with Lord Home. I got to know him and his family tremendously well. He was a person who certainly influenced my thinking and my standards and behaviour a very great deal and it was a great privilege to have been able to work for him twice and to get to know him so well in the intervening period, and have him as a real friend.

LC Would you say his standards were old-fashioned?

AA No harm in that, some would call them old-fashioned, I would call them extremely decent and high principled. He had a code of standards; he was a moral man and he was a simple Christian and he believed certain things were right and certain things were wrong. And certain things were right or they were wrong in international affairs. That was very important, that was at the top of his list. Morally and internationally right. Very close to that was what was right or wrong for his country. You might have to ask what his country was, whether it was Scotland or the United Kingdom. He was a devoted Scot but of course he represented the United Kingdom fully. What's right for the country. And then only if someone gave him a nudge, and he needed quite a powerful nudge, he had a very nice man called Miles Hudson as his political adviser, and occasionally Miles would have to say I think perhaps we need to think of the interests of the Conservative Party, and he would say, oh yes. But that wasn't at all high on his agenda. Never, never, in all the years I worked with him, did I hear him mention, consider, think about what was

right for him, for his own personal reputation, it just never entered his thinking. He had a real old-fashioned idea of service. He went through an extraordinary time at the beginning of the war. He was going to go and fight with the Lanarkshire Yeomanry and they discovered that he had a bad back and he went to a doctor in Edinburgh who said "You have got tuberculosis of the spine. There is a new operation which can be done but nobody really quite knows whether it is going to be successful or not. We can shave off bits of bone from your shin and graft them into your tubercular vertebrae and if we don't you won't be able to walk after a bit". Alec Home said "well, I must try and keep going and I'll have a go." So he had this operation done and was in a plaster cast for a year under his armpits down to his knees, totally unable to move, and he was wheeled up into the garden at Spring Hill, the house they had on the Tweed, with squirrels and rabbits around him and he would throw things to feed them. During that time he read a great deal and he was much better informed and better read than people gave him credit for. He read Marx and Engels and political history and political biographies and so on. After a year the doctors came and took off the plaster and said "you are getting on very well but you will have to be in plaster for another year". And Elizabeth Home told me that she almost lost him, that he had lost heart and that he thought that every year they would come and say you are getting on but you are going to be in plaster for another year. After the second year they came and took off the plaster and said 'take up your bed and walk.' He had to learn to walk again. I think during that time he decided that if he was going to be able to walk again and take an active part in life he would do so and that he would behave in a certain way. He had a wonderful, natural temperament, but he had a code of behaviour which he stuck to quietly, not ostentatiously at all, but he had very strong fibre inside him. He was never bitchy about people, he was never catty. If he made jokes they were often directed against himself or his family. He was an inspiration to work for. I could go on a long time about him but I mustn't go on too long.

LC I wouldn't denigrate that in any way but I suppose some people might say that the kind of independence that he had, meant that he could perhaps afford a moral line which others might not feel they could tread. He could walk out of the government the next day without...

AA Yes he could. But because he had these standards he had an extraordinary influence. With the Conservative Party in Parliament, if he stood up and said, 'I believe this is what we have got

to do and I have thought about it,' it was pretty readily accepted. I remember the Prime Minister of Luxembourg, at the time when I was ambassador in Luxembourg, came to our house one evening, drank quite a lot and became quite talkative. He said "It's an extraordinary thing about Alec Home, we are totally different in our mental approaches". Gaston Thorn was very French in training and intellectual; Alec was much more intuitive, he was an instinctive politician. But Thorn said, 'I don't know what it is about him, if this house was on fire and we were on the third floor and he said to me jump, and you'll be all right,' I would go because I just trust the man.' Alec Home had that effect on people.

LC But he didn't have a good press.

AA No, he didn't. I think he looked wrong on television. He was thought not to be an expert, certainly not on matchsticks economics, which was an unfortunate remark of his. He was thought to be slightly old-fashioned, as you said, slightly unprofessional, but he was far more professional underneath than he gave the appearance of being. He was extremely dedicated to work. He got through his work wonderfully well, was very well informed and going round the world with him, he was listened to, there is no doubt about it. He had been in foreign affairs ever since the thirties when he was Parliamentary Private Secretary to Neville Chamberlain, and went to Munich with him. On the whole he supported Chamberlain on Munich. He was not terribly partisan, he was a Conservative and thought the Conservatives ran the country better than the Labour Party, but when Jim Callaghan became his successor he really, genuinely wished him well. And they used to keep in touch, which was nice. Callaghan respected Alec Home and Alec Home liked Callaghan. He told me that he hoped, if the Labour Party won the election, that they would appoint him as Foreign Secretary.

LC But in fact during this period is the time when the Berlin wall went up, isn't it? In spite of whatever you agreed in Geneva over that 6-week period, so how was that received?

AA It was the period of the cold war. At Geneva one had to accept there were the two Germanys. At the time of the Geneva conference of course you still had the Control Commission in West Germany and the Russians were running East Germany but the two parts

would become the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic, and they were to be eventually two recognised, accepted countries. Then the wall went up and the cold war intensified. The main thrust of foreign policy, apart from trouble spots like the Middle East, was the relationship between the great powers, between America and the Soviet Union and that really was the priority number one, to maintain the defences, to maintain NATO as a successful defensive shield, to try to get arms control agreements and Alec Home worked extremely hard on that to try to limit the awful balance of terror caused by nuclear weapons. And you had to be to be vigilant. You remember he threw out the hundred and six Soviet spies during that time, just before I became his Principal Private Secretary, in the second period I was with him just before 1971. He tried to get Gromyko to do it without fanfare or fuss, he wrote him two letters and said, 'I am serious, we are not prepared to put up with all this espionage, just quietly withdraw them and we will keep quiet about it.' He got no response so out they went. He meant what he said; he was pretty tough on those sorts of things.

LC This was just after your period but relationships with de Gaulle, leading up to the time when de Gaulle blocked an application to join the Common Market from Britain in 1963, were you involved at all at that time with the negotiations with mainly French objections?

AA No I wasn't. We have jumped, you see, because in 1960 he became Foreign Secretary and then in 1962 I went to New York and then he became Prime Minister in 1963 and lost the election in 1964 and then Wilson became Prime Minister. And of course New York was again an interesting period. I have been looking back on how things have changed. It was still a time when Britain and America really could swing the votes and we thought it right to have specialist lobbyists. We had two lobbyists, one for the Latin American delegations and one for the Africans. Richard Sykes, who was eventually murdered by the IRA in The Hague when he was Ambassador, worked with the Latin Americans and John Powell-Jones, who became an Ambassador in Athens, I think, worked with the Africans.

LC When you say lobbyist, you mean people who spoke say Spanish...

AA Spoke Spanish and spent their time cultivating the delegations and explaining British and

American policy. The Americans had a team as well, also trying to ensure they voted the right way. Certainly with the Latin Americans the key was to know what their domestic habits were. Richard Sykes, who had been in the army, was tremendously courteous and dignified, and also very friendly and had a very nice personality. He got to know that the Colombian Ambassador, for example, was usually in bed with his mistress after lunch and it would be no good hoping to get him in to vote in the UN before 4 or 4.30pm. But at 4.30 or 5 o'clock you would see him ushering him in like an old tortoise who had woken up from his sleep and then he would put his hand up in the right way. John Powell-Jones had experience of Africa and he kept in touch with the then quite small number of African delegates...

LC Presumably the Soviets were doing the same thing...

AA I am sure they were trying, yes. Certainly America had much more influence in Latin America than they did and we perhaps because of our ex-colonies, Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Kenya and so on, had some influence with the Africans. But you could by persuasion swing the votes and occasionally one did. The first major crisis that came my way was Cuba, the Cuba missile crisis. On arrival I was allocated various responsibilities, one of which was Latin America and I had to draft the speech for Sir Patrick Dean to make in the Security Council on the Cuba crisis. I didn't feel I knew too much about it but I remembered that my godmother was in town and we were going to have her and her husband to dinner and she got very delayed and I had a drink or two before dinner and then they came late, we had some more wine and they went and I thought, 'My God, I haven't done this speech for the next day,' so I sat down in the heat of the moment, or the heat of the alcohol, drafted it out, took it in and had it typed early in the morning, served it up to Pat Dean, and he summoned me in and I thought I was going to get a rocket for not doing a very good job. He said, 'This is pretty good, pretty tough stuff isn't it, Antony.' So I thought perhaps that's the way to do it. If you are under real time pressure and you have a drink and off you go and it comes out all right. So he made the speech. It was a very dramatic debate. Adlai Stevenson was the American representative and he sat down and he said to Ambassador Zorin, the Russian representative, "I ask you Ambassador Zorin to say whether there are or are not nuclear missiles in Cuba". Zorin said, 'Ambassador Stevenson, this is not a court of law where you can interrogate me, I am not prepared to give you an answer.' Stevenson

said, 'Well, I'll wait here 'till hell freezes over, I'll get my answer in the end.' It was exciting stuff.

LC And did he get an answer?

AA Yes, he did. He didn't get it there in the Security Council but the next thing poor old Zorin learnt - he really had the ground shot from under him - was that Khrushchev had admitted that there were missiles and they would be withdrawn. They were being taken out and the crisis was over.

LC How did you feel at the time? Did you think there was a real danger, yourself, as an insider, of war breaking out?

AA It was a pretty tense moment indeed. I imagine that Washington had more of an insight, David Ormsby Gore, Lord Harlech, was the Ambassador and a nephew of Harold Macmillan and had been Minister of State at the Foreign Office, he had a very close relationship with the Kennedys. He had been brought up with them and knew Jack Kennedy and Bobby Kennedy and Jackie very well. I think he was in the White House the whole time. And Macmillan gave a lot of advice through Ormsby-Gore who talked to the President about it, just as Margaret Thatcher talked a lot to George Bush about the Gulf war. I think it was a moment when Britain had a lot of influence.

LC Of course Macmillan got on very well, surprisingly, with Kennedy, or was supposed to ...

AA Yes, he did. I, remember when he went to his first meeting with Kennedy. In this country, he tended to put on the 'old man' act and have a rather floppy, knitted waistcoat and droopy moustache and shuffled about looking much older than he really was, but he decided when he went to see Kennedy with Alec Home that the "old man act" wasn't the right one so he spruced himself up and trimmed his moustache and threw away the woolly waistcoat, squared his shoulders, he was a very good actor, he was very good politician but he could put on and off various acts at will. If he hadn't been a politician his family always used to say he'd have been an

actor. He decided that the old man act wasn't one which would appeal to the young new frontier President. They did get on very well then and I think Kennedy respected his expertise and Dean Rusk, who was Secretary of State, was a great friend of Alec Home and they got on extremely well also, so it was a very close relationship.

