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DOWSE, Timothy Michael (born 18 December 1955)

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BRITISH DIPLOMATIC ORAL HISTORY PROGRAMME

RECOLLECTIONS OF TIMOTHY DOWSE CMG, RECORDED AND TRANSCRIBED BY SUZANNE RICKETTS

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SR: This is Suzanne Ricketts recording Tim Dowse on 12 February 2020. Tim, tell me why you joined the Foreign Office.

TD: Well, it sounds clichéd, but it's what I always wanted to do, really from quite a young age. When I was about eleven, I didn't want to be an astronaut but Secretary General of the UN! So I often say that I have spent my career doing exactly what I want to do. Not everyone can say that. I was always interested in history, more the political history than social history, and in geography, more what we now call geopolitics ... maps with borders and disputed territories were what fascinated me more than the rock formations of the central Massif or whatever. So that was one fundamental underlying thing. Secondly, the fact that my family had never gone overseas, not for a holiday or any other reason. I think my parents felt they couldn't really afford it. So there was the interest of the unknown, if you like. But I never really thought I could be a diplomat: I had a vision of diplomats as supermen. Then, at University, I met people whose parents were diplomats. One of my fellow law students at my college was the youngest son of Reg Hibbert, then a Deputy Under Secretary at the Foreign Office and had lots of stories about Mongolia. I thought, "Why not give it a try?" So I applied. I didn't apply for any other government department. I think if I hadn't got in, I'd have probably become a solicitor. I would rather have become a barrister but didn't really think I could afford the pupillage at the London Bar. Then, rather to my surprise, I did get in. I did the usual Civil Service Selection Board.

SR: What was that like? Was it quite intimidating?

TD: It wasn't very intimidating. I found it quite stimulating. The theme running through our Selection Board was all to do with buying natural gas from Taiwan. This brought in a whole lot of different aspects of decision-making, both politics and economics. Clearly, I did all right. The language aptitude test was interesting and I did pretty well on that. For some reason, I think I did particularly well on spatial awareness.

SR: Why on earth do diplomats need spatial awareness?

TD: I have no idea! Then there was the final Selection Board: that was the most daunting. I can't remember who was on it now. But I remember I talked at some length about my interest in developing countries and wanting to go to Africa and do good in the world. One of the board remarked, "Hmm, perhaps you should have applied to the Overseas Development Ministry?" Then, rather to my surprise, I did get in. I was actually on holiday in Cornwall, in August 1978, and my parents got a call from the Foreign Office to say that I was 'in' and telling them that they wanted me to go straight off to New York for three months for the UN General Assembly as a reporting officer. At that time, I hadn't even been on an aeroplane! How times change. (I think when we came back from Washington, we worked out that our children had been on more aeroplanes than buses.) But in fact that didn't happen. It was cancelled.

SR: Really? They dangled this in front of you only to take it away again?

Foreign Office, 1978–80

TD: Yes, so as my new entrant desk, I was sent to United Nations Department, the UN finance and administration desk.

SR: Did you do any sort of induction course before that?

TD: Yes. It was certainly no more than a week. It might have been three or four days.

SR: What did it consist of?

TD: There are two things that stick in my mind. One was a sherry party with the Permanent Under Secretary, Michael Palliser. Rather reminiscent of Oxford, actually. And then we had one whole day on drafting and paperwork. A lot of it was to do with what a minute or a submission looked like, run by a very fierce former senior registry clerk. He was very insistent on the importance of good drafting. That very much stuck with me. I also remember him advising us that we should all look up a particular dispatch from the Ambassador in Morocco called The Spanish Ambassador's Suitcase. (Subsequently, it formed the title of a book by Matthew Parris.) It was about a trip up country which had been a great trial and tribulation to all concerned.

Other than that, we were given a very useful little booklet called Officemanship. (Note the 'man'! I should say that there were eighteen of us on the induction course, of which seventeen were men.) It had very useful things like saying that you didn't have to knock on

doors before going into an office - you just put your head round the door and if something is going on you withdraw. It had a glossary of sporting references used in the Office such as *close of play*, *going into bat for the Department*, *kicking something into touch*. Actually, that really was very useful: it sort of humanised things and made you feel comfortable. I remember we were also told quite firmly that the Foreign Office hours, unlike the rest of Whitehall, were from ten till six. That was to give them time to distribute the telegrams. In retrospect, although one simply accepted it at the time and appreciated being able to get up a little bit later in the morning, they could perfectly well have distributed the telegrams earlier. It was simply the Foreign Office being different.

So those are some of the things that stick in my mind from the very short induction course. And then basically you were put on a desk in a room with two other people.

SR: The so-called Third Room.

TD: Yes. You were essentially told to get on with it. But there was a lot of help. I certainly had my shoulder looked over quite closely.

SR: Who was your Head of Department?

TD: Michael Simpson-Orlebar. Michael Keith Orlebar Simpson-Orlebar in fact! He was a very intimidating character. At least to me, in my first full-time job. Another example of how things have changed is that I didn't lay eyes on him for a week. I think it was at the end of my first week that I got a summons. The deputy Head of Department, the Assistant as we called it then, was chap called Robert Stimson, a very nice man who ended up as Governor in St Helena. So he was enormously welcoming and taught me a huge amount. He was very much my mentor in those early days. He told me that Michael wanted to see me. So I went down and, following my book on officemanship, I didn't knock but put my head round the door. He was sitting at his desk at the other end of the room, looking at papers. He didn't look up. So I said, "Mr Stimson says you'd like to see me." He still didn't look up but pronounced his first words to me in a gravelly voice, "Don't refer to your colleagues as if they were police constables! He's Robert." I thought to myself, "Goodness me. I've started off well!" One compares that to today ... the idea that a new desk officer in a Department would not see the Head for a week is just unimaginable. So that was my introduction.

Michael was very old school. He did teach me some things. The importance of drafting: he was a real stickler for drafting. He also had some idiosyncrasies: for example, I never agreed

with his insistence on spelling *connection* with an x. Two of his comments have stuck in my mind. He corrected one of my replies to an MP's letter which I had drafted for the Minister to send. I had put *I am afraid that*. He crossed that out and said that in the Foreign Office we were never afraid. The other one was that he would never allow you to say *We think* or *I think that*. His comment on that was that in the British Diplomatic Service, we do not think, we know! There we are. A real old school character. There were quite a lot of people like that then.

My immediate line manager was Bill Sinton who finished his career as Ambassador in Bolivia. He was also very helpful in looking over my shoulder and teaching me the ropes. And there was a certain amount of learning on the job. Not much in the way of formal training, at least in my first year. I did do a course in Brussels for young diplomats from the new EU countries: Brits, Irish and Danes. We spent three days at the Commission, including a reception with Roy Jenkins. That was the first time I had ever had caviar! Then we had a day with our Delegation to NATO. Sir John Thompson was the Ambassador at the time and Donald Maitland was our Ambassador to the EU. Then we had half a day with the Embassy to Belgium who, very clearly, felt they were the poor relations of the three. We all came away not enormously impressed with the efficiency of the Commission, particularly in comparison to NATO. But the course was good. It was still very early days after accession.

Otherwise, with the Labour government and the UN admin/finance job, essentially they were working from the default position that the UN was a good thing and deserved to have a lot of money and you didn't need to ask too carefully how it was spent. This is probably why that desk in the Foreign Office was given to a new entrant. It seemed to me very daunting in that I appeared to be responsible for spending £80million of HMG's money. In those days that was quite a lot. All the Specialised Agencies were included as well. But it taught me a couple of things. I eventually did do a General Assembly, a year later, which meant that I stayed in the job for almost eighteen months rather than a year which most of my contemporaries did. I did it not just as a reporting officer, going along and sitting in the Assembly and noting down the debate and writing the reporting telegram each day, but I was a delegate on the Fifth Committee. Our lead was a man from the Treasury called Michael Stewart who knew a huge amount, but was not very diplomatic. He had quite a tendency to rub both his own and his international colleagues up the wrong way. I think there was a feeling later that he personally might have been the reason that the UK was voted off the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. This was a great disaster

from our point of view because we had relied on that Committee to be the thing that kept UN admin and finance in order. So when, suddenly, we were not on it, there was a rather horrified feeling that something had gone rather seriously wrong. He'd been there quite a few years and knew a lot about the UN system. One thing I learned then was that there's no substitute for basically knowing the detail of the subject, no matter how boring the paperwork, you do need to read it and get a command of it. That's what will give you an advantage over the opposition, so to speak.

SR: Yes, that's an obvious point, really, isn't it?

TD: Yes. You did have a bit more time in those days. Everything moved at a slightly slower pace.

SR: But of course the way the Office organised itself was a factor. There were carbon copies and typists.

TD: Yes. Everything was drafted in manuscript. You had typists - who were all women - in the Department, and also in the Typing Pool. You could send something down to the Typing Pool and get it back the next morning. It did mean that the repeated drafting and redrafting was quite a challenge. How the typists managed to interpret the multiple layers of handwriting in bubbles and insertions was extraordinary. We did have a photocopier, but it was quite carefully protected.

Something else that was very different from today was that there was a very large single Registry for all of UN Department plus a separate one just looking after UN documents. The files were kept absolutely meticulously. Again, there were registry clerks who were supervised by a senior who really ruled with a rod of iron. It did mean that when something came up that you hadn't seen, there was almost always a file that you could go and look at to see what had happened last time. That was enormously helpful. I think it's much less available these days. And there was always Diplomatic Service Procedure. A set of about twenty ring binders which told you how to do everything, whether filing an expenses claim or how to write the correct form for a diplomatic Note. That was actually very useful. Volume 3 I think was the crucial one on paperwork. Very helpful. Otherwise, you had to learn on the job. I had no real handover with my predecessor. In fact, I remember Michael saying, "Your predecessor in this job was one of the more idle new entrants I have come across. I hope you

do not intend to emulate his example.” Above him, the Assistant Under Secretary was Lord Nicholas Gordon Lennox. I think I probably saw him four or five times.

SR: The Under Secretaries were godlike creatures, rarely to be seen, weren't they?

TD: Yes they were. I did see Ministers a couple of times. The principal Minister for the UN was the Parliamentary Under Secretary, Evan Luard. A rather intense person, but very committed to the UN and knew a lot about it. Then I had a little bit to do with Frank Judd because one of the things that I got involved in in a marginal way was that we were trying to negotiate an international Convention against corruption in international trade. Well, we were not exactly rushing to negotiate it. I don't think it ever got done, but this was in the wake of the Lockheed bribery scandal in the mid-70s. I think Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands was involved at some point. Frank Judd was looking after that as Minister of State. I went with him to Parliament on one occasion where he was answering some questions, so that was my introduction the parliamentary side of things.

I did get to go to New York a couple of times. There was a Committee called the Committee on Programme and Coordination which was just about as boring as the title sounds. I went to the Mission in New York in the early summer of 1979. Anthony Parsons had just become Ambassador, having moved on from Iran. I was sitting in the back row at his first office meeting with the UK-based diplomatic staff. I remember him saying, “Things are going to be a bit different around here. There's going to be no more of this talk of supporting humanitarian interventions.” This was fairly soon after the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia, driving out the Khmer Rouge which led many people to say it was not a bad thing and we shouldn't really be critical of it. Anthony's view was that if you let this sort of thing take hold, then South Africa would be the next one. We needed to think about what the consequences would be. That rather stuck in my mind.

Otherwise, the Mission was full of very bright First Secretaries, many of whom I subsequently had dealings with in later life. My initial contact was with William Ehrman for the CPC. Then there was Simon Fuller and Kieran Prendergast. All three of them were later my line managers. I remember going with William to the CPC and what that taught me was that jokes don't necessarily work very well in translation. We were discussing a code of conduct for transnational corporations which, again, came out of some of the 70s experience with multinational companies like Lonrho. There was quite a discussion about how to define a transnational corporation. In his intervention, William said, “Well, it is difficult to define.

The Soviet Ambassador seems to think they're like gods. The American Ambassador seems to think they're the devil incarnate. We in Britain are quite clear that a transnational corporation is like an elephant. It's very difficult to define, but you know if one climbs into bed with you." The English speakers around the table all chuckled away, but two thirds of the room looked completely mystified as they were getting the translation!

I found it a very good introduction to the Foreign Office because, a lot of the time, particularly with the specialised agencies, I was not dealing with the Foreign Office but the rest of Whitehall. The Department of Health led on the World Health Organisation, the Department of Employment led on the International Labour Organisation and so on. Very early on, I got to see how the Foreign Office related to Whitehall and that stuck with me. And I spent a lot of my career since in that same sort of Whitehall-wide world.

SR: Did the advent of the Thatcher government make a difference?

TD: The big issue that happened before I moved on was the election of the Thatcher government. Under a Labour government, you basically gave the UN lots of money and didn't enquire too closely about how it was spent. Mrs Thatcher arrived with a conviction that we were throwing a lot of money down the drain, both nationally and internationally, and something had to be done about it. She commissioned a review of all our international financial commitments. Membership of every international organisation, including the UN, although I don't think it was seriously thought that we would not remain a member of the UN. The only one that was excluded from the review was NATO. So suddenly, having been in a job that was not exactly a backwater but very much a sort of routine job where if you did get something wrong it wouldn't be too disastrous, it became quite a hot topic. We did end up withdrawing from UNESCO and we decided not to join the World Tourism Organisation. Otherwise, everything stayed as it was, but we remained hot on budget-cutting. That was still progressing when I moved off to my first posting.

Third, later Second Secretary, Chancery and Information Officer, British Embassy Manila, 1980-82

SR: So how did that come about?

TD: It was not where I'd asked to go at all. In those days you didn't bid for specific jobs, but you could express preferences. You were also expected to choose a hard language. I said that I would like to learn either Hausa or Swahili and go to Nigeria or Kenya as I thought

Africa would be interesting. But that didn't happen. I was sent to Manila without any real explanation. I didn't mind. It was somewhere exotic, somewhere I didn't really know much about. It was exciting for a 24-year old.