LC I wonder how it affects the freedom of the Ambassador when the President of the United States and the Prime Minister have a very close relationship. In a way you were in the same position when Mrs Thatcher was Prime Minister and President Reagan was President. Does it mean things go on over your head because there is this close relationship between the two Heads of State?

AA Up to a point. You can't and you wouldn't want to, it would be quite wrong to stop the direct contacts and the important thing is that when the Prime Minister, Mrs Thatcher talked to the President, talked to another head of state, her staff told the Ambassador that it had happened and as much of the content of the discussion, and hopefully most of it or all of it, that they thought appropriate because, certainly with George Bush, I got to know him extremely well, he would have expected me to know about it and you would look rather foolish if you didn't. Charles Powell and the staff with Mrs Thatcher, yes they did keep one informed of the content. But it is very important that Heads of State should talk directly to each other.

LC No, no. I can see that, and there have been criticisms of Mrs Thatcher in that she had her own little cabinet with Charles Powell, and the Foreign Office, represented by Geoffrey Howe, felt that they were not always in the picture. I wondered if that was a danger or a difficulty?

AA I don't think I felt that in Washington. I felt that 95% of the time I knew what was going on. In addition to the telephone calls there was an awful lot of coming and going of senior people, Ministers all the time, we had nearly every member of the Cabinet visiting. I tried to aim for a sort of royal flush of the Cabinet, but there were one or two rare birds like the Lord Chancellor, though he came, or the Lord Privy Seal...

LC I like the idea of a hand of spades...

AA Collecting them. All of them came. And then many of the senior officials, the Chief of the Defence Staff, the Intelligence community, so one did have people in the Embassy all the time and I think that one felt that one was pretty well informed.

LC And then in 1964 there was a change of government in England and Wilson became Prime Minister. Did that affect the way you worked in the UN? Was there any marked change of policy?

AA Well there was a significant change in that the head of mission left. Sir Patrick Dean was unceremoniously removed and rather badly treated I think. He wasn't told initially where he was going or what was going to happen to him. He did in the end go to Washington, but after a certain pause. The Labour party had in their manifesto that they were going to appoint a politician as Minister of State to the United Nations and they appointed Sir Hugh Foot, Lord Carradon, to come to the United Nations and he became our boss. So the personalities changed and he had his own fairly idiosyncratic style of working but he was a good man and fun to work for just as Pat Dean was. But you obviously adapted to his style, he was much more political, he was less analytical, he was more emotional I think. He was an extraordinary man. For relaxation he loved speechifying and the bigger the audience the more the adrenaline worked and for a really good, relaxed weekend he would go off and address 30,000 delegates in Salt Lake City. He was a very good orator, but he could become slightly repetitive. He had the 'battered relic' speech which was about his time in the Colonial Service and he used to start it, 'Look well on this battered relic of an old colonial empire,' and off he would go, talking about Cyprus and Nigeria and Jamaica and so on. But he was good ...

LC Did he have any different policy lines?

AA He had a very strong view about Rhodesia and he actually thought and feared all the time that the government, including Wilson, was going to sell out to Smith. He got very agitated about this, because he felt that Smith had to be faced down and there were the various meetings Wilson had with Smith, he had a meeting on the Tiger, the frigate, and Lord Caradon came back

at one time ready to resign over the Rhodesian policy and he wanted to lobby the Prime Minister and Arthur Bottomley who was Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations. Lord Carradon asked me to come with him to organise his programme and deal with the mechanics and take records and so forth and we ended up in the Commonwealth Secretary's room, a big room in the old Commonwealth Office, and there was Arthur Bottomley, he didn't seem to have any papers on his desk, he didn't seem to have much to do standing there, and as soon as we were in the room off started the great eloquence of Hugh Caradon. 'I want to tell you, Secretary of State, there is going to be a fire in the basement of Africa, the whole continent will go up in flames, there will be doom death and destruction ...' he went on like this for about ten minutes and Bottomley looked at him, rather like an old tortoise with an unwinking stare, and at the end of it he said, 'Well, Hugh, I've heard what you have got to say and it's very interesting. I don't think I disagree with any of it but I have got just one question, 'What do you think we should do, and when I say 'do' I mean 'do'?' I remember Caradon saying, 'Do, yes absolutely of course, do ...' But he was a little bit like that, a lot of froth and sound and fury, but not always wholly practical. But he didn't resign and he played a very big part, I think he got it through just after I left New York to go to Geneva, in drafting the very important resolution 242 on the Arab-Israel question which really has become the bible and the text book as to what the solution should be. He negotiated that. He felt very strongly about the Arab-Israel issue as well because he had served in Palestine and felt there was great injustice for the Arabs and he worked very hard for them.

LC How did you feel about the UN at that time? Did you feel it was a good working organisation and how do you feel about its development since then? Have your views changed since that time?

AA It's got so much bigger, I think the sad thing about it was that you felt very often that the representatives were just voting according to the political policies of their governments, and not listening.

LC So there could be really no serious debate...

AA There wasn't really significant debate. I think I was most disillusioned over the Congo

crisis. If you remember there were Belgian hostages in Stanleyville in the old Belgian Congo. The Belgians decided that they must be released, they were under siege. They sent in Belgian paras and they used the British island of Ascension, and American planes to take them in. The Belgian paras went in and defeated the Congo guards and the Belgian hostages were sprung and then they withdrew. It was purely a humanitarian mission to get these people out. It was very successful and I don't think there was significant loss of life, if any. The three countries, Belgium, Britain and America, were arraigned before the Security Council, and Monsieur Spaak, Michael Palliser's father-in-law, a man of huge distinction, Prime Minister of Belgium and Foreign Minister at the same time, then Secretary General of NATO and so on, he flew from Belgium to present the Belgian case and Adlai Stevenson spoke for America and Hugh Caradon for Britain. First of all the Africans were all up in arms saying this was a monstrous act of aggression, kept Spaak waiting with procedural wrangles whether he should be allowed to take his position in the Security Council, whether he should speak or not. Eventually he was invited to the table, this distinguished man having been kept hanging about for hours. He took it in good part and I remember he gave a really wonderful speech, eloquent and in no way carping or impassioned but gentle and well reasoned and then Adlai Stevenson spoke and he was a wonderful orator, then Hugh Caradon, and when he was on a new subject he was very good. I sat there listening and they might just have been playing their national anthems for all the effect it had, the rest of the Council weren't listening to what was said. We had to undertake the operation to save lives. We did it and in no way interfered with the internal affairs of the country and we withdrew all our forces and that was the end of it. But it just went straight over their heads. I think one felt a bit disillusioned. The debates on Arab-Israel were rather the same where you had Abba Eban and Golda Meir on one side, Ahmed Shukeiry on the other ranting and raging at each other, the Arabs I am afraid more than the Israelis. The Israelis were the better debaters and the Arabs always tended to overstate their case. Abba Eban made a devastating remark about the Arabs, that they never missed an opportunity to miss an opportunity. I'm afraid there is something in that. If they could have had the statesmanship to accept a settlement years back, and we are talking about 35 years ago, if they had accepted a settlement, they wouldn't be in the awful position that they are in now. Great injustice has been done to them, but they have always wanted to have 100 or 105 per cent. In any negotiation you have got to settle for 75 per cent and you are lucky to get that. If you get 85 per cent you are

doing jolly well. The same really with Cyprus. I was in the Special Political Committee for the Cyprus discussion between the Greeks and the Turks and you felt that it was a dialogue of the deaf. They presented their cases but you didn't actually get any closer to a solution. Just think of this for one moment, I was there in, I suppose, 1963 and the United Nations force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) was sent to maintain the peace between the two communities. It is still there. It may have maintained peace but it hasn't made the peace and that is the danger, if you insulate parties from reality you perpetuate the state of affairs. Cyprus is more divided now and the British tax-payer and other tax-payers has paid for this force for 37 years. I think the United Nations has a reasonable record of peace keeping but not a good record of peace making.

LC Interesting. Well, I suppose I should move you on from the UN to the UK mission in Geneva. So from one multilateral to another. Was that going to a similar place or...

AA It was different because one was dealing with the specialised agencies of which there were seven or eight in Geneva at the time...

LC Were you working particularly with one or two of the agencies...

AA I had as Head of Chancery to co-ordinate the representation of all the various organisations. There was the World Health Organisation, Telecommunications, International Labour Office, High Commissioner for Refugees and all the rest of it. And you used to get delegates coming from Britain, from the specialised ministries and you had to service them and make sure that they had all they wanted and they were properly briefed and generally keep a watch on overall policy. I dealt particularly with the High Commissioner for Refugees which I thought was a marvellous organisation. Lean and not over-staffed. Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan was the High Commissioner and was a very impressive character. They really did wonderful work I think, humanitarian work and sensible work, they weren't trying totally to change the way of life of the wretched refugees and build them new townships but they were giving them equipment and supplies to enable them to do a little bit better with what skills they had anyway. It's a great mistake with refugees to mother them too much, the great thing is to keep them active and involved in their own agriculture, farming or whatever it is and give them the wherewithals to do

it. It was a less vivid activity in Geneva, less politically highly charged but interesting. I was very glad to get this insight into this work. I think some of the United Nations subsidiary organisations have got too big and have slightly lost their way and they have got inflated and they are rightly criticised for too large a staff, too large budgets and too much entertaining. I fear it is the case with most organisations that they are set up for a very good and legitimate purpose and then time changes. They need a new review and some of them need to be abolished. I think some of them have been. UNIDO, the industrial development organisation in Vienna, has I think now gone. You ought to be able to rotate them and ones which have served their purpose should be got rid of. I was proud that when I went back to London, back to the Arabian Department and having hopefully sorted out the affairs of the Persian Gulf, I did abolish the Department. I said to the Head of the Foreign Office, or perhaps it was said to me but I think I took the initiative, I said, 'Look, we don't now need an Arabian Department, one Department for the Middle East can do the lot.' So it went and was no longer a separate department.

LC Tell me a bit more about the two years you spent as Head of Arabian Department. It obviously was always crucial...