SR: Did you do any language training?

TD: No. It wasn't regarded as necessary. But I did recommend that my successor should have some Tagalog training. He did indeed do some. I'm not sure it was vital.

I was Third Secretary and Information Officer. The newspapers were largely printed in English. The Filipinos would switch from one to the other the drop of a hat, which could be a bit frustrating at times. But it wasn't really vital for the job. It was a very small post, though not a mini mission by any means, heavily focused on commercial work.

SR: Who was the Ambassador?

TD: When I arrived, it was Bill Bentley. He was an ideal man for the job. They say of the Philippines '400 years in the convent and 40 in Hollywood'. Certainly there was a degree of the Hollywood which hit you more in Manila. Bill Bentley had film star good looks and most mornings he would spend an hour at the gym working out. This was very good for us because Mrs Marcos really liked him. Everyone said there were three Ambassadors who were her favourites: the American, of course, the Australian and the British. Bill Bentley was often invited to soirées at the Palace. At the time when I arrived, they still had martial law and there was a Communist insurgency of a sort going on. There was a Muslim insurgency in the South. Manila was quite isolated from all this, a very large Third World city. Masses of traffic. The Deputy head of mission was the Commercial Counsellor. His name was Roy Marlow. The Head of Chancery when I first arrived was a Scot called Alastair Baillie who had served in a lot of Third World posts. He was replaced by David Carter, much younger than him and very enthusiastic. Most of the bilateral diplomacy was done by the Head of Chancery and the Ambassador at various levels. My job was partly keeping abreast of what was going on and sending a weekly letter back to London to explain what had happened in the Philippines that week. We didn't send that many telegrams, as London weren't that interested, to be honest. When the Foreign Office thought about South East Asia, it thought about Singapore and Malaysia and Hong Kong. British Ministers passing through the area tended to go to Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong: the Philippines was the bit that the Americans looked after.

At one stage, I did do quite a big in depth study, at the Ambassador's request, of the Philippine coconut industry and how it had been exploited for political and financial gain by various politicians, including the then Defence Minister. It took a lot of work. I recall that Bill gave a copy of it to the Australian Ambassador, who then told his staff that this was exactly the sort of thing that they should be producing. When I was in touch with the desk officer for the Philippines back in London, I asked if he had received my study. He replied that he had but he was wondering what to do with it. He thought he would copy it to Research Department!

As Information Officer, I had three very jolly Filipina ladies working for me. I can even remember their names: Marion, Rowena and Estella.

SR: You can remember their names?

TD: Yes, and can even remember their nicknames. Everyone in the Philippines goes by a nickname. Ryan, Stella and Weng-Weng! They were great fun and very good at their jobs. They would go round distributing leaflets on new products from Britain. We had things produced by the London Television Service - mainly tourism promotion - which would get shown on the local TV channel which actually had a slot for one hour a day devoted entirely to Embassy programming. The slot was on between six and seven o'clock in the morning, so I'm not sure how many people actually watched it.

It was also the Cold War, so there was a certain element of promoting anti-Communist messages. Sometimes this was placing op-eds in the newspapers. And I remember I had to distribute copies of Andrei Sakharov's memoirs to Filipino influencers. I wonder whether anybody actually read it.

We were also running sponsored visits for influential people back to London. There was a certain amount of planning of those things with the Central Office of Information who were very effective. Everyone always came back adoring Britain. I like to think it had more lasting effect than all the people the Russians were taking off to Moscow.

There were a number of things that were great fun. First of all, as I mentioned, they were under martial law which had originally been declared back in 1973. All the newspapers and TV had been shut down. So there were a lot of journalists and editors around with nothing to do. The doyen of Philippine political journalists, a chap called Teodoro Valencia, invited them all to come and have breakfast with him, on him, while martial law was still going on,

at the Jeepney coffee shop in the Intercontinental Hotel. He clearly thought martial law would be finished in a couple of weeks. Once it had been getting on for nearly a year, he decided to put it on a more regular footing and set up a club called the '365 Club' because it met 365 days of the year for breakfast. All the leading political and media people were members. Various politicians would turn up, including Johnny Enrile, the Defence Minister and the presidential press spokesman would often drop in. And then there were one or two foreigners: myself, the American head of the political section at the US Embassy and the TASS correspondent. We were the only outsiders who had a coffee cup - and I still have mine - with our names on it. It was very good for networking and picking up gossip. But you had to be very careful about it, because if you went too often the Filipinos would notice: you slightly walked on eggs, not pushing your luck because it was quite a privilege to be part of this. It was really due to my predecessor in the job who had got us into that circle. So that was good. I used to go about twice a week. Sometimes I just dropped in for coffee and sometimes I would stay for longer.

Then there was also the Foreign Correspondents of the Philippines Association who would have a happy hour every Friday at the Hyatt. All political life revolved round the big international hotels in Manila! That was another great place to go to drop in and pick up gossip. There were a lot of interesting characters there. It was only five years after the end of the Vietnam war and quite a lot of the American correspondents had drifted over from Saigon to Manila, thinking this was going to be the next domino to fall ... which, actually, it wasn't. Again, you often got politicians dropping in to gossip or promote their particular interests. So there was quite a lot of that sort of activity which I did in my capacity as Information Officer. It both made sure that the British Embassy was seen as active and visible and a player in the Manila world, but it was also a very good way of picking up information. I'm sure that half the Filipinos thought all the foreigners who went were spies! We weren't.

Bill Bentley, as Ambassador, was having a competition with the Australian Ambassador, Dick Woolcott (who later became head of the Australian Foreign Service), to see who could get to every province of the Philippines first. Dick Woolcott had an advantage because he had a plane for a couple of months of the year from the Australian Air Force. I quite often went on some of these trips as a bag carrier: that was great fun. You often had to be prepared to sing for your supper because it was quite a tradition in the Philippines to end a big official dinner with a singsong. The local Governor or the military Commander would sing a song -

they often had very fine baritone voices. Bill Bentley and his wife used to do a very romantic number where they gazed into each other's eyes. I can't remember what the song was but it always went down extremely well. Happily, as the bag carrier, I wasn't required to sing.

Because we were not being pressed very hard from London most of the time on the political side, one was able to take the Defence Attaché's Land Rover and go off to some quite remote provinces. One would go bearing gifts from the Head of Mission gift scheme which always got you an entrée. You would call on the military Commander, the dissident priest (to get the other side of the picture). I do remember, at some point up in northern Luzon, stopping the Land Rover on an unmade road coming down the Central Cordillera and just looking out over the rice terraces and thinking that I was being paid for doing this! It was very exciting for a 24-year old.

SR: Did the authorities mind you travelling?

TD: No, they didn't. It was a dictatorship, but an extremely inefficient one, with the trappings of democracy. It was almost the first place, I think, that invented crony capitalism with all the big companies - there are a lot of semi-state owned companies generally owned by friends of the President. Undoubtedly the Marcoses were on the take from most of these things. The Philippines is a fascinating place, but the politics is deeply corrupt. There is a quotation from a Philippine congressman, going right back to the 50s who, when accused of making money from his position said, "What are we in power for?" Indeed, there is a book with the same title. The joke was that Marcos had said the three pillars of the New Society in the Philippines were mining, peace and order, meaning 'That's mine', 'I'll have a piece of that' and 'That's an order'. The charm of it was that it was very inefficient. They were not watching you every second. Undoubtedly there was lots of brutality and human rights abuses out in the provinces by the local police forces and the army. They would regularly have ceremonies where the New People's Army (NPA - the Marxists) would be seen handing in their guns to the local military. You were pretty sure that those guns were going to be sold back within six months. The NPA were a pretty shambolic crowd, almost as much as the government was. One never really felt the atmosphere as being oppressive, certainly in Manila. One of the things that has stuck in my mind as an example of the inefficiency of the dictatorship was a New Year's eve party being given by the Foreign Correspondents and at about 11 o'clock in the evening, a Filipino came through the door and asked everyone to be quiet and listen to him. He said, "I am the brother of Tommy Manotoc, the national

basketball coach. He's secretly married the President's eldest daughter Imee and now he's been kidnapped!" You can imagine the stunned silence. Everyone had a strong belief that this chap had, first of all, married against the wishes of the Marcos ...

SR: He was already married, wasn't he?

TD: Yes indeed. He claimed he had got it annulled in Switzerland. But of course in a Catholic country you can't just get it annulled. His wife was a former international beauty queen. So, for the Marcoses, the marriage just didn't exist. And they had pretty clearly had him bundled away. Then a ransom note turned up, demanding that various political prisoners be released. It looked pretty fake and his parents said that it wasn't his handwriting. This was all being reported in the newspapers: they couldn't control the media. I remember the Ambassador, who by that time was Michael Morgan, saying that Imee was behaving extraordinarily. He reported that he'd been at a Palace reception and she had turned up in jeans and a T-shirt. Clearly, Imelda was not pleased by this. Time went on. After a couple of months, we all thought that Manotoc would turn up in a ditch if he ever turned up. And then, on one of these Friday night Happy Hours, the presidential spokesman showed up and said, "You know Tommy Manotoc? I've got a feeling that that guy is going to turn up sometime soon and it's going to be okay." Sure enough, within a week, he was 'rescued' by a special forces operation. It was playacting. Everybody knew it was playacting. This was not a brutal dictatorship in that sort of a way.

The one time that traditional diplomacy really impinged on me, when I was acting Head of Chancery, was when the Falklands war broke out. The Philippines were on the Security Council at the time. It's another of the things that have changed, that we got the newspapers several weeks late via the diplomatic bag. You could only just about hear the BBC World Service, because they hadn't got a transmitter in Hong Kong at the time. So we were not that well plugged in. We knew something had been going on with scrap metal dealers down in the South Atlantic. On 1 April, the communications officer put together a fake incoming telegram from the FCO and laid it on my desk saying, "You'd better read this!" It said '*At such and such an hour, Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands. The Royal Marines defended bravely but were overwhelmed. We are now at war with Argentina. The Queen will address the nation. Stand by for my immediately following twenty telegrams.*' Of course it was an April fool. And then, within twenty-four hours, I actually got a call at two in the morning as they'd been summoned to open up the comms centre. "You shouldn't make jokes

about this sort of thing. It's really happened!" I thought that you could take a joke too far and put the phone down. But, of course, by 8 o'clock the next morning, we were camped on Carlos P Romulo, the Foreign Minister's doorstep, lobbying to get their vote in the Security Council. It was one of those occasions which did Britain's reputation a great deal of good: they loved all the 'Empire strikes back' image. That and the SAS raid on the Iranian Embassy.

It was quite frustrating during the Falklands conflict because I had every bit of the Philippine media beating my door down trying to get information. These days, there would have been a very slick feed of information and images coming online. In those days there wasn't. I couldn't even get London to send me photographs of ships in the task force. Not the ones actually in the task force, but the sort of ones that were there. At one point, I had the state TV channel in the lobby of the Embassy with their cameras, trying to focus on pictures of HMS Invincible from Jane's Fighting Ships!

SR: You had a visit by the Foreign Secretary. Was that Peter Carrington?

TD: There's actually very little I remember about that, mainly because he was taken everywhere by the Ambassador. I recall going to see him being given an honorary degree at the University of the Philippines. It was the first time I had seen a Foreign Secretary's visit and the operation that goes with it. The Private Office was set up in a room at the Residence. The Royal Military Police looked after the papers. The Embassy had to have its communications open twenty-four hours a day and there was a massive telegram that came in first thing in the morning with a summary of the British press. And I remember seeing how the Head of News Department, Nick Fenn, handled the press briefing for the local press. He was very brisk, very straightforward and, if they asked an irritating question, he certainly left them in no doubt that they were being irritating. There was one particularly irritating correspondent who I always had trouble with who asked some disobliging question about British colonialism. He simply replied, "That is such a silly question that I'm not even going to bother to answer it." That was quite an eye-opener for me.

We also had a royal visit. The first royal visit to the Philippines there had ever been, by Princess Margaret. I'd only been there about six weeks. That was also fascinating in terms of the way the machinery works around a royal visit. What the Palace wants, as you will know, is for every detail to be planned weeks in advance, down to the last minute. That's just not the way it works in the Philippines. They had not got a printed programme for the visit

until about 36 hours before she was due to arrive. She was already in Singapore. I was dispatched to Singapore with copies of the printed programme and told that I had to be able to answer questions from the royal party about anything to do with the programme. That was really quite a daunting experience. Coming back from Singapore, the Filipinos had put an entire First Class section of an Airbus at our disposal: there was the Princess, her Private Secretary, two Ladies in Waiting, her hairdresser, a detective and myself, together with Filipino protocol officials. The one question that I did get asked was what car we would have from the airport. As the President was in Hawaii, we were being hosted by Imelda and, luckily, I knew that she tended to like Mercedes. So I said that it would probably be a Mercedes. The Princess really didn't like Mercedes and wondered whether they had a Cadillac. So the pilot radioed from the cockpit to say that the Princess would like to travel in a Cadillac. At which point, Imelda put her foot down: we ended up with a Lincoln Continental. But there was a crucial problem because my job on arrival, while the Princess processed down a red carpet to inspect a guard of honour, cameramen reversing in front of her all the way down the carpet, was to nip round the back and plant the Royal Standard on the flagpole of the car. The Royal Standard that we had got was for a Mercedes. I couldn't get it on to the Lincoln. So she ended up with a rather nice gold fringed Union Jack ... all quite traumatic!

SR: Did she notice?

TD: I doubt it. One of the other questions was whether decorations would be worn for the reception at the Malacañang Palace. The answer was yes. Would tiaras be worn? Yes. So when it actually came to the event, Madame Marcos was there with a rather demure circlet of diamonds in her hair. The Princess appeared with her head a blaze of sparkling light: we all wondered whether an order for half a dozen of those would be sent to Cartier's ... It was very much Hollywood on show. Imelda sang to Princess Margaret at the dinner and presented her with a full-length, life-size portrait of herself - a pretty ghastly one. The Princess asked if she could see some shells that she might be able to buy. The answer came back that Imelda was going to give her the National Shell Collection, which was all rather embarrassing. After the Princess's departure, there were something like a dozen crates of gifts that we had to arrange to be sent on.