AA It was very important at the time. The Labour government, I think it was at the end of 1969, sent round Lord Goronwy Roberts to swear everlasting friendship with the Gulf sheikhdoms, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and the Trucial States, and a few months later the poor man went again to tell them that the government had decided to withdraw from East of Suez and to close down in Bahrain and Sharjah and indeed Singapore. That was Dennis Healey's policy. Then you had the 1970 election when the Conservatives came back. Alec Home became Foreign Secretary again and had to take the difficult decision whether to maintain that policy or whether to countermand it. He was under a lot of pressure from the right wing of the Tory party, people like Julian Amery, who was one of his Ministers of State, to go back on it and in his wisdom, and I am sure it was wisdom, he took the view that once it had been announced, whether the policy was right or wrong, you couldn't put the clock back. If you did there would be a great outcry, there would be terrorists putting bombs up against the perimeter fence of the bases in Bahrain and Sharjah and though he didn't approve of the way it had been done and wasn't sure it was right, I think he partly thought it was right. So we needed to modernise our relationship with the Gulf States...

LC There was a lot of financial pressure too...

AA Yes there was. That one should stick to it. So that was our task and it had to be done by the 31st December 1971.

LC You didn't know you had to do this when you accepted the...

AA Yes, we were planning for it. Then Donald Macarthy left and I was made Head of the Department. It was a rare occasion when you had an absolute time frame in which to operate. I gave all the members of my department various subjects and we had a critical path analysis board with horses going across the board. If they got stuck in a ditch, they then had to try and crack the whip at the Ruler and sort out whatever the problem was and get them all at the end of the course by the 31st December. The first key was of course to get the Iranian claim to Bahrain off the shoulders of the Bahrainis. The Shah felt very strongly about Iran's prestige but I think he realised the strength of feeling on the Arab side and was looking for a way out. He gave a speech which was reported in a newspaper in India, to the effect that he would be prepared to accept an expression of the wishes of the people of Bahrain as to whether they were Iranian or Arab, or wanted to be with Iran or wanted to be with the Arab side of the Gulf. We pounced on that and tried to work out a device where the sounding of opinion in Bahrain could be properly taken. We asked U Thant's, United Nations representative in Geneva, a wonderful Italian called Signor Winspeare Giucardi, who inherited the Winspeare side from a Yorkshire forebear, he had the guile of an Italian and the appearance of an English country gentleman, which was rather reassuring to the people who he had to deal with, to conduct this sounding of opinion. He knew perfectly well what the outcome had to be but he had to find a way of doing it. The Ruler of Bahrain, Sheikh Isa, was of course terrified to have any sounding of opinion because any sounding of opinion of what the people wanted, whether they wanted to be Iranian or Arab, might, he feared, lead to a sounding of opinion on whether they wanted him to be their Ruler. So he was very apprehensive about the referendum and in the end it was a sounding of opinion talking to the sporting clubs, and the various clubs that existed and Giucardi did it very well, dressed it up and the Shah in the end accepted it. And it was accepted in the United Nations, so

the Iranian claim on Bahrain was removed and then we had to sort out the lower bits of the Gulf. Originally the idea was to have a Federation of Bahrain, Qatar and the Trucial States. Then Bahrain and Qatar wanted to be independent and the Trucial States wanted to be merged together and Sheikh Rashid of Dubai and Sheikh Zayed of Abu Dhabi had to agree to come together and resolve or forget their tribal differences. We had to write the constitution of the United Arab Emirates for them, settle further issues in dispute over the Gulf islands and the Saudi claims to Buraimi. I thought at the time that it couldn't be done with the normal mechanism of the Foreign Office, that the Assistant Under Secretary and the Deputy Under Secretary above me would be too busy with other things. I said to Lord Greenhill that I really thought we needed a trouble shooter who could take charge and do nothing but sort out the Gulf. He said, 'I think I agree with you, can you think of anybody?' I said, 'I can immediately think of somebody who would be absolutely ideal.' He asked who and I said, 'Sir William Luce.' He was in Sudan with my parents, I knew and respected him and he had been Governor of Aden and Political Resident in the Gulf. Dennis Greenhill appointed him, he came out of retirement and he was the man who talked to the Shah, talked to the King of Arabia, talked to the Arab Sheikhs and did it extremely well, he spoke good Arabic and had just the right demeanour for dealing with the Shah. He told it as it was to the Shah which very few of the Shah's own people ever did and the Shah was rather fascinated by him. It did on the whole work. We had to unwind the ex-territorial legal jurisdiction; we were the receivers of wrecks, and manumitters of slaves, we had cemeteries and we had rifle ranges and we had bases and it was really quite a lot that had to be unscrambled. We got it broadly completed by the 31st December 1971 but we couldn't settle the question of the Tunbs, the islands at the mouth of the Gulf in the Straits of Hormuz. We tried to persuade the Ruler of Ras al Khaima to do a deal with the Shah but he wouldn't do it. They were uninhabited and the Shah took them which caused a row with some of the other Arab countries who nationalised British oil companies and so on. I think it was a pretty successful operation and the United Arab Emirates has gone from strength to strength and continues to exist. It's the weight of the oil money which really has ensured it has prospered and it has held together, but there it is and they have good relations with Saudi Arabia now and slightly wary relations with Iran. I look on it on the whole as a very important time in my career, a very fascinating time when you were actually having to do something practical, achieve something on our own. It was a British responsibility, we didn't have to consult with our European allies, we told the Americans what

we were doing, they backed us up to an extent but it really was a British operation.

LC One of the last?

AA Well, we had Hong Kong didn't we, later. Yes, one of the last. And there were alarms and excursions. Armand Hammer of Occidental tried to queer our pitch by towing out an oil rig to start drilling in a disputed area near Abu Musa which was disputed between Sharjah and Umm al Quwain and Ajman and claimed by the Shah. I recommended that a frigate should be sent to stop him. Perhaps it was the last gunboat to be sent. Hammer, Lord Thomson of Fleet and Sir John Foster QC, who were partners, brought a writ against the British government for illegal boarding in the name of Acland and the captain of the frigate but didn't get anywhere. I think we claimed Crown immunity, but it went to the House of Lords and was thrown out. But it was the right thing to do. If he had been allowed to start drilling the Shah would have blown him out of the water and we would have had a war. So it was an exciting time.

LC And it has often been marked as the beginning of the end, in a way, for bigger, more powerful ... the retreat from the Middle East, influence having to be done more diplomatically, less militarily, more physically ...

AA Yes and because I was involved (and perhaps I am prejudiced) but some people said it was an undignified withdrawal, a scuttle from our responsibilities. I have always called it a modernisation of our relationship with the Gulf States, and I think you do have to update your relationships. It was a very odd, quaint, unmodern relationship. You don't, in developing countries, have courts nowadays. When I was there in the fifties, one sat as a judge, judging non-Muslims but actually Pakistanis also came under our jurisdiction and it was a strange and antiquated relationship which obviously had to change.

LC And so you came back from those giddy heights to being Alec Douglas Home's Principal Private Secretary. Did he ask for you to come back ...

AA No, I am sure he didn't. I'd be astonished if he did. No, Johnny Graham was my

predecessor. He had been with Michael Stewart and Alec Home and it was time for him to move on and I was there. I was the right age and I was the right seniority. I was a Counsellor, I'd finished the job as Head of Arabian Department and I had abolished the Department. I was going to have to do something else and probably Personnel Department knew I'd worked for him before and maybe thought I was suitable and put up my name.

LC Surely he had to agree?

AA And I hope and think that perhaps he was quite pleased. He wasn't the sort of man to interfere. He would have waited to see what Personnel Department said. When my name was put forward I daresay, I hope, he was quite pleased and I started again another very happy relationship with him.

LC And what were the main issues that you remember from that time, the main difficult issues?

AA Just before I joined him as his Private Secretary, he and Heath had signed our accession to the European Community, so it was the beginning of our membership of the EEC...

LC It was 1972 wasn't it when we joined?

AA Yes, or 1971? I always forget dates. So it was the beginning of our relationship as a full partner in the European Community. He had John Davies as his Minister for Europe who spoke very good French, and Alec Home was very busy with everything else, with the Commonwealth which he knew very well, he had been Commonwealth Secretary, relationship with the Soviet Union, relationship with America, NATO. All those problems. He still did a lot of travelling, I think he was then over 70, or very nearly 70, and being Foreign Secretary is a tiring job and he had long days. I think he had hoped to decentralise and delegate to John Davies most of the European work, but it turned out that Michael Palliser, who was then the Ambassador to the Community, very often wanted him to go to Brussels. And I remember going into him, saying to him, Michael Palliser says you really ought to go to this meeting. And he would respond that John Davies knew all the issues and should go. And I would say the same to Michael Palliser.

John Davies has this responsibility, why do you want the Foreign Secretary to come, he's just about to go to Cyprus or go to Africa, or somewhere, and he is pretty tired, why ... "Oh, it's very important he is there, he has got the authority to clinch the deal" was the response. And I would tell Alec Home this and he would sigh and say but John knows it all and understands the issues in a way that I don't, he speaks French. But he always would be prepared to go the extra mile if he was persuaded he was needed, and off he would go. And you did actually understand why, in the end it was important, because he would sit there leaning back in his chair and you'd think he wasn't wholly following the discussion, he had his earphones half on and half off and people would be whispering in his ear, and I sometimes wondered whether he had got the gist of it. Then suddenly he would put up his finger and the chairman would say (interestingly he was never called the distinguished representative of the United Kingdom, distinguished though he was and representative of the United Kingdom though he was, he was always known as Sir Alec), and the chairman would say, 'Sir Alec, you want to say something?' And Sir Alec, once he had the floor used to say, I think I can see the way in which we can reach agreement on this issue, and put forward a proposal, and the tide would go to the shore in agreement instead of breaking down in eddies of disagreement. He had this extraordinary instinct of being able to clinch a deal. He knew of course that when he got back to Parliament he could sell it in a way that John Davies, who wasn't basically a politician, he was a businessman, wouldn't have the authority in the House. He was very good, John Davies, but he stuck a little bit too closely to his brief and tried to get it all and lost it. There is a moment in negotiation when you have got to catch the tide and that was Alec Home's skill and why Michael Palliser always wanted him to be there if he possibly could. So the European issues and getting comfortable with Europe were one of the main preoccupations and the continued relationship of course with the Soviet Union and the continued relationship with America. Alec Home wasn't a Euro fanatic at all. He believed that our destiny lay in Europe. I don't know what he would say about the Euro if he were alive today, I think he would want to retain a fair measure of independence in running our own affairs free from Brussels. He absolutely didn't see, and nor did I, not that I had great influence but it was something that has remained with me, that it was either/or, the French were always trying, and up to a point the Germans too, to say that either we had to be fully European or we had to be fully with the Americans. For me it was a question of both, it was Churchill's idea of concentric circles ...

LC You mean Churchill's three circles ...