It was an interesting insight into how that circle moves. The visit put us very much on the map for a while and certainly got us in very good favour with the people that mattered in the Philippine government.

We had no idea what was going to happen politically in the Philippines. At that stage, Aquino (who subsequently came back and was killed at the airport on his return) was in the States and seemed to be just disappearing as a political force. We all thought that Marcos would be replaced by another person in his image, if not a member of his family then one of his cronies or perhaps a general. That was not how it turned out.

SR: So how long did you spend in the Philippines?

TD: Two and a half, nearly three years. I really found South East Asia very much to my liking, both fascinating culturally and politically. And economically a part of the developing world where things were really happening. So I wanted to stay in that part of the world. I got a cross posting to Kuala Lumpur. But then, at the last minute, that was cancelled. There was less than a month to go. Instead, I was told I was going to go to Israel. That came about really quite by chance, because the First Secretary in our Embassy in Israel, a lady called Rhona Ritchie, had had an Egyptian diplomat boyfriend to whom she had given some classified papers. It turns out he wasn't a diplomat, but a member of the Egyptian intelligence services. She was stupid, not wicked. It was correspondence between Lord Carrington and Al Haig about setting up the Multinational Force and Observers in the Sinai after Israel returned the Sinai to Egypt. The correspondence was going to be made public but, at the time that she gave it to her boyfriend, it was still confidential. She was caught by the Israelis, brought back to the UK on a pretext and arrested on arrival. She ended up getting a three-month suspended sentence.

So suddenly there was a vacancy in the Embassy which they needed to fill. Kieran Prendergast was at that time the Head of Chancery and referred to me as the 'new Rhona Ritchie' which I didn't take to very kindly.

Hebrew language immersion training (Kibbutz and Haifa University), 1982-83

SR: So you had to go and do some language training?

TD: Yes. I learned Hebrew on a kibbutz.

SR: What was that like?

TD: I was in a language school for new immigrants, with a lot of young people, most of them from Latin America, a couple of Argentinians (interesting, so soon after the Falklands). Quite an interesting cross-section: some very rich kids from New York, a couple of Iranians, some French. Quite a multinational group but all learning Hebrew with a view to making *aliyah*, becoming new immigrants to Israel. I was the only non-Jew which brought home to me quite effectively what it's like to be a minority. It was the day when I found that I had been scheduled for kitchen duty on Christmas Day. I said that I had been rather hoping to have Christmas Day off to spend with my colleagues in the Embassy. It clearly hadn't occurred to the kibbutz. You sort of begin to understand. It was a very left-wing kibbutz: they wouldn't have a rabbi on the premises. If you wanted to have a religious marriage, you had to go to a nearby town. But more often there would be a civil ceremony in Cyprus. When I arrived, it was just after the Sabra and Shatila massacres. They were absolutely up in arms. They'd all been very opposed to the Lebanon war, although I met quite a few optimists who were saying ... it was at the time when the Lebanese were flying into northern Israel for peace talks and the Israelis were still camped around Beirut ... that it was wonderful and they would be able to go and do their weekend shopping in Beirut! Of course it all turned to ashes in their hands. On the day that Ariel Sharon resigned, the kibbutz declared a holiday, so no work was done that day. They would organise bus trips down to Tel Aviv to demonstrate for Peace Now. There were more red flags than Israeli flags on Independence Day. It was a very interesting experience. But I was just like another member of the language school in the sense that I did my formal classroom work and my homework living in a room with two other students. And I also did four hours of physical work a day on the kibbutz. This was either working in the citrus processing factory or cleaning tables in the dining hall or peeling potatoes in the kitchen. Indeed, I injured my back really rather badly quite early on in the factory lifting a box of tomato powder in the wrong way. I was flat on my back for about six weeks in the kibbutz clinic. The Embassy did send somebody once to come and see me and they did deliver my post. But, in some ways, it was good because I couldn't really do anything but study. I have wondered in later years whether I might have been able to claim industrial injury benefit!

The one advantage I did have was my car. I'd taken a car out to the Philippines and I hadn't been able to sell it there, so I had it shipped to Israel. A Ford Escort. So I was extremely popular among the students for giving them a lift down to Tel Aviv for the Sabbath. I was the only person with a private car. So I wasn't quite one of the gang.

SR: How long did you spend in the kibbutz?

TD: I spent four months there. And then I did two months at Haifa University. There was only one day of formal tuition a week, so I got to know northern Israel really very well. I went all over in that time. I did the exams and got Intermediate Hebrew. It was very useful getting past peoples' secretaries. But it wasn't good enough to be able to do serious business, particularly because the Israelis usually had very good English. Their English was far better than my Hebrew. A lot of people we dealt with were British immigrants.

First Secretary and Press Officer, British Embassy, Tel Aviv, 1983-86

The UK desk officer in the Foreign Ministry had previously done my job at the Embassy. I knew him as Yossi Melman. In the Diplomatic Service, he'd been Neville Lamdan. It was quite difficult in some ways in that the Israelis had returned Sinai to Egypt, but there were still negotiations going on over a little bit around Taba, just south of Eilat. We were strictly neutral on this subject. The Israelis were convinced that we were helping the Egyptians. I think the Egyptians had got a former FCO Legal Adviser on their negotiating team and the Israelis thought this chap must be working for the British government. He certainly wasn't. At one point they were asking for maps of this area and I remember Neville/Yossi saying, "Come on. I know the Foreign Office has got maps of this. Why don't you just ask Research Analysts?" He knew how the system worked.

The Israelis were very clever at playing on this: they could pretty much wheel out someone from anywhere in the world if they wanted. I remember Richard Luce came when he was a junior Minister and we took him to the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem. The Permanent Secretary, David Kimche from Manchester whose brother was a Guardian journalist, said, "It's very nice to have you here, Minister. I'm frequently getting submissions from the Department here about the UK." The entire discourse was not just in English but in our Foreign Office language. You could see Richard Luce wondering whether he was back in London!

So you had to frequently remind yourself that we didn't see eye to eye on everything with Israel. Indeed, in 1982 when I arrived, our relations were pretty bad because they had been selling weapons to Argentina which were then used against us in the Falklands. We had an arms embargo on them because of the invasion of Lebanon. We wanted them to tell us the specifications of the mines they had sold to Argentina which, by then, were scattered all over

the Falkland Islands. They refused, saying that if they did that, no-one would ever buy mines from them again. But they noted that we wanted something from them and they wanted something from us so there was an opening for business to be done. We took what I thought was a moral high ground approach and didn't accept that there was any equivalence between an arms embargo and a request for information about mines. Of course there was a relationship between the two. This is the Middle East and you do bargains. So it was quite difficult in that respect. Indeed generally a lot of things were quite difficult.

SR: Who was your Ambassador?

TD: The Ambassador at the beginning was Patrick Moberly.

SR: And then Bill Squire?

TD: Yes. Sarah Squire, his wife, replaced me. Kieran Prendergast was the Head of Chancery who was replaced by Simon Fuller. Two people I had known in New York!

Again, I was the Press Officer as well as the Second Secretary in Chancery. There was a Commercial section, largely local staff, a Consulate two doors down the road on the Tel Aviv seafront. One spent a lot of time driving up and down to Jerusalem, sometimes twice a day: I got to know the motorway to Jerusalem very well. I tended to drive myself most of the time. That allowed me to think about what I was going to say to the Foreign Ministry.

We had a plot of land in Jerusalem, known as the Orange Plot because it had some orange trees on it, which was reserved for the day when the Embassy could move to Jerusalem after a peace settlement. One of my jobs was to enter upon this land once a year to maintain our right of title to it. There was quite a large file of paperwork on the subject of the Orange Plot.

The real difference with the Philippines was the size of the place: the Philippines was enormous whereas Israel just felt very small - you kept bumping into borders you couldn't cross. Even though it was easier to travel than it is now as it was before all the intifadas. It was quite normal to go over to Jericho on the Sabbath for lunch. You could get there from Tel Aviv in three and a half hours by car. There are some very nice Arab restaurants there. Generally, there wasn't a security problem about travelling around the West Bank and even down to Gaza - the UN had a beach club in Gaza which diplomats could use. What was noticeable already, particularly in Gaza, was that more women were covering up, for

example. That was quite unusual for Palestinians: they had always been a liberal, secular culture. More fundamentalists were beginning to come: that was a concern.

Apart from internal politics, one of my jobs was supposed to get alongside the Israeli Arab community which I did to a certain extent. I had friends, mainly journalists, up in Nazareth that I would visit. I was also supposed to be the contact point for the ultra-Orthodox Jews who were becoming much more important in Israeli politics. That was hopeless: it was just completely impossible to penetrate the community. I had learned Hebrew, but of course they don't speak Hebrew. They refused to talk to you in Hebrew because that's the language of prayer: they speak Yiddish. So I made no progress with the ultra-Orthodox at all!

Politically it was difficult. As I say, our bilateral relations were difficult for much of the time there, though that did change. In terms of the peace process, it was stagnation. It was a Likud government under Shamir - the granite teddy bear as we called him – to begin with. And then there were elections in 1984 when we did think there was a chance of a Labour government which would at least have unfrozen some things. But they didn't quite manage it, so there was a National Unity Government. Shimon Peres became the Deputy Prime Minister, but Likud were still in charge. The only thing that was happening in terms of movement was an endless minuet that went on between Yasser Arafat and King Hussein of Jordan. It was very frustrating. One of the things I remember Kieran Prendergast saying when he left was that he felt a great weight was lifted from his shoulders! I remember feeling exactly the same when I left in 1986 and I took the ferry from Haifa to Athens as the hills of the Carmel sank below the horizon. You never had a conversation, whether official or private, that didn't end up going round the same old things.

It was very difficult to see how things would get better. I knew some delightful Israeli politicians. There was one in particular, called Elazar Granot, from MAPAM, the far left party, with whom I became good friends. He took me to his kibbutz and things like that. He was an enormously impressive person who would have promptly made peace with the Palestinians on a two-state solution, but he was becoming marginalised. When I found out his wife had been killed in a Fedayeen attack in the 50s and the kibbutz he lived on was not the one he'd lived on earlier as he couldn't bear living in that part of Israel ... so it made it all the more impressive. (Actually, I subsequently discovered that he was exposed in the Mitrokhin Archive as having been working for the KGB since the 1950s. That was a bit of a shock! I've got quite a history of that sort of connection. I can come on to it later ... I only

discovered that when reading up a bit of background on characters and saw it online. All rather a surprise.) You felt that he and his generation were becoming yesterday's men.

I also had as contacts two friendly backbenchers from the Knesset who I would get together with for steak and chips at a little restaurant in Tel Aviv once every six weeks or couple of months. From Likud it was Ehud Olmert who subsequently became the Prime Minister and also got into a bit of trouble with the law. And from Labour it was a chap called Haim Ramon who was subsequently Deputy Prime Minister in a National Unity Government and Minister of Health, I think. So we did pick the right ones!

We also had a particular contact who was Mayor of one of the development towns, a chap called Meir Sheerit, who went on to become a presidential candidate in the 90s. We were good at spotting the up and coming people.

It was a great time. In the Philippines we did wonder whether any of our political reporting got read. In contrast, the reporting from Israel was definitely read and we did a lot more of it by telegram.

SR: You had some high level visitors, didn't you?

TD: We did, yes. Geoffrey Howe came in 1984. I have two recollections of that. One is that it was very important that his luggage had to go in the boot of his car from the airport. He arrived at Ben Gurion Airport near Tel Aviv, but was staying in Jerusalem. The importance of the suitcase was all related to a recent occasion when he had lost his trousers on an overnight train. The other thing that stuck in my mind was when he went to the Knesset. He and I, and I think Ewen Ferguson, were in a lift in the Knesset with Abba Eban and the lift got stuck! Geoffrey Howe was no lightweight, but Abba Eban was very much not a lightweight. For the first couple of minutes there was amusement. But after about five minutes, it began to get a little stuffy. It did get moving again. Geoffrey Howe had perfectly unremarkable talks, really. What the official records call an exchange of views with the obligatory trip to the Occupied Territories. Standard stuff, though I recall David Kimche congratulating us on the Anglo-Irish Agreement which had just been signed. I have no doubt he was making a point that our relationship should be about more than just the MEPP. But of course that dominated nevertheless. We were gradually trying to get our relationship back on a more even keel after the very difficult period we'd gone through.

SR: I think you had the first visit by a British Prime Minister?

TD: Yes. Mrs Thatcher came in 1986 and it was quite soon after the American raid on Libya. Most of the European countries had refused overflying permission for the F-111s, but she had allowed them to fly from British bases to make the raid on Gadhafi. She took a lot of political flak for that in the UK. I always remember my father saying he thought it was really the wrong thing to have done. He was a pretty much dyed in the wool Tory, so I was quite surprised when I heard him say that. But, of course, it went down like a house on fire in Israel. She stayed at the King David Hotel in Jerusalem and the people who stay at the King David Hotel in Jerusalem tend to be rich American Jews who cheered her every time she went in and out. They would cry out, "Thank you Mrs Thatcher for letting the planes take off!" There were demonstrations in several places as she went around Israel – demonstrations in support of her. It was an unusual experience for her; she really glowed. So it was quite a triumphal visit from her point of view. It was my first and only direct experience of her, actually. She was extraordinary in the way she operated. I still have a photograph of Bernard Ingham in the back seat of an Israeli helicopter flying down to the Ben Gurion Museum in the Negev Desert.