AA Yes, I do. I don't think it is either/or. Of course I believe very strongly that we must stay in Europe in the single market. That is beneficial. What we joined, although Heath would say something slightly different, was something called the European Economic Community. He would say that over the period the purpose of the treaty was to move towards a greater, more complete union, or something that did imply a union, but the people of this country, I believe, thought they were joining an economic grouping in which the barriers to trade would be reduced, that you would have free movement of goods and services, professional skills, money and investment and so on. And that is what we signed up to. I think Alec Home probably thought that that was what we signed up to. Not necessarily a single foreign policy, not necessarily a single European force or anything like that, not a federation where there's just the commissioners as a cabinet running Europe. I might be straying onto a different subject but I really don't think that the European Central Bank can sensibly with one interest rate run the economies of 14, 16 or more divergent countries. So that was one of the main issues and then there was the 1974 election when Callaghan came in and I stayed with him and it was happy and harmonious. I was worried that it all would be very different or he would say disobliging things about his predecessor but, as I said earlier, he respected Alec Home and Alec Home thought that Callaghan would be a good Foreign Secretary and hoped that he would be appointed so with that testimonial ringing in my ears I was very happy, so long as Callaghan wanted me, to stay on doing my job. They had very similar views. In those days Callaghan was quite a Euro-sceptic. He has changed. He has become a bit of a Euro-fanatic but that was after he became Prime Minister, after he left being Prime Minister, but in those days he was pretty sceptical about Europe as lots of the Labour party had been. In other respects with his policies it was a happy example of a sort of continuum. He took the same view on the Soviet Union, he took the same view on the importance of the relationship with America, the same view on NATO, there were shades of difference certainly about South Africa and Indonesia or Chile or whatever, but it wasn't a great swing or difference.

LC Was it difficult for you to serve one master then another?

AA Not a bit. Occasionally of an afternoon, if I was sitting behind him and felt slightly dozy and sleepy I'd sort of half come awake and think, 'Surely I've been here and heard all this before,' and hear Alec Home's voice almost superimposed and saying exactly the same thing that Callaghan was saying about the importance of NATO, the importance of defence, the importance of being vigilant against the Soviet Union, the importance of the American relationship. He used to say to me often that since I knew Alec so well would I ring him up and tell him what he was trying to do about Cyprus or Rhodesia or whatever and if he had got any ideas he would love to have them because he would never know as much about foreign affairs as he did. They used to see each other quite often. He used to say if ever there's a President, Foreign Minister, Prime Minister who I'm entertaining who you know that Sir Alec and Lady Douglas Home know, and would like to see, never ask me if they can come, just ask them to come because it would be an honour and a pleasure to have them there. A good relationship.

LC You left that and went on to be an Ambassador yourself, at last. Luxembourg seemed an unlikely first starting point.

AA Well it has been a starting point. It was a starting point for Patrick Wright who came after me as well, and various others. And Luxembourg is curious, it's the size and population of Dorset and very small but right in the centre of Europe. There were a number of the European ministerial meetings in Luxembourg. I think it has changed now but they used to meet in Brussels and Luxembourg and the European parliament met in Luxembourg and the European Court of Justice was in Luxembourg. A lot of European institutions were in Luxembourg which kept one occupied and the Luxembourgers, perhaps because they had something in reserve, played a much bigger part in European and international affairs than the size of their country would warrant. You had Gaston Thorn who was President of the General Assembly of the United Nations, President of the Commission. You had Santer, subsequently President of the Commission. They had some very good businessmen who were perfectly capable of taking over German enterprises. ARBED was the big Luxembourg steel company and they merged with German companies and ran them. You had Monsieur Bech who was one of the founders of the European Union way back and Pierre Werner, who had been Prime Minister before Gaston

Thorn. He produced the Werner plan for European cooperation. The Luxembourgers did seem to have something in reserve which enabled them to play a bigger part and because they were small they could often be the broker who would bring about a conclusion between the larger countries.

LC How did it fit in being Ambassador? I can understand all these things happening in the country but what was your job as Ambassador?

AA Yes, the various Ministers who came out ...

LC They would come and represent themselves wouldn't they?

AA Ministers like David Owen, First Minister of State and then Secretary of State, he always stayed with us at the house and we had to ensure that their programme, their briefing was organised and you made what input you could. They had experts with them, of course, from the Department of Trade or whatever. But one was involved in getting to know the local officials when the experts weren't there, presenting British policy to the European Parliament and the Court of Justice and so on. And then you had the bilateral relationship with the Luxembourgers, quite a bit of trade and exchange of information of one kind and another. It so happened that there was a State visit whilst I was there. I was only there for two years and the Queen came and paid a State visit. And then I was very surprised because Charles Wiggin, who was the Ambassador in Spain, died of cancer unexpectedly quickly, and I think David Owen, who was young himself, thought that Spain was a young country with a young King and a young Prime Minister. Franco was dead and they were trying to create all things new so perhaps a youngish Ambassador should be appointed. I suppose I got to know David Owen quite well when he came out to stay for the European meetings and he asked if I would like to go to Spain which was a great surprise, a great honour and a great challenge. It was marvellous. My late wife and I had to try to learn Spanish very quickly which we did in Luxembourg before it was announced we were going so we used to get language tapes and get up early in the morning and talk into the tapes and I think the small staff that we had, I think they were Portuguese, thought we had gone mad getting up about 6 in the morning and talking to ourselves in separate bedrooms. Then off

we went in 1977 to Spain and had an absolutely fascinating time. We arrived the day before the first legislative elections, the first free elections, and Spain was creating all things new, with great skill under the King and Soares and were looking for advice from a whole range of countries. Kreisky in Austria, who was a socialist, paid a big part and the Germans, under Helmut Schmidt, and the French of course, but they liked to get information from everybody and wanted information from me about devolution, for example. They were trying to put in place their Statutes of Autonomy. I said I thought we were doing it pretty badly in Britain, but various planning papers had been written. The great thing with Spaniards is never to tell them what they should do but to explain what you have done and say "you have got to produce your own system, we have probably made a muck of it but if you want to see what we have done, here it is." And it really was a very exciting time, seeing the great success of establishing modern, democratic Spain and setting up the institutions, legalising the political parties. The King was superb in putting on his three uniforms (he had been trained in the three services), and persuading the old generals, admirals and air marshals to accept the legalisation of the communist party after the civil war. That was really a huge achievement. But he was right. If they hadn't legalised the communist party it would have gone underground, it would have become a terrorist organisation, and in fact they have gradually lost popular votes. I think there is a great feeling in Spain that they must never let the country tear itself apart again. The country must be held together. On the whole the people voted for the middle parties, the PSOE, which was the socialist party, or the UCD, which was Soares' party, or the Liberals or the Christian Democrats. There was quite a proliferation of parties in the middle, but they didn't vote for the Fuerza Nueva, the old fascist party, or the communists on the left. And I wished I had stayed longer in Spain. There was a lot to do there in developing trade and travelling around. There was the constant problem of Gibraltar which one tried to keep in proportion and keep simmered down, although the Spaniards felt pretty strongly about it and still do but the way to solve Gibraltar is to woo the Gibraltarians and keep the frontier open, not put restrictions on. Intermarry, have joint economic ventures and then the question of sovereignty will be diminished. Then I got the summons, to my annoyance, from Michael Palliser, to come back to be a Deputy Under-Secretary in charge of Defence and Intelligence and so on. I suppose it was because he was a great planner of the future and interested in personalities. I suppose it was to get round his management table all the possible people who might have succeeded him.

LC So you had to say, 'Yes.'

AA I suppose I had to say, 'Yes.' He didn't tell me that was the reason he wanted me back but, yes, I was told that I was going to be appointed as Deputy Under Secretary so you couldn't really say, 'No.' So I did that for 2 years and then, to my amazement was told that I was to be his successor which totally surprised me. I had casually wondered who might succeed him and I thought of one or two rather good people who would be very good and I genuinely wasn't on my list at all. But I was summoned down at the end of the summer to see him and I thought it was for him to receive an account of my stewardship before he went on leave, but it wasn't. It was to be told that Peter Carrington, the Foreign Secretary, and the Prime Minister had decided that I was to be his successor. He said the Foreign Secretary was waiting to go off on leave and just wanted to see you before he goes. I went up to the Secretary of State's room and there was Lord Carrington standing there, waiting to move off to go down to his car, and he said, 'Are you very angry with me, Antony.' So I said, 'No, I'm not angry with you at all but I am just amazed. I think someone must have been giving you some pretty funny advice.' For a moment I thought he was going to be angry, his eyes slightly glittered behind his spectacles and he said, 'Do you think you can't do it, don't you want to do it?' I said, 'Well, I don't know, I feel slightly shell-shocked.' Anyway, there it was.

LC What stands out most of all from that period, the sort of issues that you most remember?

AA Of course the beginning was a considerable baptism of fire because Michael Palliser, my predecessor, was due to retire on I think the 6th of April when he was 60. On the 2nd of April 1982 the Argentines moved into the Falklands. On the 31st of March Lord Carrington was away, I think in Israel, and Michael Palliser was also abroad so I went to this now rather famous meeting in the House of Commons with the Prime Minister to hear the news that the Argentinians had taken South Georgia and were on their way to take the Falklands. It was a pretty gloomy affair with Richard Luce and I from the Foreign Office and John Nott and Frank Cooper from the Ministry of Defence, and the predictions they were very unfavourable. There could be no defence of the Falklands and that to regain it with the territory 8000 miles away

would be a pretty difficult, tricky and hazardous operation. And as has been recounted, sometime after the beginning of the meeting Admiral Sir Henry Leach, who was the Chief of the Naval Staff, representing Admiral Terry Lewin, who was also somewhere else, erupted into the room. He had been held up by the security people in the House of Commons because he was wearing his uniform which, no doubt, set off all the alarms and, knowing he was late, he arrived in the Prime Minister's room in extremely bad temper. She looked at him and said, 'We have been talking about the problem of the Argentinians attacking the Falklands and how we can deal with them.' He said, 'Prime Minister, if you give me the orders I will put together a task force, we will get the task force ready and I am sure we can do it.' And of course it was what she wanted to hear. That really turned around the whole attitude. That weekend, on the Saturday, unusually for the House of Commons, there was a major debate about what had gone wrong, why Britain had been caught napping, what was the matter with the Intelligence and the mood of the House of Commons was very opposed to Lord Carrington, who of course couldn't be there as he was a Member of the House of Lords. But it was a very vicious debate. I think some of the Conservatives slightly wanted to get their own back on him because they, the right wing of the party, felt there had been a betrayal over Rhodesia. I sat in the gallery with Lady Carrington and others and it was not a happy experience. That weekend he debated whether he should stay or should resign. Like many people he, in a moment of anxiety, went to see Lord Home and asked him what he thought and Lord Home, being a patriot, and admiring Peter Carrington, and thinking he should stay as Foreign Secretary, tried to dissuade him from going. But he had to go out to the lavatory half way through and Lady Home, Elizabeth Home, in her very forthright way, said that of course Alec has told me that if he was in your position he wouldn't have the faintest hesitation but to resign. So that slightly spiked Alec Home's guns and on the Monday there was a very disobliging article by Charlie Douglas-Home, Alec Home's nephew, who was editor of the Times, and he decided to go. So, four days later I found myself as head of the Foreign Office, holding this job for which I wasn't sure that I was well qualified (I hadn't even been a candidate on my own list, I thought there were many other people who could do it better than me). I had four new Ministers and an impending war and the Prime Minister, not exactly best pleased with the Foreign Office, pouring out a fair amount of criticism from the other side of Downing Street. So it really was a baptism of fire. The Falklands, I suppose, dominated my activity from the beginning of my time as Permanent Under-Secretary right until it came to an

end, to a successful, satisfactory and victorious conclusion.