So, having arrived at a time when our relations were pretty well at rock bottom, by the time I left they were about as good as they'd ever been. Quite a thing. We spent a lot of time thinking about what would happen ultimately. We looked at the demographics which suggested that the Sephardi community, that is Israelis who had come from Arab countries, were going to become over the course of time a majority of the population. I remember Kieran Prendergast saying that he thought that, ultimately, Israel would begin to blend into the region a bit more: you'd lose some things, maybe the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, but it would actually look less different from the rest of the region. That wouldn't be all bad. But, of course, what we had not foreseen at all was the collapse of the Soviet Union and then the massive new immigration of Ashkenazi Jews which changed the balance right back again.

It was quite an intense time, but absolutely fascinating.

Economic Relations Department (ERD), FCO, 1986-88

So then I came back in 1986. Again, I went where I was sent which was Economic Relations Department, as Head of the section that dealt with developing country issues, the North/South dialogue and commodity policy. ERD was at that time one of the two joint departments with the Overseas Development Administration: Aid Policy Department in Eland House and ERD in the FCO. I remember that we were inspected. The Inspectors asked me how I felt,

working in a joint Department. I replied that it felt to me like any other Foreign Office Department. The Inspector said, “That’s funny. That’s what your colleagues from the ODA said! And over in Aid Policy Department, everyone says it feels like being in just another ODA Department.” It’s where you sit that makes the difference.

SR: Who was your Head of Department?

TD: Tom Richardson, who chain smoked horrible cigars. This was 1986 so we were just beginning to get the first word processors. They were owned by the typing pool. I’d been in the Foreign Office for eight years and, for the first time, I was line managing UK based staff. I had three: a section clerk and two desk officers. Both desk officers went on to do very well. There was a chap called Tony Crombie; Nick Cannon who was later one of the Assistant Private Secretaries at Number 10; and Philip Barton as a new entrant.

SR: He’s just been posted to Delhi, hasn’t he?

TD: Yes. Indeed, he line managed me in more recent years: I obviously trained him well!

It was very much back into multilateral diplomacy. Commodity policy was really quite a hot issue because it was in the wake of the collapse of the International Tin Council. That was all before my time, but anyone who had had anything to do with the collapse of the International Tin Council, including Mrs Thatcher, clearly had it engraved on their hearts. A huge amount of money had basically disappeared into thin air. These commodity organisations were supposed to try and smooth out fluctuations in the market. Commodity prices tended to be a boom and bust thing and it was obviously not good for the producers (who tended to be developing countries) in bust years. And, to a degree, the consumers preferred to have a bit of predictability. So the idea was that you had a big fund which was used to prop up prices in the bust years, when the cycle went down, trying to buck the market. The Tin Council had been a huge failure. It had spent a very large amount of money and there was litigation still going on. The British government’s view, firmly pushed by the Prime Minister, was that you can’t buck the market. Market forces must rule. There was the International Coffee Organisation, the International Cocoa Organisation and the International Natural Rubber Organisation which was just being set up. Part of my mission was not exactly to undermine the Cocoa and Coffee Organisations, but certainly to keep them from thinking they could defeat market forces. With Natural Rubber, we just wanted it to be an information exchange and we didn’t want to be putting money into these things. All quite difficult. It was the first

time I had really had anything much to do with European Community coordination. Most of them were less hard line market orientated than we were, so we carved a slightly lonely furrow, although the Americans under the Reagan Administration pretty much shared our way of thinking. The Australians as well. But we were quite ideological over this.

Similarly, the North/South dialogue had peaked in the 70s with the New International Economic Order, promoted by the G77, the developing countries. It was pretty much on its last legs but there was still a lot of multilateral negotiation around this, whether with the UN in New York or the UN bodies in Geneva. Quite a lot of work went on trying, generally rather defensively, to hold the line and avoid being drawn into committing large amounts of money to do things that we didn't think would be worthwhile. It was just about the time when what was going to become the G7 was getting going. I remember Nicola Brewer was the desk officer in ERD for economic summits which was something the government was very keen on ... the idea of rich countries getting together and coordinating economic policies to some extent. Again, I spent most of my time dealing with the rest of Whitehall rather than just the Foreign Office. My previous experience in UN Department stood me in good stead: I knew how the Whitehall system worked.

The big conference that we had to prepare for – and it took six months of Whitehall work – was the UN Conference on Trade and Development or UNCTAD. The cynics used to say that UNCTAD stood for Under No Circumstances Take Any Decisions!

I don't think we go through this process before major UN conferences now, but we had about six months of preparation with an interdepartmental Committee chaired by a very nice and effective Assistant Under Secretary called Tony Hutton from the DTI. My particular task at the actual Conference - which was a month long in Geneva - was to be the representative on the Committee which dealt with the least developed countries and also to keep an eye out for any attempts to boost commodity organisations. There was a large interdepartmental UK negotiating team at the Conference including a lady from the Treasury, Vivien Life, who I hit it off rather well with! She was there mainly trying to stop me spending government money: at the time she was in the Treasury's international finance directorate and was the desk officer for the World Bank.

We were working towards a single final outcome, a single document encapsulating everything that had been agreed. It was a pretty thankless task, actually. It was probably too ambitious and a lot of time we were being rather defensive and difficult. I do remember our

Ambassador in Geneva, John Sankey, coming to one of the corridor discussions we were having at our Committee and saying, “What’s all this I hear about the UK opposing something?” I’m afraid this was exactly the sort of thing that made the rest of Whitehall rather annoyed with the FCO.

We did reach a sort of final outcome. The Secretary-General of UNCTAD, Kenneth Dadzie, subsequently said he thought the only really positive outcome of UNCTAD VII was the fact that Vivien and I got married! Geneva can be a very small place when there’s a big international conference on. Towards the second half of the month, when we were trying to find ways to slip away and have a dinner *à deux* in some little restaurant, invariably half the rest of the UK delegation would walk in and come and join us. I remember we went on a trip one weekend to Lausanne, to the Hermitage, with the American delegation. Going to Lausanne Cathedral, the Bible was open on the lectern. Tony Hutton went and read the verse of the day which was from the Book of Proverbs: ‘A soft answer turneth away wrath.’ He thought that wasn’t a bad motto for us to take back to the conference. The Head of the American delegation said, “What do you say that for? I completely disagree. What this thing needs is a bit more wrath!” Before the conference happened, the US Embassy in London would come and talk to me about the prospects. I told them I was ‘cautiously pessimistic’. I was subsequently told that when they reported that back, it caused a lot of laughs in Washington. I think I was probably about right.

Apart from the UNCTAD conference, there was a lot of travel, mainly to Brussels. It was my first real exposure to the joys of EC coordination.

So that was Economic Relations Department.

Resident Clerk, Southern Africa Department, FCO, 1988-90

SR: And then you moved to South Africa Department in 1988. Did you ask to go there?

TD: No. I didn’t really have a say in it. I was told they needed someone to be Head of the South Africa Internal section.

It was a wonderful time to be dealing with South Africa. Kieran Prendergast, again, was now Head of the Department. I was dealing with the ANC. Because Mrs Thatcher had described them as a terrorist organisation, we were not allowed to meet in the Foreign Office. Patrick Fairweather was the Assistant Under Secretary. He and I used to go and meet the ANC rep in

London, Mendi Msimang, and occasionally visiting ANC bigwigs. We used to meet them in the Oxford and Cambridge Club which Patrick was a member of. I have very vivid memories of Thabo Mbeki coming through, and sitting in a big leather chair in the library of the Oxford and Cambridge Club puffing on his pipe and looking as if he'd been there his whole life! You occasionally had to remember that this chap was a fairly senior member of the South African Communist party. We managed to get along and do business with them and talk to them, despite the political sensitivities around that. We spent quite a lot of time doing things which these days would, I think, be called Track II activities: setting up meetings and weekends in attractive country houses with nice food and alcohol for figures from the ANC, figures from the Pan-African Congress and members of the Broederbond, the Afrikaaner sort of core organisation. Just to get people talking to each other. And they did. I remember feeling at the time – after I'd been on my familiarisation trip around South Africa when I went all round the country for the best part of two weeks – that the difference between this and the Middle East is that here everyone is looking for a deal. On Israel/Palestine there are some people looking for a deal, but an awful lot of people quite consciously not looking for a deal on both sides, who are looking to wreck it. I couldn't see that the wreckers with the South Africa situation were going to be able to wreck, if you like.

To begin with, PW Botha was the President in South Africa. That was a block. We were holding the line for them against international financial sanctions particularly. Our Ambassador, Robin Renwick, was very strong on this. I think it was one of the ways he got credibility with the South Africans as they knew he'd been sent there very much by Mrs Thatcher as her person. He'd impressed her enormously, both over the Lancaster House negotiations but then subsequently he was very much involved in getting our rebate from Europe. She trusted him and he really quite played on that. He would ring up Kieran, or subsequently Richard Dales (Kieran's successor) and occasionally me. "What you people just don't understand is, if we don't do this, this and this, then there's going to be real trouble. If you're going to be difficult about this, I will just go to the Prime Minister." I'm absolutely sure he did this for the benefit of the people who were listening to his telephone calls! It did work.

At the same time, we had John Sawers and Charles Crawford, who were the two Chancery First Secretaries in the Embassy. We had a big thing about them getting out into the townships. They were called The Barefoot Diplomats. I think Tom Fletcher has suggested

something similar recently. A lot of it was just trying to get people to come together and talk to each other: I do think we made a difference.

Then PW Botha left the scene and FW de Klerk arrived. On his first visit to London, Mrs Thatcher gave him a real handbagging. It really shook him to hear her say, "I cannot hold this line if you aren't prepared to change." I think he got it. He did absolutely understand that they couldn't carry on as they were. From that point onwards, we reckoned we had a chance to get things on the right road.

We had a Cabinet Committee of officials where we were trying to ask what we would do in the event of a serious race war in South Africa for all the British passport holders and the people with right of residence in the UK, of which there were thousands and thousands. We got to the point of calculating how many jumbo jets from Gaborone we'd have to fly out round the clock. Then we decided that it just could not happen: there was no way we could cope. So that was an eye-opener: it was so important that the South Africans got this right. De Klerk did get it. But Mrs Thatcher's comments certainly shook him. He may have got there anyway, but her comments probably speeded thing up.

Then, of course, we had the release of Mandela. I vividly recall Vivien and I sitting in front of the TV on a Sunday afternoon seeing him walk out of prison.

SR: Yes. The BBC interrupted the Antiques Roadshow to show his release!

TD: I remember thinking that I had achieved my first objective! And then there was all the preparation for his visit to London. Very intensive work.

We were very nervous about how his first meeting with Mrs Thatcher would go. Again, I think Robin Renwick got it absolutely right. "You don't need to worry. He'll charm the socks off her, because he is a gent! She will react wonderfully to him." That's exactly what happened, actually. He had an old-fashioned style. He had a terrible cold and, of course, his programme was absolutely packed because every community organisation, every NGO all wanted to see him. It was absolutely non-stop. In between meetings, he would get in the car, sit back, shut his eyes and go out like a light. And when we got to the next event, he'd wake up, as if nothing had happened. Quite extraordinary mental and physical self-discipline. Amazing.

Things continued to look up from then on. It was a great time to be dealing with South Africa.

I do remember there was one of those moments. 1990. There was going to be a big demonstration, led by the ANC, held in Cape Town coinciding with the opening of Parliament. We were very worried that the government was going to ban the demonstration and that things would get out of control. It could really upset the whole process which, by then, was seriously under way. Robin Renwick personally intervened, with the government, with the Mayor of Cape Town and the police and really pulled out all the stops. It ended up with the Mayor of Cape Town marching with the demonstrators. Subsequently, I've thought that that must be one of the very few recent occasions when you can say that a British Ambassador really had an impact on history.

And at the same time, I was a Resident Clerk: that had its own interest. Working on one country, however fascinating that country, was limiting. Everyone says that being a Resident Clerk is beneficial to your career because you get to deal with senior officials and Ministers. It was before we had the Global Response Centre that the Foreign Office has now.

SR: So you did your day job as well?

TD: Yes, extraordinary really. Here we are, a permanent member of the Security Council. We went right through the Cold War with basically one bloke with a couple of telephones as our out of hours duty! That was for weeknights and at weekends there were two blokes, plus a News Department duty officer, plus a Consular duty officer. One of the attractions was that one had a flat in Whitehall with a rather nice sitting room and bedroom, overlooking St James's Park: no hot bedding in those days! There were six of us in those days, working on a rota. Eventually, I was Senior Resident Clerk. That gave you a little bit more money but you couldn't really not be the one who volunteered to be on duty on Christmas Day! Actually, it was quite jolly in the Office on Christmas Day: we would have a Christmas dinner.

You had to be ready to deal with anything that came up, including consular things during the week. Most of the time, you didn't get a disturbed night. Both Fiji coups were on my watch. The only time that I was up all night was the night of Lockerbie. I remember this very distinctly. To begin with, I got a call from the Department of Transport duty officer who wondered if I'd like to know that a plane had crashed somewhere up North. I said that we probably ought to tell Number 10. By the end of the night, almost every Embassy in London

was calling me up to ask whether any of their nationals were on board the plane. And then there was a series of emergency meetings. But that was the only night when I got no sleep at all.

Towards the end of that time, I had the experience of having the Foreign Secretary sharing the Clerkery with me. John Major was Foreign Secretary only for a matter of a couple of months. Sir Geoffrey and Lady Howe were still in Carlton Gardens and not in any rush to move out. John Major's constituency was in Buckinghamshire, so he decided to stay in the Clerkery where we gave him a bed and breakfast. Indeed, I've still got his cheque for £12 something for his breakfasts! Of course, after being Foreign Secretary he became Chancellor of the Exchequer and then Prime Minister, so I'm glad I never cashed the cheque.

He would work late in the Office, much to his Private Office's disgust and go out to get himself some dinner. Quite often at the McDonald's in Victoria Street, which his detective was rather upset about, I think. Then he'd come back after that. It was slightly nerve-racking because it was just about the time that everyone was suddenly leaving East Germany and going into the Western Embassies in Prague and maybe Vienna as well ... there was a big flow. One would be watching the News at Ten and John Major would turn up and plonk himself down on the sofa. I always remember him asking, "Hmm. East Germany. Do we have a line on East Germany?" I told him that my day job was South Africa and offered to find out for him. "No, no, just wondering" he replied. He would get his Daily Telegraph in the morning and would always turn first to the cricket page.

So that was the Resident Clerkery. Of course now it's a much more professional organisation. It may have lost some of its old world charm, but I'm sure it's more suited to world events.

Deputy Head, Gulf War Politico/Military Emergency Unit, FCO, 1991

SR: Good morning. It's Suzanne Ricketts again with Tim Dowse on 2 March 2020. At our last session, we finished off with you being a Resident Clerk. Your next move was to the Emergency Unit in the Gulf War. Tell me about that.

TD: Yes. After the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the FCO activated the Emergency Unit for the political crisis and it was then staffed with people from Middle East Department. But, for the actual period of hostilities, really from the beginning of January 1991 more or less to the end of March, there was also a politico-military section of the Emergency Unit. They needed to

staff it so I was asked, partly because of my experience as a Resident Clerk, to join as one of two Deputy Heads. The Head of the Pol-Mil Unit was the Head of Non-proliferation and Defence Department, Roland Smith. We worked a shift system from the day that the actual fighting began. It wasn't an ideal system: we did twelve hours on and twenty-four off. Quite disruptive to sleep patterns. But we managed. It was interesting. The sort of things that we were doing were largely concerned, before the outbreak of hostilities, with things like negotiating air sea rescue arrangements with Iran if any of our planes came down in their territory. There was quite a lot of trying to encourage particularly European, but also other, partners to provide things like medical facilities ... those countries that weren't going to be involved in the actual hostilities, of which there were quite a few. For example, could the Belgians make hospital facilities available? The anticipation was that there were going to be high numbers of casualties. We actually thought it was quite possible that the Iraqis would use chemical weapons. So preparations and contingency plans were made for really quite substantial numbers of casualties which, happily, didn't in the end happen. It was over faster and with fewer Allied casualties than we had expected and prepared for.

Then, when the actual shooting started, in some ways there was slightly less to do, because events took on their own momentum. There was quite a lot of looking out for SCUD missile launches against Israel, because there was concern that the Israelis would feel obliged to retaliate and that would then change the political dynamics in the Muslim world, which had been pretty well on our side - the Egyptians and the Syrians and of course the Saudis and Kuwaitis were fighting with us, but we thought that if Israel became actively engaged then that would change the political dynamics. I recall that you would get a message from CENTCOM via Northwood to say that there had been a SCUD launch, but generally you knew first about it by looking at CNN. The official system simply did not work as fast as the 24-hour live media coverage.

I did think that the way the government organised itself for Desert Storm was very good in terms of how to run that sort of crisis. Each morning, at 0630, there would be a meeting (that whoever was on shift would attend) of the Assessment Staff at the Cabinet Office to agree a morning immediate assessment of the intelligence picture covering the military situation, the diplomatic situation and specific things to do with the likelihood of the use of chemical weapons, for example. That then fed into a meeting of senior officials at 0745 which then fed into a War Cabinet meeting at 0830 which would start off with the intelligence briefing. That battle rhythm, if you like, worked really rather efficiently. So by between 0900 and 0930

each morning you had the instructions from the Ministers at the War Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister telling us what had to be done that day. It worked well.

The other thing that fell to the Politico-Military Emergency Unit was supporting the campaign to raise money to help share the financial burden of the conflict. Again, it was focused on countries that were not going to participate actively in the actual fighting. It was actually very successful. It was led by David Mellor, Chief Secretary to the Treasury. He had previously been a Foreign Office Minister and had very good contacts in the Gulf states. At the ministerial level, he was spearheading the attempt to raise money: I think we almost broke even.

We were in a sort of bunker, completely windowless. Catering was provided by the Metropolitan Police, so we had stuff brought over from New Scotland Yard, generally rather lukewarm when it arrived. I liked the cooked breakfasts although they have probably taken several years off my life! Subsequently, the FCO now has a much more sophisticated Crisis Unit, partly because of the lessons we learned. Previously, the Emergency Unit had only ever been open for a week or ten days at a time, dealing with a services-assisted evacuation or something like that. On this occasion, it had been open from the beginning of August 1990 right through until the end of March 1991. By the end, it was a pretty unpleasant place. Scruffy and smelly. There were periodic efforts to clean it up but you couldn't do much about the fug that tended to build up.

I do recall also that it was in this period that the IRA launched their mortar attack on Downing Street. We knew nothing about that in our bunker. I was coming off duty in the morning after an all-nighter. On coming up, there's a very tall window alongside a staircase at the Horseguards end of the Foreign Office. You had to go up that staircase. Looking out, I saw something burning on the grass at the back of Downing Street. Had I known it was an unexploded mortar shell, I probably would have moved away from the window a bit more quickly! We had no idea what had happened until we found we couldn't actually get out of the office: Whitehall was on lockdown.

SR: Being in an Emergency Unit is very exciting work, isn't it? Being involved in a crisis like that.

TD: Yes. There was a strong sense of Whitehall coming together, whether Ministry of Defence, Cabinet Office, Foreign Office, DFID (or ODA as it was then). It was very

exciting. Everyone had a very clear understanding of what the objectives were. Of course, it was one of those cases where the issues involved were pretty clear-cut. There weren't many grey areas, if one country has actually invaded and occupied another. There wasn't that much room for argument! I remember I was actually on duty on the night the actual fighting came to an end. Douglas Hurd, as Foreign Secretary, was over in Washington. He was in the White House when they decided to stop. The report that came back to us of the discussion was that the Iraqis were fleeing from Kuwait and the American air force was just destroying them. The escape route north from Kuwait City was subsequently called the Highway of Death. Colin Powell, who was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, said something on the lines of 'It's not in the tradition of the US Armed Forces to shoot people in the back.' At that point, President Bush, HW Bush, agreed to call a ceasefire. There has been criticism since that it was too soon, they should have gone further and overthrown Saddam. But there was a clear sense - certainly from the American side and we rather shared it - that if you overthrow Saddam and occupy Iraq, then you have responsibility for running that country. We didn't want that. We thought we would also lose diplomatic support around the Arab world if it started looking like a colonial act.

Shortly afterwards, there was the Shia uprising in southern Iraq and the assault on the Kurds in northern Iraq. That then led to the setting up of no-fly zones in what was called operation Provide Comfort to bring assistance to the Kurds in the north, which was another quite considerable multinational military operation. I think that if the Emergency Unit hadn't just been open for nine months, we would have reopened it again to coordinate the FCO input to that activity. I think there was such reluctance, psychologically, on everyone's part, to go back down into that hole in the ground, that we didn't!

But yes, it was exciting. One felt one was making a certain amount of history. It was a huge error on Saddam's part to do this just at the point that the Soviet Union was on its last legs. The UN Security Council, quite unusually, was united.

Assistant Head, Non-Proliferation and Defence Department, FCO, 1991-92

Then, after that, I didn't go back to South African affairs. My wife and I had just got a joint posting to Washington. There was a complication in that we were due to go in the spring of 1991, but we produced our first baby at the crucial moment and Vivien wanted to take a year's maternity leave. The original plan was for her job to begin in the spring and I was going to do something for a think tank for a year as my job wasn't due to start until the

middle of 1992. But she ended up doing a different job - the First Secretary (Trade Policy) job, which was actually much more suited to her previous experience. And it fitted my timing rather better. We thought at the time that the Foreign Office was hugely accommodating to us. Today, of course, we would have been within our rights to have insisted she had the original job that she had been chosen for – the First Secretary slot dealing with American domestic politics. Ironically, as a result of her dropping out, the job went to one Jonathan Powell. It was a result of that job that he met Gordon Brown and Tony Blair...

Anyway, we didn't go off to Washington. I became one of two Assistant Heads of Non-Proliferation and Defence Department, largely dealing with the aftermath of the Iraq war, particularly in the proliferation sphere because of course we did discover afterwards that Iraq had progressed quite a lot further in some of its weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programme, notably the nuclear programme, than we had thought. This came as something of a surprise. We set up the UN Special Commission, which was there to disarm Iraq of its WMD. There was also quite a political demand, broadly across the Western world, that something had to be done about unrestricted arms sales. A lot of countries had made a lot of money supplying Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war. There was a feeling that something had to be done to respond to the criticism of unrestrained conventional arms transfers. In the summer of 1991, we had a regular annual UK-US Pol-Mil meeting at the headquarters of the Strategic Air Command at an Air Force base in Nebraska. The two leads were: John Goulden, Assistant Under Secretary, on our side and, on the US side, Dick Clarke, the State Department Assistant Secretary for Politico-Military Affairs. They told me and Dick's deputy, one Charlie Duelfer who subsequently became very well known as Head of the Iraq Survey Group after the second Iraq war, to go away and think of something that we could do on conventional Arms sales, that we could launch as a UK-US initiative. What we came up with was the UN Register of Conventional Arms Transfers. It still operates. It became rather more ambitious. When we set it up, it was quite a modest proposal. We were quite conscious on both sides - and indeed in other countries - that we do have defence industries that need to make money. And in order to provide us with what we need, they need to be able to export as well. But the concept was that if you were more transparent in what you are selling or transferring overseas, it would provide some degree of political restraint on some of the more egregious arms deals. So we came up with that. We sat down and tried to work out what the categories would be of the things that we would cover. I know there's been a certain amount of academic discussion about how we established the categories, particularly

on missiles over a certain range and not including shorter range missiles. The simple reason for that was that we thought the Register would come into complete disrepute if we tried to have transparency in reporting requirements for things that we would never be able to check up on. So for big missiles, you've got a pretty good chance of being able to see whether they are being transferred if the country is not reporting it. But we would never manage to spot little anti-tank missiles or little shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles: they were too easy to smuggle. I literally looked in Jane's Weapons Systems ...

SR: Again!

TD: Yes ... I looked at what the ranges were and decided which ones were big enough to have a chance of spotting. It was no more complicated than that! Slightly to my surprise, the Ministry of Defence experts said we were broadly right. The UN Register continues to this day. I think it is now expanded to a wider range of weapons systems. So that was my contribution to world security.

We also had the actual end of the Soviet Union in the course of that year. I remember going on a trip to Moscow and Beijing in connection with selling the concept of the Register, with an MoD official whose name was Ian MacDonald. He had become famous as the MoD spokesman during the Falklands war. That was a very interesting time. Going to Moscow three weeks after the failed coup against Gorbachev, the streets were littered with broken down Ladas, half the lightbulbs weren't working in the Foreign Ministry ... a sort of definite feeling of *fin de siècle*. It felt like a society that had given up trying. Going on to Beijing, we stayed in the first international joint venture hotel. There was a much greater sense of dynamism, although China was still only just beginning to open up under Deng Xiaoping. Even the stallholders at the Great Wall of China would bargain with you, whereas in the Arbat in Moscow they'd just shrug with a take it or leave it attitude. I was very struck at the time by the contrast.

Then, there was a certain amount of work on things like winding up COCOM, some of the Cold War systems.

But with setting up the UN inspectors for Iraq, it was an extraordinary time, really. There seemed to be nothing we couldn't do through the UN Security Council. There was nobody to say no to us. One started off with a fairly low level of ambition, having been used to the idea that it's always terribly difficult. But actually we began to realise that you could put almost

anything in the Security Council Resolution and it would get through. It was an unusual period. It didn't last very long. But it played into things like Bosnia, though by the end of the decade the dynamics were changing. It was a rather heady period, I think, for Western policy makers doing things at the UN: it seemed there was almost nothing one could not do.

Secondment to US State Department, Washington DC, 1992; First Secretary Chancery, British Embassy Washington DC, 1992-96

I only did that for about a year. Then we went on our joint posting to Washington. I started off doing an attachment to the State Department.

SR: You were the first person to do that, I think?

TD: Yes, I was the first British diplomat. Surprising, given the nature of the UK-US relationship. A Dutch diplomat had done it, but the Americans had been incredibly cautious and made him work in the Consular Directorate, which wasn't even in the same building as the main State Department in Foggy Bottom. So I don't think he had much fun. They did go a bit further with me but, initially, they said I couldn't have access to the IT. I did a few weeks with the Europe Directorate being shown the ropes and shown how the system worked. I did a course they provided for US diplomats coming back from overseas to get them acclimatised to Washington again, called Washington Tradecraft. It was actually rather good. But then I went to the Africa Bureau because of my time working on South Africa and went on the South Africa desk, in fact. They said straightaway that I would be of no use to them if I didn't have access to the WANG, as they called it, the brand name of their IT. So they just, possibly, broke the rules ... I don't know.

I found it very interesting, the contrast between the UK and the US system. This was the James Baker State Department. Baker ran things with a very small, tight group of handpicked senior officials: he had Lawrence Eagleburger and Bob Zoellick. Margaret Tutwiler was the spokesperson. This close-knit group was up on the seventh floor of the Foggy Bottom building. In some ways, the system seemed similar to the FCO in that you put up submissions, although they would call them memos, decision memos. There would be two boxes at the end: yes and no. You did much the same in setting out your arguments, with a deadline on it, similar to a policy submission in the UK system. You had to get clearances from everybody who might be involved - far more signatures than we would normally have in our system. So that would all take time. Eventually it would go up, with the box for yes

and the box for no, and it would come down again. It might say no, but it didn't actually explain why not. So you had to run your own sort of intelligence system. Below the seventh floor there was the Executive Secretariat on the sixth floor. The abbreviation was SS: people said that was not by error! They were the people who handled all the paperwork and the bureaucracy for the seventh floor. You needed to have your friends in the Executive Secretariat who could tell you the reasons behind a decision. It felt slightly odd. I think we have more - and better - vertical communication in the FCO. The Private Office would minute out, '*The Secretary of State took the following view etc. etc.*' You didn't really get that in the State Department.