LC What was Foreign Office policy? You haven't really mentioned that. It was obviously the Navy who said yes, we can do it.

AA Foreign Office policy was absolutely clear, and I kept on saying this to the Prime Minister, that if we could get an honourable settlement, which preserved the interests of the Falkland Islanders we should support it. One wanted to avoid a war if possible but it had to be honourable settlement which the Falkland Islanders were satisfied with and preserved their interests and their way of life and their independence from the Argentines, because that is what they wanted. If one couldn't get that one totally accepted that one had to fight the Argentines out.

LC Was there an attempt at this late point to attempt a negotiated settlement?

AA Oh yes. And of course very much led by the Americans, by Al Haig who was the Secretary of State who made several visits to Buenos Aires to see General Galtieri and got extremely close to getting a settlement. It was madness on Galtieri's part not to accept what was on offer. But he was in the hands of the three Juntas, the army, navy and airforce juntas, young officers who, when Haig thought they had got an agreement would erupt into the room and say, 'That is not good enough.' And he finally lost patience. The Americans were equivocal about it all, President Reagan was a staunch friend of Britain, he also attached great importance to relations with Latin America as did Al Haig, and Jean Kirkpatrick was the representative of the United States in New York. She was very much a compromiser and at all costs really wanted to avoid the war and wanted to curry favour with the Latin Americans. The real stalwart member of the administration was Casper Weinberger, the Secretary of Defence who, without consulting the President, gave instructions that anything the British wanted by way of sophisticated equipment which we didn't have would be provided. He was a real friend to Britain and quietly gave us what we couldn't have done without for the prosecution of the war. It was a very hazardous enterprise and if one of the capital ships, the Hermes or the Invincible, the two carriers, had gone down, or the Canberra, carrying the troops, it would have been a disaster. I was at Chequers with the Prime Minister, Francis Pym had become Foreign Secretary, and he travelled a lot trying to

generate support, he went to America a lot, so I often attended the inner Cabinet either with him or on my own without him, and I attended various meetings at Chequers. I was at the meeting when the Prime Minister had to decide whether the Belgrano should be sunk or whether it shouldn't be sunk. She asked us all in turn, I think there was Willie Whitelaw, Cecil Parkinson, John Nott, Michael Havers and me and she asked us in turn what we thought. I'm afraid, I think this sounds rather awful, I had no hesitations at all, if the Belgrano hadn't wanted to be sunk it shouldn't have been there. And the direction in which it was going was irrelevant, it could perfectly well turn round, it had two escort vessels with Exocet missiles and they were very nearly in range of the task force which was coming south-west down the Atlantic towards the Falklands. As I have said, if one of the capital ships had been sunk I doubt whether one would have brought it to a successful conclusion.

LC Was it a period of sleepless nights and very long days?

AA Yes, and a considerable worry, but fascinating to be involved in it. And to see the Prime Minister involved, she felt the whole issue enormously, when the Sheffield was sunk I was with her in the Cabinet room, it was like a sort of body blow to herself, the sacrifice of British lives. And when the Scots Guards were burnt in the assault vessel again she almost wept. Tears were nearly shed at the end of it out of exhaustion and relief I think. I was paradoxically having dinner at the Spanish Embassy in honour of Lord Carrington who had had to resign, he really shouldn't have resigned on the merits of the case, and we knew that the Argentines were beginning to crumble and I had people keeping me informed about what was going on. Just about as I was about to put my knife into a good looking steak I was tapped on the shoulder and told the Prime Minister was going to make a statement in the House of Commons at 10 o'clock in the evening, again an unusual occasion, and she wanted me to be there. So I leapt up, I was in a dinner jacket, my car wasn't going to be back until a quarter to eleven, with a taxi difficult to find, I got there just as she was going in to the Chamber with Willie Whitelaw and other Ministers. Terry Lewin, Lord Lewin as he became, Robert Armstrong, Secretary to the Cabinet, and I went into the officials box and heard her make the very dramatic statement that white flags were going up over Stanley and that the Argentines were surrendering. And then we went back to her room afterwards and Dennis Thatcher was there and opened a bottle or two of champagne.

Willie Whitelaw, he was Deputy Prime Minister, said “I don't want to make a speech but I do want to congratulate you, Margaret. I don't think any other politician in the country would have done what you decided to do, to embark on this enterprise and to bring it to a successful conclusion,” and she nearly wept.

LC A very emotional moment ...

AA I suppose out of relief, out of exhaustion. But she felt it very, very deeply. She was difficult to deal with, she was very confrontational and you had to be pretty tough and sometimes quite rude to her. Some Ministers, I think, when she came into the Cabinet room, with eyes flashing, banging her briefs before she sat down, saying I think this is wrong and this is what we should do, quite a lot of Ministers thought that she had been up at 5 o'clock, she had read the brief, she had made up her mind and the buck stopped with her, and there was no point in arguing. But what she wanted was someone to challenge her and say, all right Prime Minister that is what you think, that is your instinct, but just very quickly there are a few points you really need to keep in your mind, and she would listen and she would take it in and, occasionally, she would change her mind. Put you had to be pretty rough. I remember on one occasion she said to me, what does the Foreign Office think? And I started ... I don't agree with that, she said. So I said, well Prime Minister if you will just let me finish, I'll be very quick, four more sentences and perhaps you will agree with me at the end. And then if she was critical I would say to her, in my view Prime Minister, we are all on the same side in this. She was always claiming that the Foreign Office was wanting to make a compromise and I said, 'Our view is what I have just said to you, that if we can't get an honourable solution we must fight, but we should avoid war if we can, we are all on the same side in this.'

LC Did you have to adopt different tactics then change your style?

AA With her, yes. At one moment when I thought she was being unnecessarily critical, I said, 'If you want to get another Permanent Under-Secretary for heavens sake do, I am not particularly liking the job and perfectly happy to go on to something else.' That gave her pause. She did say, 'All right, no more Foreign Office bashing,' I nearly said to her, 'I don't know how long that will

last, Prime Minister,' but I bit it back and said, 'Thank you very much.' So it was a baptism of fire. Perhaps enough of that, but it did occupy an enormous amount of my time at the beginning until it was brought to a successful conclusion and one could settle down and do other things.

LC You weren't involved in the winding it all up so much?

AA I suppose not so much. I was involved with giving evidence to the Franks commission. If you remember the government set up a commission to inquire whether the Foreign Office, or the government could have known or should have known, given the resources they had in intelligence terms and so on, and although I hadn't been previously involved, I was Head of the Foreign Office and I went with the Foreign Office team to give evidence to Lord Franks, who was Chairman of the committee, and a very distinguished committee it was. It had Lord Watkinson, a former Conservative Defence Secretary, Merlyn-Rees, Harold Lever, Tony Barber, who was Chancellor of the Exchequer, and I thought it was going to be rather an alarming procedure, but Lord Franks was so extraordinarily fair, and his only interest was to establish the facts, he wasn't trying to catch anybody out, he wasn't trying to bully anybody, he just wanted officials to give the evidence. He did it, I thought, absolutely brilliantly and at the end of the day produced a report which said that the government hadn't known and couldn't have known. Some people said it was a whitewash. My answer to that is you couldn't pull wool over the good Lord Frank's eyes. He was a highly intelligent and perceptive man and there was no question of it. If he had thought there had been negligence he would have undoubtedly said so.

LC I suppose we should move on, fascinating though that all is. The other sort of issues that I have down for this period was South Africa. Was that something that is of concern to you? Mrs Thatcher possibly had a slightly different view than the Foreign Office.

AA Yes, she did. I think a lot had changed from the time when I was first junior Private Secretary to Selwyn Lloyd and Alec Home, then became Permanent Under Secretary. The first time that I was there every paper that went to the Foreign Secretary went through the Permanent Under Secretary and it had Sir Frederick Hoyer-Miller's signature at the bottom. Life had changed. It would have been absolutely impossible for every paper to go through me so there

was much more delegation to the Deputy Under Secretaries who had their own areas of responsibility and one was obviously responsible for Europe, another for the Middle East, another for Africa, another for the Far East, another for the Americas. If it was something I was particularly interested in or experience made me feel I could make a contribution then I would insist the papers came through me, or if it was something I had talked to the Secretary of State about and felt I ought to see the papers on the way up I would say that I needed to see them but with the speed of events, the merry-go-round going ever faster and faster, decisions were having to be taken. I would get a copy of all the important, what were called, submissions to the Foreign Secretary but I couldn't actually deal with them in the day with all my other engagements. And the other thing which had changed significantly was a tipping of the balance away from policy formulation to administration. I remember Michael Palliser saying that he didn't think Lord Strang or Ivone Kirkpatrick or Hoyer-Miller or Caccia really did very much in the way of administration, though they took an interest in personnel appointments undoubtedly. When Michael Palliser was Permanent Secretary he said that 50 per cent of his time was dealing with policy and 50 per cent dealing with administration, and he said, 'I'm afraid, Antony, in your case it will tip even further towards administration.' And so it was.

LC In spite of all the delegation that you had?

AA Yes, because with the beginnings of the Parliamentary Committees, which Francis Pym set up when he was Leader of the House, Permanent Secretaries had to go much more often to Parliament to talk about the detail of Foreign Office administration to the Foreign Affairs Committee or the Public Accounts Committee and you were much more publicly answerable and there was much more of a spotlight on the management of the Foreign Office. I did two things, with the approval of the Foreign Secretary, one was in a way negative, we got rid of the Passport Office and gave it to Home Office. It was a real poisoned chalice and it became even more poisoned later on when people were queuing up and couldn't get passports for their holidays within a 6 month period, or whatever.

LC Did you persuade the Home Office that they wanted it?

AA Somehow we persuaded them that the whole business of issuing passports was theirs but issuing visas was done by the Foreign Office, in a sense on behalf of the Home Office because they decided who should come in and who shouldn't. So we got rid of that and then we took on the management of the diplomatic estate which had been run in the old days by a department which has long since gone called the Ministry of Works. We thought that they didn't do it very well and they were quite glad to get rid of it. We knew what was required for diplomatic representation but that was a new major undertaking. We had thousands of properties around the world, some owned, some rented. There was a good deal of criticism that some were too big and ostentatious for the situation in that particular country which, perhaps, had changed. We had a huge embassy, for example, in Kabul in Afghanistan, a dining room which would take 64 and a ballroom and all that. Well, that wasn't suitable for our relationship with Afghanistan so that had to be handled rather sensitively. But areas which I suppose one remembers most were obviously our relations with Europe where we had a very competent and strong team, both in Brussels and in London, Michael Butler, David Hannay, Robin Renwick and so on, and they were all very expert and very good and Geoffrey Howe himself, who succeeded Francis Pym, he knew a lot about European affairs so I was somewhat on the sidelines on that. There was the relationship with the Soviet Union, the arms control and nuclear non-proliferation treaties which were being negotiated, South Africa ...

LC Yes, I suppose I should pause on Europe at this point. This was the time of Mrs Thatcher saying 'No' to ERM, and Lawson and Howe saying 'Yes'?

AA In the end she said 'Yes', didn't she.

LC That was, I believe, around 1985, when she was still saying 'No'. I don't know how much you felt the Foreign Office, this capable team of yours, which had a great deal of experience in Europe, how frustrated they felt at not being able to get their views accepted.

AA I think they got their views across. It's a curious business. Others will no doubt talk to you about this. Mrs Thatcher had very strong, instinctive feelings about things, about the relationship with Europe, about British sovereignty, about the importance of the American relationship, about

being strong in defence, wary of the Soviet Union and so on. But she was perfectly capable of being persuaded intellectually. The trouble was that although her head would say, we have got to do this and it's right and she was persuaded by the team or by Geoffrey Howe or Nigel Lawson and accepted it intellectually, then later on her sort of natural instinct went against it again. This was a tension within herself, that she could see the intellectual argument and accepted it, not really liking it instinctively. So it was a constant tension and in the end it was what destroyed the relationship between her and Geoffrey Howe.

LC I have been reading about some of the atmosphere which seems to indicate that she was less and less prepared to have any consultation over Europe except with her own people who shared her opinions. That led to great difficulty over debate.

AA I think it wasn't just Europe. She after all had been in power for a very long time and was an extremely hard worker and had a capacious memory. At the beginning of her time as Prime Minister when I was either Deputy Secretary or Head of the Foreign Office she had all sorts and conditions of people into number 10. It was a very good thing. She had politicians, she had cronies, she had journalists, she had businessmen, people like Arnold Weinstock who was a sort of guru on industrial and commercial affairs, she had crooks, all sorts of strange people who had got access, and letters would come winging over from people. I remember the private secretary at number 10 writing, 'Recently the Prime Minister has been told that Iran is going to attack Kuwait, or Bahrain. What does the Foreign Office think about it?' It created a great deal of work. You had to work out some not too complacent answer, not saying everything in the garden was rosy but you had to get her back to thinking intellectually that this was unlikely to happen. But it was healthy because she was seeing people, she was hearing opinions and gradually I saw over the years that the number of people and the sources of information were being throttled off. I think at the very end she was out of touch and she had a very small circle, Charles Powell, Bernard Ingham and so on, people who agreed with her and it was quite difficult. But she did probably know more than many of the people who were talking to her, who were advising her. And they hadn't been there as long, hadn't got to know all the issues and formed an opinion about all the various personalities in Europe or around the world. She had seen them all and knew them. She did make too many snap judgements about people, I think,

both members of the Diplomatic Service, who she either liked or disliked, and probably fellow politicians as well. I think that is what in the end actually brought her down. She was out of touch, and out of touch with parliamentary opinion, out of touch with opinion of colleagues and so on.

LC After that you mentioned discussions with the Soviet Union. It was a time I think of Gorbachev's first visit. Were you there for that?

AA Yes I was. It was fascinating. He wasn't then Secretary General...

LC Was this a Foreign Office thing? It was a very clever tip.

AA Well, we got good marks for it. I think everyone thought that he was the up and coming man and he was in the Duma, if my memory is right, he was Chairman of the Soviet-British parliamentary group. Of course you have to act on a reciprocal basis, you had to get the right person, who was Antony Kershaw, who was his equivalent in Parliament at the time to issue the invitation. He came on that basis, and he obviously wanted to meet Mrs Thatcher. Mrs Thatcher very much wanted to get to know him and realised that he was the up and coming person. He arrived and she had him down to Chequers, I was down there for that meeting with him, and it was at that meeting that she came out and made the famous statement that she thought he was someone who she could do business with. And what was interesting about him, for all of us I think in the meetings, was he actually could conduct dialogue and a debate in a way that British parliamentarians could. All the previous people from the Soviet Union just read out the standard line, they would put on their spectacles and drone away. Gromyko, for years as Foreign Minister, he would do it without notes because he had a very good memory but he just repeated time and time again the same line, it wasn't really a debate at all. Gorbachev would listen to the argument and respond. Sometimes one noticed that his entourage were slightly surprised by the things that he was saying. She found this tremendously refreshing and established a remarkably good relationship with him which has, I think, persisted to this day. I think Gorbachev is greatly underestimated. My own view is that when the history of the 20th century comes to be written at some distance, and people look at those who really changed the course of history and broke the

mould, (that awful cliché), I think two people who deserve recognition are Gorbachev and de Klerk.

LC de Klerk?

AA Absolutely. I mean Mandela is an absolutely wonderful man but he was safely tucked away in Robben Island in prison and de Klerk could have easily stopped a bullet from the right wing of his party. He could see there had got to be change, release Mandela, do a deal with the African majority who were going to take power and he doggedly went for it and got it. But neither of them, (Gorbachev and de Klerk), like prophets who have no honour in their own country, neither of them have honour in their own country today. But they really made a difference. It was terribly lucky that de Klerk and Mandela were there at the same time and that they were complimentary to each other but de Klerk was the one who, in a way, had to show the political courage, to try to persuade his own party to do what had to be done.

LC That brings me round again to South Africa and whether the British government was supportive enough of de Klerk and his stand, given the attitudes to sanctions.

AA Yes, I would have thought so. From the very beginning, when South Africa was a regular subject at the United Nations we were, perhaps, one of the slower ships in the convoy. There was article II.7 which we held onto for a long time. You weren't allowed to discuss or pass resolutions about the internal affairs of another country, and the question was whether apartheid was an internal affair for South Africa. In the end it was agreed that it was sui generis. It was an international affair rather than internal national affair. We also felt that sanctions, in that particular case, didn't work and that South Africa, and particularly those who were more on the Liberal wing, should be encouraged but sanctions were going to damage the situation. It was one of the differences, going back a bit, when I was Private Secretary, it was one of the shades of difference between the Conservative government when Sir Alec Douglas-Home was Foreign Secretary and Jim Callaghan took over. But these were differences of emphasis, the relationship between Britain and South Africa, Britain and Indonesia, Britain and Chile and various other countries in Latin America.

LC Anything else you particularly want to talk about at that time or should we move on to why you left and ...

AA To my surprise, I was appointed quite young to be a Permanent Under Secretary and I could have done it for 8 years. I felt that probably 8 years, or a little more than 8 years, would be perhaps too long and that it would be quite nice to have another final ambassadorial post. I was not only Permanent Under Secretary but I was chairman of the senior appointments board that made recommendations for the senior ambassadorial appointments to the Foreign Secretary and then he would get the Prime Minister to endorse the senior ones. So after 4 years or more as Permanent Secretary I had no hesitation but to recommend Acland for Washington. It worked. I had a bit of trouble with Mrs Thatcher. She said that she had been pleased to appoint me as PUS, forgetting apparently the beginning of my time as PUS when I really wondered whether she did want me or whether she didn't, but she said she would like me to stay but if I really wanted to go to Washington she would be very happy to have me represent Britain in America. It was in a way a difficult decision. Partly I enjoyed being in London, I enjoyed being PUS, my wife had died in 1984 and it meant being on my own as a widower and one had to think whether one could manage the job and the representational side of entertaining in that big house in Washington on one's own. I thought that America was one of the few places where you could do that, because the Americans are so warm and welcoming and tolerant and understanding. It was the only post I wanted. I wouldn't under any circumstances have gone to Paris or Bonn. I wouldn't have been suitable for it. And I had been in America before, I liked the Americans, I felt I understood them, up to a point. I went and it was a wonderful time and happily I got married again 1987 to my present wife and she came out and absolutely transformed the situation. There was a moment when one of George Bush's senior Ministers, Clayton Yeutter who was Secretary of Agriculture then Chairman of the Republican Party, came to dinner after Jenny had arrived and of course Americans always have to make a speech, whenever they come into your house. He looked across the table and said, 'Antony, we felt that you didn't do the job too badly when you were here on your own and we felt a bit sorry for you in this big house but you managed pretty well, but now Jenny is with you you are nine times as good.' I would have said 900 times as good. It was wonderful to have her join me and it was a very happy,

interesting, fascinating time. Two years with President Reagan and three with President Bush and I was asked to stay on, I don't quite know why, for a bit more than a year after my proper retiring age of 60.

LC I presume the Iraq conflict?

AA Yes, I dare say. They also wanted to get the three major appointments of Permanent Secretary, ambassador to Washington and ambassador to the UN settled all at the same time and if I had gone and someone had come to Washington they might eventually have wanted that person for Permanent Under Secretary. It was very good to stay on. It was a tremendously interesting time with Reagan's negotiations with Gorbachev over arms control, the coming down of the Berlin wall and the unification of Germany and then of course the Gulf war, which was a good moment to go out on. President Reagan was I think greatly underestimated in this country, perhaps George Bush was, initially, underestimated. Reagan wasn't nearly as daft as he was portrayed to be by the British cartoonists and some of the British media. He was certainly a delegater, he wasn't an intellectual giant, but he had a tremendous instinct for politics. He had some simple ideals which he had always stood by and governed by, governed California for two terms, which happened to coincide with the mood of the American people when he was elected for the first and indeed for the second time. In his view America needed to stand tall and have a pride in herself. To do that she had got to be strong in defence. Government should be got off the backs of the people. Taxation should be reduced and free market principles allowed to run.