I also spent a short time on Capitol Hill. A month with the House Foreign Affairs Committee and a month with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Again, just getting a feel for how they worked and making contacts, which was very useful subsequently.

When I moved to the Embassy my job was the First Secretary dealing with what NATO called 'the rest of the world'. I dealt with Africa throughout but at one time or another I dealt with policy towards every continent, including Antarctica.

For the first year, I was responsible for the Balkans. Very interesting because Yugoslavia was falling apart, first the Croatian conflict then the Bosnian conflict was really getting under way. We set up UNPROFOR, the United Nation Protection Force in Bosnia. Then the Clinton Administration came in with a number of - to us - unsettling ideas involving bombing the Serbs. They saw things in very black and white terms. I have sometimes thought that you can look at the European and American approaches to diplomacy in Henry Jamesian terms! The American see things in a very black and white way, whereas the cunning Europeans with their wily ways see things in shades of grey. That was very much true in the case of Bosnia. Indeed it became the subject of a lot of dissension within the State Department: there were a number of young State Department officials who resigned or went public, criticising what they saw as US inaction in pushing to take a stronger military stand against the Serbs attacking the Bosnian Muslims. We had a very different view of this, not least because we had forces on the ground that would be at risk, but we also thought there were faults on all sides. So that was quite a difficult period. Warren Christopher did a tour of Europe which turned out to be something of a kamikaze mission trying to persuade us all to let the Americans drop bombs from a safe height while our troops were on the ground. He didn't succeed.

I also had sub-Saharan Africa. The two big things in my four years were, first of all, Somalia where the US had led a multinational effort to provide aid to the famine-stricken country with the best of intentions, but it was really one of the first foreign policy tests for the Clinton Administration which hadn't really wanted to make foreign policy its main issue. It was 'the economy, stupid' which was supposed to be the thing. Things fell apart with the famous Black Hawk Down incident which rather paralysed the Administration. We had, in fact, been quite cautious about Somalia. We had provided a couple of Hercules transport planes to help move aid into the country, but we had declined to put forces in. We were still committed around the Gulf and in Iraq. So we did not go in and I think we rather congratulated ourselves subsequently. There was a whole issue about when the Americans said they were going to have to get out after Black Hawk Down: they wanted to hand over to the UN. They wanted to get a credible UN operation going instead: that involved some difficult transatlantic discussions.

That did have a major impact because then we had the Rwanda crisis. After being criticised for rushing into Somalia, there was then criticism that the international community was too slow. I remember on that occasion Glynne Evans, who was head of United Nations Department back in London, moving heaven and earth to try and get more international effort into Rwanda to try and stop the massacre. The person I was dealing with in the National Security Council, the junior Director for Africa, was Susan Rice. The Americans were just very resistant, very much because of what had happened in Somalia. But we didn't really understand quite how appalling the situation in Rwanda was. I remember making a lot of effort to try and get an American transport plane to fly some British military trucks to Rwanda to support the UN when the UN force was eventually set up there: it took an extraordinarily long time to get the use of this one transport plane. Having got it, it then broke down. But Glynne was absolutely single-mindedly pushing on this, quite rightly.

I dealt with the Far East for a little while which included the 1993 nuclear crisis with North Korea. This led to the first US-North Korea Framework Agreement to provide the North Koreans with light water reactors. That again was an interesting case. The Americans reached the agreement with the North Koreans and then briefed their allies on what they had done. I recall the French Embassy being very critical, accusing the Americans of letting the North Koreans off the hook and not standing up to them. The Americans were quite brusque - not without reason, I thought - and said that when France was prepared to put two divisions between Seoul and the demilitarised zone, perhaps then they would have some locus to tell

them what to do. We were supportive of the Americans and had quite a lot of nuclear expertise to share with them. I think we saw some commercial opportunities as well. That programme then did go forward until early 2001 really when we caught the North Koreans cheating and it all fell apart. It was at that time actually, when the crisis was at its height, that John Major asked what our contingency plans would be for a new Korean conflict. That concentrated minds around Whitehall. Interestingly enough, it wasn't that dissimilar to what our contribution had been to the previous Korean War, only without ground troops. Some aircraft in Japan and an aircraft carrier. And maybe some minesweepers. Happily, it wasn't required.

I covered US policy towards Latin America for about 18 months in 1994-95. My main task was to discourage arms sales to Argentina (rather an echo of my time in Israel). The Americans had imposed an embargo in 1982, but 12 years on, they didn't see why it should be maintained when Argentina had become a democracy, and they thought we were unreasonable on the issue. I think they simply didn't understand the deeper emotions anything to do with the Falklands still aroused in London, particularly in the MoD. We held the line with decreasing success: one result is that I know more about the radar on Skyhawk bomber planes than any diplomat should!

Otherwise, the US reaction to the Chiapas uprising in Mexico and the brief conflict between Peru and Ecuador generated a lot of activity, and I was responsible for opening discussions to get the UK observer status with the OAS. But generally this was the portfolio that took least of my time and got least response from London. My experience is that HMG rediscovers Latin America about once every ten years and launches an initiative - usually commercial - to raise the UK's profile (in the 1990s it was called 'Leap into Latin America'). But it is rarely sustained when other priorities crowd in.

SR: Who was the Ambassador?

TD: Initially it was Robin Renwick with, as his number two, Christopher Meyer. Then he was replaced by John Kerr. Jeremy Greenstock was his number two. The Embassy in Washington is huge, a sort of mini Whitehall. So I was in the political corridor. (There is a photograph of Vivien and myself in that corridor in the book 'True Brits' which accompanied a BBC TV series at the time. It looks gloomier than it was! Today it's all open-plan).

My portfolio kept changing really because there were a set of Counsellors who all had slightly sharp elbows and were constantly taking subjects from or giving subjects to others. Peter Westmacott was the Counsellor for US domestic issues, Philip Thomas was the Pol/Mil Counsellor and initially Peter Torrey was my line manager, followed by Tom Phillips. The First Secretaries – including Jonathan Powell, Stephen Pattison and Adam Thomson - got the collateral damage from all these ambitious Counsellors and our own topics changed! That's how I eventually got the Far East and Latin America.

One's day was spent doing the rounds of the US system. I generally would feel that I had not done a proper day's work if I hadn't been to at least two of the State Department, the National Security Council and the Pentagon and perhaps had lunch with a think tanker. I would get back to the office late afternoon and write a reporting telegram or two and maybe five tele-letters.

SR: We were in Washington a bit earlier than you. Peter (Ricketts) always said that the problem with Washington was there was always too much information to process and not necessarily a coordinated line.

TD: Yes indeed. The Americans would laugh when they came over to Whitehall: they would go the rounds of Whitehall Departments and everybody said the same thing! They used to call us Stalinist!

Coming so soon after Desert Storm, we were their favourite people. I remember talking to the Deputy Director for the Balkans, a chap called Mike Habib, who subsequently became the number two in the Embassy here in London. He said they periodically had this feeling that the special relationship was a thing of the past, not something they talked about. They had to think about broader relations with Europe. But when the chips were down and German air force pilots refuse to fly even for defensive purposes in Turkey, you could always rely on the Brits. We got enormous credit for that and we played on it quite mercilessly. At some of the most difficult points in the Balkans crisis, I would just walk in on the Head of a busy Department in State. Again, we always had something to offer. Because their vertical communication isn't so good, I could get a read-out of conversations between our Foreign Secretary and the US Secretary of State before they reached my contacts in the State Department, so I could often tell them what the subject of the conversation was. There was a lot of give and take in that way: it did mean people were not too upset if you stuck your head round the door and asked for a quick word.

My high point was when somebody reported at the Monday morning meeting chaired by the Ambassador that there had been a Deputies interagency meeting on the Balkans at which somebody had said, 'The British Embassy thinks that ...' To which someone else replied, 'The problem is that the British Embassy has become part of the interagency process.' I thought to myself, "Wow! Done it" and indeed, Robin Renwick in his valedictory dispatch mentioned this. But I absolutely understand what Peter means about too much information.

The other thing I did in Washington was to represent the Joint Intelligence Committee, which involved essentially going and having briefings from the State Department Bureau of Intelligence and Research and the CIA every couple of weeks on subjects of mutual interest. One needed to be able to converse intelligently on pretty well any subject, not just the subjects I specifically covered. I liked to be able to get the broader picture.

It was always busy. But it was very rewarding. After all, this was the decade when the US really was the sole superpower. One did feel at the centre of world affairs.

Higher Command and Staff Course, JSSC Camberley, 1997

SR: So you had a good stint in Washington. You were there for four years.

TD: A bit more than four. Four and a half. Then we came back and, again, Vivien got a job (as head of the Management Review Staff) in London before me. I had three months on Special Unpaid Leave, getting the house straight and getting our older child into school. Then I did the Higher Command and Staff Course.

SR: How did that come about?

TD: Well, it was suggested to me by the Office. It was a course run by the MoD, intensive, basically for people who they expected to become generals. They had never had a Foreign Office person on it before. They had had civilians, but always Ministry of Defence civilians. I think we were learning the lessons, partly from the Balkans, that having people in the Diplomatic Service who are comfortable with dealing with the armed forces and understand what the armed forces are about was a useful thing. We hadn't previously seen it as anyone's career anchor necessarily.

So I was a guinea pig. This was at Camberley, indeed the last one before the Staff College moved out of Camberley. Other people on the course did indeed go on to do great things: Nick Houghton, who became Chief of the Defence Staff; a future Commandant of the Royal

Marines; and various future Admirals. It was very stimulating. The lecturers were extremely good, including Keith Simpson who subsequently became a Conservative MP and PPS for William Hague. Various historians, including the late Richard Holmes. There were some extremely good visiting speakers, including Tommy Franks who had been the General in charge of the ground forces for Operation Desert Storm under Schwarzkopf. Glynne Evans, indeed, came and talked to us about peacekeeping operations. From the point of view of networking in future positions, I found it very helpful.

SR: It's also quite nice just to be able to take a step back away from day-to-day activities and do some thinking.

TD: Exactly. Somewhere in the archives at Camberley is my essay on the use of air power in North Africa in 1942. And one on the failure of intelligence in the Yom Kippur war and cognitive dissonance, which has since stood me in great stead.

The Foreign Office had a slight tendency to regard my doing the Staff Course as having had my fun, so I wouldn't be able to do the year-long Royal College of Defence Studies course. The Staff Course was intensive, but only three months long.

Deputy Chief of the Assessments Staff, Cabinet Office 1997-98

Then I went from there to the Assessments Staff. I was one of the Deputy Chiefs. This was my first introduction to the Cabinet Office and the first time I had worked in a Department outside the Foreign Office. I had a small team of analysts responsible for producing assessments on the global proliferation of WMD, but also Russia and the former Soviet Union. The way that works is that the Assessments Staff are the tip of a pyramid: a point I've always made is that they shouldn't try to be the Whitehall expert on everything. They should be the intelligent customers for the experts' views. But it is not necessary to try and duplicate what you've got in the Foreign Office Research Analysts, the Defence Intelligence Staff or indeed the Agencies who have very deep subject expertise. What you need to be able to do is bring it together, challenge the experts and communicate, boil the information and the assessment down to something that is readily absorbed by a busy senior official or Minister. The JIC Chairman was initially Colin Budd and then Michael Pakenham, who added being JIC Secretary to my responsibilities as well. I found particularly dealing with the Russian issues was very interesting. It was coming to the end of the Yeltsin period and I did go to Moscow where we had lunch in the Ambassador's Residence with Boris Nemtsov and

Anatoly Chubais, two bright young reformers. Nemtsov was assassinated but Chubais is still around. It was still that period, towards the tail end pre-Putin, when we were on warm terms with Russia. There were a lot of things which seemed possible. Russian society was under huge strain, mainly for economic reasons. I have felt subsequently that had we done things differently in some ways, perhaps things would have worked out rather better. The mass privatisations which opened the door to huge corruption and gave rise to the oligarchs. Having previously been to Moscow in the very last months of the Soviet Union, going back in 1998 and staying in a hotel with a casino in the basement and the stretch BMWs and Mercedes with their tinted windows lined up outside, you felt it was a very different society. Oligarchs were having each other machine gunned on the ring road round Moscow as they fought over the spoils.

So it was a fascinating period. I became very interested in how we dealt with Russia. I did find myself wondering, just as in the early 50s there was this cry in America about who lost China, would there be a cry about who lost Russia?

I did that for about eighteen months. First of all, I was asked if I would be interested in being the Private Secretary to the Cabinet Secretary, Richard Wilson. In fact, I declined to run for that. The kids were still small and I thought I'd never see them, but I have slightly regretted not doing it ...

Head of Defence, Diplomacy and Intelligence Spending team, HM Treasury, 1999-2000

Then John Kerr suggested I should go for a job in the Treasury, Head of Defence, Diplomacy and Intelligence Spending. In other words the Foreign Office, Ministry of Defence and the Agencies' budget. John was keen to get a Foreign Office person into it, because he had done it back in the early 1980s, although at that point he only had the defence budget. I had got the taste for working outside the FCO, so I interviewed and got the job. I did it for two years, through a Spending Review. This was the early years of Gordon Brown as Chancellor. It was a very rewarding experience: I don't think I've ever worked as hard in my life! I had really quite a small team, about a dozen, covering a total of about £30 billion a year of public expenditure. Obviously, given the relative sizes of the budgets, defence was the one that really took the time. I learnt a huge amount about how Whitehall works. It's a bit like the Cabinet Office: in the Treasury, you feel you are at the centre of things.