LC He always had an amazingly good turn of phrase but ...

AA Yes. Margaret Thatcher believed in the same things as Reagan. That's why they had this good basic relationship because they both believed in the same things. Their methods of operating were totally different but Reagan had the skill and good sense to appoint very good people, certainly in his first administration, George Shultz as his Secretary of State, Casper Weinberger as Secretary for Defence, Jim Baker as Chief of Staff and then Secretary of the Treasury and Brent Scowcroft as Head of the National Security Council. That was an amazingly good team and provided they conformed with his basic principles, Reagan was very happy to let

them get on with it. I don't think he did bother with the detail, and how much he really knew about Irangate I am not sure. At the end of his time, I asked myself whether his sort of vagueness and forgetfulness at the very end was perhaps the beginning of the awful Alzheimer's which afflicts him. He is now completely lost, I'm afraid, which is terribly sad, but his real problem was that he was extremely deaf. He had hearing aids in both ears and if you are President of the United States, your minders and, I suppose spin doctors, say that you must never admit you've dyed your hair, had a face lift, wear spectacles or have hearing aids so when he gave these press conferences, someone would shout a question from the back of the room and he was concentrating so much on hearing it that he didn't actually switch on to the right answer and he wasn't absolutely sure he had got the question, and he didn't want to go on saying, 'Can you please repeat it.' So he would give a very general answer which sometimes whizzed past the question, and he looked rather baffled because he was trying to listen. We discovered this at the end because, when he left as President, quite modest people who had worked for him and liked him, wanted to have him to dinner in their homes and he and Nancy accepted and, I suppose because we were known to have known them reasonably well and we weren't going to cause any disturbance or be controversial, Jenny and I were quite often asked to these farewell parties. Because of the protocol that the wife of the British Ambassador, if he is the senior Ambassador, is seated next to the guest of honour, she was often seated next to Reagan. It was May and sometimes you were out of doors, to the horror of the security people, on the patio, but if there was any background noise he simply couldn't hear her voice at all. It suddenly made us realise that this was a real difficulty and disability. He was quite switched on and had a wonderful ability to communicate, and it wasn't just his speech writers, because on one occasion when Margaret Thatcher came out we went up to Camp David on a Saturday. She had her private talk with him then we all went in and heard what they had been talking about, then we discussed other things and had lunch. At lunch he suddenly said, 'Margaret, you know I do this radio broadcast every week from Camp David, it's nation-wide.' It was a sort of folksy talk for quarter of an hour, 'I just want to tell you that Nancy and I sure are worried about the narcotics problem,' or whatever and he said, 'Would you like to be with me when I do it?' She was fascinated, partly by the technology of how you did it from this camp in the hills of Maryland to the whole nation and she went to join him. On the way back in the helicopter she said it was extraordinary because he sat at his desk with a big clock with the second hand going round and he had his text

and he watched the clock. Being a professional, he would make a change in the tempo, he would speed up and slow down and speed up and slow down and as the clock got to 2:15 he finished on the dot, 'and God bless you all, my fellow Americans.' Margaret Thatcher said that it was a really professional performance of someone who had done a lot of broadcasting but more important she said, 'I was looking over his shoulder and there on his text were a lot of manuscript amendments in his own writing.' He had obviously been through the text overnight and had really made quite a lot of changes to put what he wanted to say in his own words, and she said, 'As you know, I never accepted those terrible Foreign Office drafts, did I Antony?' I said, 'Oh no Prime Minister, absolutely not.' But it was interesting that it wasn't just that he was served up with a text which he then reproduced very eloquently, he had a very nice voice, a deep throaty voice and a very good sense of timing, but he did obviously work at it himself as well.

LC And how much was the Star Wars scenario, something that was very close to his heart rather than ...

AA I think it was very close to his heart. I actually think it was very important. Whether it would have worked or failed, or whether this new version will work or fail, I'm pretty sure it was really one of the factors which made Gorbachev realise that they simply could not keep up with America's technology. America was so far ahead. This is what has been proved since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, that although they had the ability to put up Sputniks, and they had that scientist called Academician Blagenravov, who was the man who designed the high thrust rockets which could take a great payload up into space, they were very good at that. They were good at some things but everything else now seems to have feet of clay. Their nuclear system and the appalling lack of maintenance in nuclear power stations and nuclear submarines. I think that we probably over-estimated their defence capability and probably Gorbachev knew this and thought that if they had really got to try to produce something which could counter America's Star Wars, they couldn't manage it. At the time of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait Mrs Thatcher came to Aspen, Colorado, where the Aspen Institute was having its seminar and President Bush and she were going to make keynote speeches. And then of course the invasion took place and they met together in the garden of the then US ambassador to London (Henry Catto), up in one of the valleys of Aspen. But the day after the Aspen speeches we went to the

Star Wars research laboratories in Colorado and it was absolutely mind-boggling, the things that they were producing. They had computers in a matchbox, an ordinary matchbox, and the computer had ten times the power of a major computer. The miniaturisation was absolutely extraordinary. If you were going to put up satellites which were going to fire missiles at incoming missiles they could only be very small so all the equipment and all the controls had to be tiny. They were achieving this amazing miniaturisation and I really think it had an effect on Soviet thinking, that they couldn't keep up. Therefore they had to develop a new relationship with America. Reagan too established a good relationship with Gorbachev, and nearly went along, in Iceland I think, with arms controls arrangements which weren't wholly wise. But at the first meeting in Geneva they did establish, as Mrs Thatcher had with Gorbachev, a good working relationship. Reagan was fascinated by Gorbachev's background, as to whether he had or had not any sort of Christian upbringing, Russian orthodox upbringing. He believed that he had. When he said goodbye to him at Geneva airport he thought he would give him the old Irish blessing of, 'May the road be straight for you and may the sun shine gently on your face and if there is rain, let it fall on your back, and until we meet again may God hold you in the palm of His hand'. He was holding on to Gorbachev's hand and when he said 'May God', Gorbachev, he said, squeezed his hand tightly, and it clearly meant something to him, and he said he was sure that he had had some religious upbringing. Actually it made me think, and I told President Reagan this, that when Gorbachev came to London for the first time one of our interpreters, he was more than an interpreter, I forget his name, but he was attached to Raisa Gorbachev and went round in the afternoons shopping with her and they talked a lot and Gorbachev had said to him that he had been brought up partly by his grandmother, who used to say to him, 'Michael Michailavitch, I don't know what will happen to you if you abandon the faith of your fathers,' and in the room where he slept there was an icon in one corner and a picture of Lenin in the other. So Reagan was right and Gorbachev after all did allow the Russian church to come back, as it has now.

LC So the contrast with President Bush. Was it very great?

AA Yes it was. Bush was much more knowledgeable about the detail of foreign affairs. He was a real practitioner, having been Head of the CIA, ambassador to the United Nations, ambassador

to China, Vice President for eight years. He knew an awful lot. Couldn't have been a nicer man. He and Barbara really became great friends of ours and we were very lucky to have known them as well as we did. We got on well. He was kind to me at the very beginning when I went out there and the Vice President's house is just north of the British embassy on Massachusetts Avenue. He occasionally rang up to say, 'I am waiting for Barbara Bush to come back from one of her engagements, why don't you hop over the garden wall and come and have a drink.' And I would say, 'Well, Mr Vice President, I would love to come and have a drink but I think I will go round to the main entrance, because if I hop over the garden wall I'll be shot by your guards.' He was very friendly. He was an Anglophile and I got to know him very well. He always had us to his Christmas parties. My mother and father came out and he treated them as honoured guests. We went to both the Vice President's house and the White House Christmas parties. He couldn't have been nicer and we have stayed friends and we still correspond from time to time. I think he was slightly more like an official, looking back on it, than a real politician and he perhaps wanted to be liked too much. He was a very un-confrontational man. He didn't like dissension. He was basically a nice guy. Reagan was a nice guy, but curiously he was tougher. George Bush used to write endless manuscript notes to people, taking a lot of trouble but perhaps distracting him from other things. He made that announcement about "the vision thing." I'm not really sure that he did have a vision in the way that Reagan had, with his five or six cardinal points. Bush was more reactive.

LC Bush was President when the wall came down, wasn't he? Or was it still Reagan? Because Bush has been given quite a lot of credit for support for Reagan, I think ...

AA Bush was President at the time of the Gulf war and I have no doubt that he knew from the beginning, though people say that he wouldn't have been so resolute if he hadn't had Mrs Thatcher urging him on, that if Saddam Hussein couldn't be negotiated out of Kuwait he would have to be fought out. That he would have to commit American armed forces to war. If you are President and Commander in Chief it is a pretty tough decision that you have to take. I have no doubt, and I think Charles Powell has said this in various interviews as well, that of course he enormously welcomed having the stalwart lady beside him and I am sure she said, when she went back to Washington on her way back to London and saw the President alone, I am sure at

that meeting she said to him, 'Mr President, if you have to commit American forces I will commit British forces as well, and I will be with you.' But I think he knew that he was going to have to do it, and he took the tough decision. When the Queen came after it was all over on her State visit, (I hope it was my embassy that did it, wrote the first draft of her speech), she said to him how much Britain had admired his leadership in the Gulf crisis and the way in which he and Jim Baker put together this extraordinary coalition and his decision to commit American forces and she said, 'I think, Mr President, that we can say that you had that sort of quiet three o'clock in the morning courage, when you had to take a decision.' That's probably when you do it in fact. You wake up at three 'o'clock in the morning and wonder what you should do and you have to say to yourself, 'all right.' He had to commit half a million men half way round the world, not knowing if he was sending them into a nuclear war, a bacteriological war or conventional war.

LC What about the end, because by that time he didn't have that lady by his side. If he had, do you think that American and British troops would have gone further? There was a lot of criticism about the point at which operations stopped.

AA Absolutely not. Again, by chance Douglas Hurd, who was then Foreign Secretary, was in Washington and we went to the White House to see the President. It was clear the Iraqis were getting out of Kuwait. They were streaming out on the high road to Basra, they were demoralised, they were hungry, they were barefoot, they were in rags, they hadn't got weapons and the American air force was strafing them as they went along the road. I remember Douglas saying to the President, 'What do you think should happen now? We have obviously fulfilled the mandate of evicting the Iraqis and we can now restore the legitimate government of Kuwait.' The President said, 'Well, you were with us from the beginning, I'm just about to have a meeting with Dick Cheney and Colin Powell and Brent Scowcroft to discuss what we do, why don't you stay and we will talk about it together?' And they came in and Colin Powell said, 'I'm not going to be able to go on giving orders to the American Air Force to bomb these wretched Iraqis. They were really refugees, they weren't soldiers any more. The President longed to depose and unseat Saddam Hussein. He really felt strongly within himself that he was a terrible tyrant who should be got rid of, but the mandate given by the United Nations was to evict the Iraqis and restore the legitimate government and that, as it were, were his marching orders. And if American and

British forces had gone on right up to Baghdad, the coalition would have fallen apart, we would have lost a lot of support in the Arab world. The mandate wasn't to topple Saddam Hussein, it wasn't to take over Iraq and the great danger, of course, to the Americans was if they had gone in and got rid of Saddam Hussein who in the world would they have put in his place and how would they ever have got out again. And the one thing the Americans are still desperate to avoid is a Vietnam situation where they go in and get stuck and can't get out again. So, they did decide at that meeting to cease hostilities and two hours later President Bush went on television and announced a cessation of hostilities. He would have loved to have seen Saddam Hussein go but I think his instinct was absolutely right. It was a good period because, once again America and Britain were in an enterprise side by side. America was by far the larger partner but they all said to me, the President, Jim Baker the Secretary of State, Colin Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Dick Cheney Defence Secretary, Brent Scowcroft National Security Adviser, they said though from time to time we forget, when you have an enterprise like this we realise and remember again that when the chips are down there is only one wholly reliable ally in the world, and that is the United Kingdom. In that extraordinary coalition they said that there were countries which were militarily competent but politically unreliable (I suspect they meant the French), and there were some which were politically reliable but militarily incompetent (like the Egyptians or perhaps, up to a point the Saudis). The only country which was politically reliable and militarily competent was Britain. It was a very good relationship, on all levels, obviously between Margaret Thatcher and then John Major and President Bush, and also all the teams working together and Norman Schwartzkopf and General de la Billière in the theatre of war. It was good for America to be reminded from time to time that Britain is a good ally and a competent ally. Long may it last. When it was all over and the British government and the Queen had decided to give honours to people who had fought in the theatre of war they wanted to give one to Norman Schwartzkopf because he had been the commander-in-chief. I had to ask him whether he would accept an honorary Knighthood. It was slightly complicated because I was at a British festival of some sort in Birmingham, Alabama, and he was at the Kentucky Derby, as they call it, and eventually our staffs in our respective hotels put us in touch. I had known him a bit, not terribly well but I had met him several times. I said that I was Sir Antony Acland, the British Ambassador, and had been asked to inquire whether he would like to receive a high British award, an honorary Knighthood, because he had commanded British forces in a

theatre of war. He said immediately, 'Please, in whatever manner is appropriate, convey to the Queen and the British government my delight in accepting this honour but will you add this. The honour is as it were the icing on the cake but the real honour was to have had those marvellous British soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines under my command in a theatre of war.' It was a good period. He said the same thing to the Queen. She came on a State Visit. She went down on the Royal yacht to Tampa, Florida and she gave him the insignia of his Knighthood and he said exactly the same thing to her. So it was a good ending for me and a good note to retire on.

LC Right. Well, I'm afraid we can't leave it without looking at Europe for a little bit. First of all I just wanted to mention the whole question of re-unification where possibly Mrs Thatcher and President Bush were further apart in their views on German re-unification. Was that something which was just apparent outside, through the media and not something of substance ...

AA No, I think she was unhappy. She saw that the re-unification would make Germany by far the largest country in terms of geography and space and population. She had a map that she used to pull out of her capacious handbag with a black line around the united Germany and another line around the German speaking peoples. She was apprehensive that this was going to be a very dominant force in European affairs. I think President Bush was less apprehensive. He had fought in the war but in the Pacific and I think he was less concerned than she was about that.

LC The Russians also were prepared to accept it, the terms of agreement but perhaps they were more enthusiastic, or accepted the inevitable, more easily than Mrs Thatcher ...

AA Yes, one of the most important decisions that Gorbachev ever took was to keep the Russian forces in their barracks when the wall came down and not to try and re-impose order in East Germany. It was an absolutely vital decision. I think it was bowing to the inevitable, perhaps, rather than doing it with any great enthusiasm.

LC And Mrs Thatcher always champed against the inevitable. She didn't like it. And then of course Europe, or the entry into the European monetary union. For a start for someone outside to see civil servants expressing opinions so frankly is very surprising; in particular the exchange of

letters in the newspaper. Has anything like that happened before on an issue where civil servants normally don't come out in the open, whose mouthpieces are politicians?

AA When you retire, and being retired for some time, I think you are entitled to say what you think, and times have moved on. The business of monetary union wasn't an issue when I was still employed by the Foreign Office. I have never been an enthusiastic federalist at all, and I think curiously that the two Ministers I worked for, most closely, Alec Douglas Home and Jim Callaghan, weren't either. They believed very strongly, as do I, that Britain must be in Europe and part of Europe, involved in Europe, with Europe as the biggest economic single market in which we trade but not to the exclusion of other relationships and not to the extent of domination from Brussels where unnecessarily in my view, more and more control is handed over to, at the moment, a group of commissioners who aren't elected, and I just don't think that economically or politically it makes sense at the moment. But I don't say never, I'm enough of a diplomat never to say never. But I don't think that it makes economic or political sense to join the euro.

LC This is in a way more of a personal opinion, obviously based on all your experiences ...

AA Yes, now it's my personal opinion. When I was in the Foreign Office and when I was ambassador to Washington one spent a great deal of time trying to persuade the Americans that the single market was not "fortress Europe". And I did that completely wholeheartedly. I believe that the single market is good and beneficial, provided it works properly, that the breakdown of barriers to the movement of goods and services and currency and professional skills is sensible and economically beneficial. I know that Ted Heath and other experts will say that the preamble to the Treaty of Rome uses the phrase, 'Moving towards a greater and more complete union,' or whatever the words are. But I really do think that the majority of people at the time we joined what was called the European Economic Community (EEC) thought that we were joining a common market which has turned into a single market under the European Act. They weren't ready, and I don't think that the country is ready to move to a closer federal union. I really don't see how, at the moment, a single central bank based in Frankfurt, can fine-tune, can manage the divergent economies of 16 or 17, soon to be more, countries. America is quite different. Some say that if America can do it with a single currency why can't Europe? Part of

the answer is that first of all America has pretty much a single language, although there is a danger that Spanish will become a second language. They have far more mobility of labour, so if there is unemployment in Dakota people move to Alabama or Florida. You have got very powerful state rights where taxation can be raised at different levels in different states; you've got the federal government with huge resources to give to states which are in difficulties in a way that the commission simply hasn't got enough money to pour into Greece if Greece gets into difficulties. At the moment Ireland and Spain have rather high inflation and should have a higher interest rate. Some of the other countries, perhaps Germany, need a lower interest rate. The fine tuning which keeps inflation under control in this country is now done by the Bank of England, edging interest rates down a quarter of one percent, or putting it up. Alan Greenspan has done this for twelve years in America. What other weapon do you have? And the process won't stop. The single currency, the single interest rate will lead to single taxation and more harmonisation of VAT and so on, and each country's budget will be the same. What would the Chancellor of the Exchequer get up to say if he can't do anything about taxation? He has already handed over interest rates to the Bank of England. It is both an economic issue and a major political transfer of power. Sir John Coles and I, Ewen Fergusson and Oliver Wright, Johnny Graham and Peter Marshall and others from the Foreign Office think the same. It is quite healthy to have a debate about it.

LC It caused a lot of a stir, a very surprising stir ...

AA I suppose it did. So I have joined the New Europe organisation of David Owen, as has John Coles and the others and I think the country needs a real debate about it. I think at the moment that what New Europe stands for does very much reflect the mood of the country. What will happen if, after the next election, there is a referendum campaign and the government goes all-out for a 'Yes' vote, things may be different. Last time there was a referendum ...

LC This is Wilson's referendum?

AA Yes.

LC The feeling in the country then was to say 'No', but he did manage to get a 'Yes' ...

AA The respected leaders were all pretty much saying, 'We must join.' though there were some prominent people who were very much against it. At the moment I doubt if there has ever been an issue, perhaps not even Munich, or Suez, which is dividing families, dividing professions as this does. Newspaper magnates are divided, journalists are extremely divided ...

LC It is the heart and the head. Two things as well ...

AA Diplomats are divided, businessmen are divided, the CBI and the Institute of Directors, lawyers I think are divided. It is interesting that very distinguished people on both sides take a different view about the single currency. Malcolm Rifkind, the former Foreign Secretary, has joined the New Europe, as have Lord Ashburton, a former banker, and Lord Sainsbury as a businessman, and many others. Euro fanatics take a different view but the important thing is to have the debate.

LC Yes. I did mean to ask you, when you were talking about America and you were talking about the Americans fear of "Fortress Europe," there is the other side of that. I believe that Sir Geoffrey Howe thought that if we were not in the first rank in Europe that the Americans would feel that we had less influence with the Americans, but this obviously is not a view that you would share.

AA Yes it is a view that I would share partly. With "Fortress Europe" they were afraid that what we were engaged in was to unify our economic practices and to put up a tariff wall against American goods. I and the embassy said that that wasn't what we were about at all. What we were trying to do was to get the single market within Europe but to continue to trade and have trading agreements under GATT or the new trading institution with America where we would negotiate as a unit. I think that it is good that Europe negotiates as Europe, with America or China or Russia or whoever. But we are not protectionist. We are not a protectionist organisation. As for Britain's position, I think that way back in the days of Kissinger and before, what America wanted was to have Britain in Europe, not excluded, involved in the policy

formulation, not sort of being on the sidelines and criticising rather shrilly from time to time, but in Europe because they thought Britain perhaps understood the American policies and point of view more than some of the others, and were better disposed towards America, and therefore would be a useful ally within. They wanted us in Europe, and I think if we came out or if we were clearly, totally marginalised, they would not welcome it.

LC I don't know if there is anything else you want to say, I need a good exit question that I'm not sure I've got. What would you say was your most exciting and interesting moment in this long and eventful career?

AA It's terribly difficult to answer that. I loved being ambassador to Washington and I tremendously enjoyed Spain at a fascinating time. I think one of the most interesting periods which we did talk a bit about was when I was Head of the Arabian Department and we created all the things new in the Gulf and produced a solution to a rather antiquated framework which has lasted and has prospered and on the whole we have been able to retain good relations, very important relations with Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, and retained the chance for British business to do well in those countries. If the framework was there and if British business failed it was their failure, not the failure of the system which we set up. On a personal basis I would say that the most enjoyable time was being Private Secretary to Sir Alec, Lord Home, whatever you like to call him.

LC Sir Antony, thank you very much indeed. I'm very grateful to you for giving up so much of your time.