They had, at that time, better internal IT than almost any other Department. The culture was very open internally within the Treasury. In an email, almost everybody is equal. In the Foreign Office you stick to your topics and if you're tempted to chip in on somebody else's subject, you do it with great reticence: "It's not my business strictly, but have you thought...?" Whereas in the Treasury, you got brownie points for doing that. People would be quite prepared to say, "I've got this tricky problem that's coming up. Has anybody come across this sort of thing before?" and would put it round on quite a wide distribution. Andrew Turnbull was the Permanent Secretary at the time and he would occasionally say, "Have you thought about this?" And I remember seeing some quite junior economists say, "Well, I've seen what Andrew Turnbull has said, but I think he's completely off beam!" I couldn't quite imagine that happening in the Foreign Office. So it was really rather refreshing.

That was, of course, all internal. That wasn't the way they treated the rest of Whitehall. Again, I remember going to a meeting between Geoffrey Robertson, the Economic Secretary and British Aerospace and, afterwards, saying to the Deputy Secretary in my Foreign Office way, "I'll just put round a short record of that and send it to the Foreign Office, the Ministry of Defence and the Cabinet Office." He said, "You will do nothing of the sort! In the Treasury, other Departments tell us what they are doing. We do not tell them what we are doing."

The other thing was ministerial correspondence. Anything to do with money was always copied to all the heads of the spending teams. So, again, you got a very broad picture of what interests government at the Cabinet level, what really energises them. Strikingly often it was not foreign affairs ...

So, culturally, it was very interesting. It is also useful, I think, to see yourselves as others see you. One of the first bits of paper I think I saw was a note saying that the Foreign Office was one of the least efficient of government Departments. I bristled: we had had ten years of tight budgets. It wasn't fair, actually. But the experience of the 2000 Spending Review made me see some of the things that were then - and it's changed since - wrong with the Foreign Office.

SR: Such as?

TD: This was a Spending Review for a three-year settlement. The way it worked was that at the very outset, Gordon Brown would agree with his senior advisers, both Treasury officials

and political advisers (and his political advisers were Ed Miliband and Ed Balls), the overall spending envelope. The total amount we had to play with. Then that got broadly divided up between the big spenders: the Foreign Office is not one. So you're talking about Health, Social Security, Defence and Education. And then all the other Departments were left to fight over what was left. So we agreed that we would aim to give Defence a real terms increase, though we didn't decide how much that would be. There was a very firm view from the Chancellor that that had to be offset by major efficiency savings. We'd just had a good Strategic Defence Review which had taken a long time and got really into depth. So really what we wanted Defence to deliver was settled and the MoD had quite a sophisticated system of saying that if you wanted that level of military delivery (I think it was two operations the size of Desert Storm for a short period, plus one minor operation), it would require a certain number of planes, ships and so on. The argument was all over how much that was going to cost.

With the Foreign Office, there wasn't really much argument about the money. The argument was about what was to be delivered. What are the Foreign Office priorities and objectives? This was the era of Public Service Agreements - remember those? Trying to get the Foreign Office to set some priorities was enormously difficult. Objectives even more so. There seemed to be a feeling that you couldn't reduce foreign policy to objectives or quantified priorities. Why do you have a High Commission in Tanzania? Well, you have it for good relations. It felt to me close to saying "We're here because we are here." That's what the Foreign Office was there for. Trying to get the FCO to agree to set out a coherent set of departmental objectives and parameters was really hard. I think it was partly that within the FCO itself, there was a great nervousness that if everybody didn't have an objective on the list, then somehow they wouldn't get any money at all. That wasn't the point. It was just a matter of setting some priorities.

SR: But the Office is a very different Department from, say, Education or Welfare.

TD: Yes. Some of it is more nebulous. But that doesn't mean it's impossible. I was just trying to get the management information. Could we find a set of objective criteria to decide how important every country in the world is to us? The number of British citizens there, bilateral trade, are they a treaty ally, how many British tourists go there. It didn't seem to me impossible to at least have a go at producing a set of criteria and see how that matched to how much we were actually spending on the diplomatic network. Which didn't mean if there

were discrepancies, that necessarily had to change. But there was huge reluctance to even start. It was felt to be rigid, bean counting. But it really wasn't because Gordon Brown was increasing public expenditure at the time, although he wasn't particularly keen on giving Prime Minister Blair more money to play with overseas. The idea of having some sort of rational basis for how you spend money didn't seem a bad one. I was converted very much to management by objectives and came back to the FCO afterwards and introduced it really quite energetically to my department.

The intelligence Agencies were all different. They all approached it in a different way. The Security Service was very keen to show me all their modern management methods and how good they were at introducing efficiencies. SIS more or less said give us the money and don't ask us what we do with it. And GCHQ, very much project managers, said that we could not manage without them: they were building new headquarters at the time. That gave me one of my biggest headaches as it went vastly over budget in a bit of a failure of project management. But the final result was a real success and a great improvement on their previous buildings.

Other things that came up during my time in the Treasury. Specific defence projects which largely came down to questions of whether you bought European or American. The Treasury view generally was that you got more bang for your buck by buying American. The Foreign Office, supported by Number 10, who wanted to have Britain at the heart of Europe, wanted to go for European collaborative projects. I tried to get us to withdraw from the Airbus transport plane by offering the RAF quite a considerable number of C-17s. The RAF was very keen to do that. But we were overruled in the end by Tony Blair which meant that the RAF ended up getting the C-17s anyway as Airbus was so long delayed. Equally, though, domestic politics come into these things as well. Ro-ro ships for the Royal Navy should have been built in German shipyards for best value for money, but Gordon Brown was very keen they should be built on the Clyde. So the politics of defence procurement was an interesting experience. And we were also going through defence industry restructuring at the time: essentially should BAE Systems get into partnership with the Europeans or the Americans? Their inclination was clearly to get into partnership with the Americans. The political desire in Whitehall, certainly coming from Number 10 and very much from the Foreign Office, was to push them into partnership with EADS, the European alternative. There was a terrible Cabinet Committee that I used to go and sit on, where I would occasionally have to put up my flag and say, "All I'm saying is, if you make BAE Systems do something they don't think

is in their shareholders' best interest, then someone is going to pay the price for that. It won't be them. It will be us, HMG." In the end BAE Systems took their own decision and prioritised the US market while keeping some European partnerships.

The greatest pressure was probably during the Kosovo War with shades of Desert Storm, again. There was a morning meeting at the MoD where I used to go and sit in the back row to obtain a bit of inside information as to what was going on. It was one of the few times I saw Gordon Brown face-to-face. (I generally dealt with the Chief Secretary who was initially Alan Milburn and then Stephen Byers.) This was when it looked as though we might have a ground war. We deployed ground forces to Macedonia but the hope was that an air campaign alone would do the trick. It was very doubtful whether the Clinton Administration would join in a ground war. Tony Blair was pushing very hard. At that point, I got hauled in to Gordon Brown's office and he asked me what was going to happen. He was clearly very informed, referring to various articles he had recently read. He'd fire these questions at you in a very staccato way.

As it happened, we didn't have a ground war. But the Treasury take on this was interesting: it was very clear we couldn't be in a position where anybody said the troops weren't getting what they needed because the Treasury wasn't paying the bill. We had a pretty efficient system set up for urgent operational requirements, though the MoD did try it on now and again for things that clearly weren't going to be available until eighteen months after the war. One of the things that concerned me most was to make sure that we fully funded winter quarters for the troops in Kosovo. In Bosnia, there'd been a lot of criticism that the troops had to live in a canning factory in their sleeping bags during the Bosnian winter. Indeed, the MoD took me round Bosnia to show me the appalling conditions they'd had to endure. So we funded the winter quarters for the troops in Kosovo very early on.

Then, at the end of the Spending Review, we ended up in an eyeball to eyeball confrontation with the Chiefs of Staff, under Charles Guthrie. The thing I learned from that, again, was that the argument is always at the margins. The great bulk of public expenditure goes ahead: we ended up arguing with the MoD over, I think, £140 million. On a three-year settlement of about £80 billion, this was not really very significant. Rather extraordinary. It was largely to do with the fact that the Chiefs of Staff objected to any portion of clean-up from our nuclear programme being met by the defence budget. They had benefited from the nuclear programme, from the deterrent. But they decided to dig their heels in on that, so we gave

them £140 million for smart bombs. Apparently one of the problems was that you couldn't bomb through clouds with our bombs in Kosovo: the smart bombs would work through clouds. There's always a back pocket to find bit of money... So that was the deal we did. The problem had been that Geoff Hoon had signed off on a settlement with Gordon Brown and had then come back the following day to say that his Chiefs of Staff wouldn't accept it. Gordon Brown really went through the roof about that: he asked who was running the country, the civilians or the military. So he then had a meeting with Charles Guthrie and eventually they did the deal after Guthrie had been to Number 10 to see Tony Blair. The settlement letter that went out from the Treasury said that the Chancellor 'had agreed with Sir Charles Guthrie that the Ministry of Defence settlement will be ...' Making a point!

So it was a very interesting insight, actually. You do feel are in a privileged position in a Department like the Treasury as you get an insight into everything that government is doing, perhaps to put the Foreign Office and foreign affairs into perspective.

SR: So you spent two years at the Treasury?

TD: Yes, two years.

Head of Non-Proliferation (latterly Counter-Proliferation) Department, FCO, 2001-03

SR: And then what?

TD: Then back to the FCO to be Head of what was initially Non-Proliferation Department (NPD). I changed the name to Counter-Proliferation Department (CPD), really because I felt that Non-Proliferation didn't capture what we were trying to do and made it sound rather static, as if we were trying to hold the status quo. Actually, the problem we were facing at that time was that proliferation was happening, in a number of really worrying places. I remember Michael Jay also agreeing that we should change the name. He said that he always thought that any Department with 'Non' in its name was a bit of a turnoff when people were thinking about going to work there! So I wanted to reflect the fact that we were being more proactive. So the name was changed from NPD to CPD. It was actually the Department I had worked in as Deputy Head, ten years earlier. It had been very focused on international treaties: the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention - indeed there had been some successes in getting a Chemical Weapons Convention agreed in the aftermath of the first Gulf War and there had been a big push in the mid-90s to make the Non-Proliferation Treaty almost universal, largely led by the

UK. But proliferation was still happening. We were very concerned about North Korea, Iraq, Libya, Iran. Then there were India and Pakistan: we were concerned they might use their nuclear weapons on each other. Indeed they had a conflict that could have gone nuclear quite easily in early 2002, after the Kargil trouble.

My feeling was that we should become more proactive outside the traditional diplomatic treaty framework and this coincided with the arrival of the George W Bush Administration. We were concerned that they would start to unpick the non-proliferation treaties framework, as John Bolton was notoriously a sceptic. Partly to demonstrate that we were their best friends and also that we were hard-nosed people prepared to be really tough when necessary, but also in an attempt to get sufficient credibility to also carry weight when we said that the treaty frameworks were important as well. So, in addition to the work we were doing to strengthen the treaties, we then started putting more effort into things like developing sanctions regimes and discussing circumstances in which enforcement action could be taken like intercepting ships carrying suspicious cargoes on the high seas. This also led to working closely with the intelligence Agencies: almost everything we knew about other countries' WMD programmes came from intelligence.

We developed what we called the Counter Proliferation Toolbox, which went from international treaty regimes to export control regimes to use of economic, political and diplomatic sanctions all the way through to, in extremis, military action consistent with international law. I don't think we'd ever set it out like that in a comprehensive way before. It was all with the aim of, essentially, affecting the cost/benefit calculation that the proliferator makes. Even Gaddafi must make that sort of calculation: is the game worth the candle, whether it is financial candle or other forms of candle? The trick is to reduce the benefits and raise the costs. It could be a diplomatic cost.

One of the other things there was a lot of controversy over was the American plan for missile defence. You could put missile defence into the calculation: if people think their WMD can't be delivered to the adversary because the missile defence will work, then why would they bother to develop it in the first place? We had an all-embracing approach and a strategy which included the intelligence Agencies, the MoD, the Cabinet Office. The Foreign Office led. It was very rewarding. Actually, I still like to think that we did manage to roll back a bit of proliferation. We took down AQ Khan and his private enterprise nuclear supply network. We exposed the North Korean cheating, although that was really mainly the Americans who

did it. We did the deal with the Libyans which was finally announced a month after I finished at the end of 2003. There were only about three of us in the Foreign Office who knew about the secret negotiations with Gaddafi: it was kept very tight. We knew that if there was a leak, some people in Washington might try to sabotage it. There was a very awkward moment when our little negotiating team was flying in to Libya for talks in about September 2003. It was all supposed to be extremely secret, so we hadn't briefed our embassy in Tripoli at all. The RAF asked for diplomatic clearance for the flight, by asking the Defence Attaché to arrange it! I got a rather excited Ambassador on the phone to me asking what on earth was going on. I had to tell him he didn't need to know: he didn't take it very well at all.

Iraq hung over quite a lot of it. 9/11 made a big difference. I remember coming into the office: the first thing I used to do was to put the TV on. That day I was just in time to see the second plane crash into the World Trade Center. I called William Ehrman, who was the Assistant Under Secretary and told him he ought to have his TV on. We immediately felt that this was an attack by Al Qaeda. The psychological impact was enormous. It affected everything. Suddenly, things that we had thought were just impossible seemed possible. We'd had bits of reporting that there were Pakistani nuclear scientists working for bin Laden and someone had seen some radioactive material in some hut in Afghanistan. We had hitherto treated that as rubbish. But suddenly we began to think that it could be happening. Who knew what was going on in Afghanistan? I do think that coloured a lot subsequently. Of course, Chilcot has been through this in great depth. But the idea that we absolutely had to start drawing lines, that the rules of what was tolerable had changed ... I'm sure that was very much in Tony Blair's mind. It did not seem so implausible.

I remember during the first week after 9/11, planes were banned from flying over London. The first day that they started again, I looked up into the sky over Whitehall, saw a plane and wondered to myself what it was going to do. It was not a good way to feel. I suddenly found myself going to a lot of international meetings where the discussion was all about having to do more about terrorism and WMD. Eventually, some of the heat went out, but not for a long time.

The Canadians had the Presidency of the G8, so I was almost commuting to Ottawa for a while. I went to the G8 summit at Kananaskis, the first one that the Russians had attended. The main reason I was there was that we were trying to give the Russians \$40 billion of G7

money to help them with nuclear clean-up, dismantling their nuclear warheads and putting the radioactive and fissile material to more peaceful purposes. It was a major programme and the Russians were trying to put conditions on it. Basically, the whole plan was to convert it into fuel for nuclear reactors for energy purposes. We thought there were commercial opportunities for British Nuclear Fuels in this. The Russians wanted any dispute to be dealt with under Russian law: no one was going to agree to that. It was a fascinating summit. We were at Kananaskis, in the Canadian Rockies. It was the first summit after 9/11. There were jets patrolling overhead and you had to go through about ten checkpoints on the road from Calgary Airport. At this resort, the leaders were all cocooned with their staffs. Round every corner was a Mountie in full dress uniform. Every now and again, a rather glum little crocodile of press was led in for a press spokesman meeting and then led out again to where ever they were staying. It had a slightly surreal feeling to it.

In the negotiations, the Russians really didn't understand the G7. They treated the communiqué as a sort of international agreement to be negotiated in every line, whereas hitherto in the G7 the communiqués were generally agreed on the line of 'We all understand each other so we'll let the chair produce some language.' Not totally informal, but a more relaxed feeling. Suddenly, this became really quite tedious. The Russians argued over almost every line. I was very impressed to see John Bolton at work. There was a very hard faced ex-Soviet lead negotiator for the nuclear clean-up programme who had a very Soviet style of negotiating. I've always rather worked on the basis that the last man standing is the one who gets their way. So we got to about one in the morning and pretty much everyone else had gone to bed. Bolton was still there, going backwards and forwards with this rather difficult Russian, Mr Antonov. My job was to provide solidarity with our principal partner. Bolton had enormous patience. He didn't once raise his voice or lose his temper. Very courteous all the time, but absolutely relentless. In the end, we did reach an agreement, which fell apart in later years.

There was a lot of international travelling. I think I had more air miles than almost anybody else in the Foreign Office in that year 2002-2003, whether it was Buenos Aires for the Missile Technology Control Regime or Beijing several times to try to persuade them to sign up to various international agreements. At one time I did have a platinum Virgin Atlantic card! But the ruling then came in that you had to use your air miles in the public service.

SR: I think you met Hans Blix and Mohammed el-Baradei?

TD: Yes, in the run-up to Iraq. When we got the inspectors into Iraq, UNMOVIC as it had then become, Blix came over several times. William Ehrman and I would generally see him. All completely amicable. My main concern was to make sure that we were providing sufficient experts for his teams. Having worked so hard to get the inspectors back in, we really did want to make a success of it. Everyone has their own myth about Iraq. I remember saying to one of the members of the Chilcot Inquiry that their job was to identify the myth that was closest to reality. Perhaps mine is as much of a myth as anyone else's. Having been involved in signing off on the famous dossier in September 2002, I actually wrote to Chilcot to say that none of us thought it was making a case for war: it was making a case for doing something. The something, as far as I was concerned, was getting the inspectors back into Iraq. I always thought that it was a fairly slim chance that we could avoid having a war. I didn't have high confidence that Saddam would cooperate. But if he really had, we might have avoided it. Having got the UN Resolution to get the inspectors back, I was then struck that the Americans said that the first thing they wanted to investigate was Saddam's most secret Palace, to turn it upside down. I recall saying to Peter (Ricketts) and William Ehrman, "Can I just be clear? Are these inspectors there to create a *casus belli*? Or are they there actually to try and find something?" They were very deadpan in their response: "Your job is to get the UN Security Council Resolution implemented." It did seem to me that if you wanted to actually provoke the Iraqis into closing it down again, having the inspectors go and look in Saddam's sock drawer was probably a good way of doing it.

Then, in the last three months up to the invasion, there was a sort of constant drumbeat of reporting on various channels. If we hadn't got ourselves in a mindset that the stuff was there, somewhere, we might have been a bit more sceptical about it. But it all reinforced ... they moved this missile from here to there so the inspectors wouldn't find it ... the source was probably not very good, but it all fitted the picture we had. There was so much of it. I remember having a conversation with Peter (Ricketts) in late March. He asked me if I thought we were going to find the WMD. I can remember my answer almost word for word: "It may not be as much as we think it is, but I cannot believe there could be so much smoke without some fire." Indeed, I had a whole international information campaign ready to say, "Look at what we found. Now do you understand? Proliferation is a real problem. The world must come together to prevent it."

We did find some things. UNMOVIC found some missile engines that the intelligence told us were there - and there they were. We found some documents about nuclear developments

that intelligence had told us were there. That kind of reinforced our belief that it all must be true. We got the chemical and biological wrong because the intelligence was wrong. Chilcot has gone through it. But we did believe it. And the last few weeks before the invasion, at the close of the endgame in the Security Council, I was beavering away with Stephen Pattison, the Head of United Nations Department, trying to produce a set of benchmarks that we could impose, such as providing scientists to be interviewed outside Iraq. The benchmarks had to be not impossible for Saddam to meet, but equally would not let him off the hook. In the end, it came to nothing because the French weren't willing to agree to anything.

I found it slightly frustrating when preparing to give evidence to the Chilcot Inquiry: a lot of this was all done by email. How times have changed! The Foreign Office provided two huge ring binders of every document they could find that had my name on. But they were the formal documents. What was missing a lot of the time was the email chain; in a way it's the glue that binds the narrative together. I'm afraid future historians are going to have this problem. It's not so much the document as what someone has scribbled on top of it that is the interesting thing.

SR: Would you just like to say something about the terribly sad case of David Kelly?

TD: Yes, it was very sad. The Foreign Office paid his salary, though he was line managed from the Ministry of Defence. I did meet him several times in the period before the war. He was advising on how the UN inspectors might go about their business. After the invasion, we were looking to him for advice on how to go about the search for the WMD that we were still confident we would find. I had relatively little to do with him directly, though others in CPD did at the working level. When the furore blew up over the BBC story of sexing up of the dossier, I think he wasn't the first person who came to mind as the source of that, although we did begin to wonder. I had actually, as it turns out, raised the question as to whether he could get an honour when the usual trawl for the New Year Honours came round. I sent a note to my deputy, suggesting an OBE for David Kelly, not knowing that he already had one. This bit of paper got seized on by the Evening Standard, who reported that Kelly was recommended for a knighthood. Not what I had in mind. They managed to work out it was me.

It was very tragic. I had correspondence with his wife who was very dignified. He was very conscious of his position and his standing and I think the prospect of being exposed as the source and the retribution that would come ... I speculate. We were all very upset.

The other thing that I should perhaps just touch on was that, in addition to the weapons of mass destruction, the other subject that CPD was responsible for was arms export policy. Largely applying European guidelines on arms exports. The section handling the arms export licences was probably the largest single bit of the Department, although it wasn't what occupied most of my time. But it's worth mentioning because we did two reviews of how we in the Foreign Office handled arms export licences, both at the request of the Foreign Secretary. One from Robin Cook and one from Jack Straw. On both occasions we came up with the same result, but for different reasons. Robin Cook was concerned that the decision-making was done by geographical departments who, he thought, suffered from 'clientitis' and were far too keen for purposes of bilateral relations about signing off on arms exports. He wanted the system to be much more centralised and more power to be given to CPD to make sure the guidelines were rigidly applied. Jack Straw thought that the geographical departments were much too influenced by human rights lobbyists and the licensing process overall worked much too slowly. So, for exactly the opposite reason to Robin Cook, he thought there should be more power given to the centre, not to bend the guidelines or to apply them less rigidly but to speed things up. Both of them, for diametrically opposite reasons, thought that there needed to be more of a grip on it from the centre.

It's interesting that Robin Cook thought the geographical departments too ready to sell, whereas Jack Straw thought they were too cautious. That suggests to me that they probably got it about right!

I have to say we never really got criticism from industry about the decisions that were taken. The complaints were always about how long it took to reach decisions. The licences were issued by what was then the Department of Trade and Industry. The Ministry of Defence and the Foreign Office had a role. Sometimes these things were exceptionally complicated. Bits of technical kit can have multiple uses so often you had to look to intelligence to tell you about where it was going to end up. It could often take time to apply the system.

The Department at the time was the largest frontline Foreign Office Department. We had about fifty people.

I would also like to mention that we did also have a profoundly deaf and dumb Muslim member of staff. A number of us learned at least rudimentary Sign Language as a result. She was working on the export licensing. Because most of that was keyboard work, she managed perfectly well. It was the first time that I had had a disabled member of staff in my team.

**Chief of the Assessments Staff (latterly Director, Central Intelligence Assessment),
Cabinet Office; Member of the JIC, 2003-09**

SR: So now we move on to your next job when you became Chief of the Assessments Staff. You went back to the Cabinet Office.

TD: Yes, I became Head of the unit where I had previously been a Deputy. John Scarlett was the JIC Chairman. I had five Deputies including an army officer, someone from DFID and someone from the Foreign Office. The Assessments Staff draws people from all over. We did try to look for people with relevant backgrounds but when we were recruiting new members of staff, we looked primarily for people who could absorb a large amount of information and make sense of it and people who could write. The average JIC assessment probably goes through more layers of supervision and revision than almost anything else. A little bit like Foreign Office documents were when I first joined. One of the first things I would say to new desk officers was, "Please don't fall in love with your own language. It will get changed. By all means defend what you're saying, but don't think it's a terrible blow to your ego if your wonderful words are amended!" We used to give people a test. It was probably the only place in Whitehall to do that. They would get three or four fake intelligence reports and had to summarise them in three paragraphs, drawing out the main points. We hadn't got time to teach people on the job. There is an art in getting the key messages across. A busy minister is often only going to read the front page summary, rather than the three pages behind it.

We expanded quite quickly, because this was in the aftermath of Iraq. I spent most of the first year in the job being inquired into, first by Robin Butler and his team and then there was the tail end of the Hutton Inquiry as well.

It remains the most stimulating job I've ever had. Partly, it's being in a Department which is at the centre of things. It was a very good time, if you're interested in foreign affairs, defence and security, to be at the Cabinet Office, because Tony Blair was Prime Minister and that was where the action was. I think the Foreign Office at that time was a kind of implementing Department: it was not where the driving force was particularly coming from. In the Assessments Staff, although you are supposed to be serving Whitehall as a whole and the Cabinet as a whole, you become very focused on Number 10. Nigel Sheinwald had just taken

over as the Foreign Policy Adviser. One of his Assistant Private Secretaries was Matthew Rycroft, another was David Quarrey. So there was a very high-powered team in Number 10. One was in and out of Number 10 a lot. One saw the Prime Minister not infrequently: he had enormous charisma. I was very struck the first time I met him that he was much bigger than I had imagined: he really had a rugby player's physique. I had never come across anybody who could just dominate the room as soon as he came in, just by sheer force of personality. He was very charming with it. Having had my first briefing session with him, a week or ten days later I passed him in the corridor in Number 10. He greeted me with, "Hi, Tim". I was very impressed he had remembered my name. A good politician's trick. So I remain an enormous fan, actually.

One did feel very much at the centre of things. There was a lot going on internationally. I still hold the record as the longest serving Chief of the Assessments Staff. The job was created in 1968 and I was there for five and a half years. Throughout that time we had military engagement in Iraq, we had military engagement in Afghanistan, we had the 2006 Israel/Lebanon conflict, and of course international terrorism was a huge issue - the 7/7 bombings which involved 24/7 crisis working for two months afterwards. COBRs were quite a frequent occurrence including after the Litvinenko case. And you had the whole world to play with. As the Chief of the Assessments Staff, I very much enjoyed both producing the work programme and trying to make sure that the JIC agenda matched the national and departmental priorities. Although we had this system which meant that every paper is supposed to be sponsored by a Department so we could show the Treasury we were not a self-perpetuating oligarchy, quite often the policy departments don't really know what they need. In practice, quite a lot of the time, one would go to the Foreign Office, the Ministry of Defence or sometimes to what was then the Overseas and Defence Secretariat in the Cabinet Office to ask if a paper on a particular subject might be a good idea. Sometimes it wrote itself. Once a month you needed to do papers on the political and military situation in Iraq and a paper on the situation in Afghanistan every three months. So those were regulars. But, beyond that, there was a certain degree of freedom in what one could choose: to a degree, one was setting an agenda.

A lot of the time, JIC papers don't provide great revelations. Again, I think it was Jack Straw who said that the trouble with JIC papers was that they rarely told him what he couldn't read in the Economist. To which I thought the answer was that it was reassuring that the intelligence community thought the Economist had got it right. Where it really comes into its

own, in some ways, is on more technical subjects such as covert nuclear programmes. We were always being asked how long it would be before Iran got nuclear weapons. I had been involved as Head of CPD in launching the European initiative that eventually became the E3+3 initiative on Iran's nuclear programme and had gone with Jack Straw to Tehran in October 2003 to launch negotiations for that. I had written the submission that said we needed to change their cost/benefit calculation. So it was personally very good to be able to continue to follow all that through.

Ministers have said, and I largely agree, that as far as the political judgements are concerned - what's in the mind of Kim Jong-un, for example - your guess is as good as mine, really. The JIC's comfort zone is more when there's a bit of hard material to go on, technical assessments of weapons systems and that sort of thing. Nevertheless, it gave one a seat at the table for pretty well all the major strategic defence and security and foreign policy meetings. So I would go to the Afghan Strategy Group, the Iraq Strategy Group. It was frustrating when we would come up with a strategy and then, six months later, ministers would say that it didn't seem to be delivering and so the strategy must be changed. You have to give things time.

I very much remember going to a COBR meeting on Afghanistan, in late 2006, I think. Sherard Cowper-Coles was the Ambassador in Kabul linked in by video link. He said, "Well, of course you do know that to achieve what we are trying to achieve in Afghanistan, we're probably talking about twenty or twenty-five years in getting the Afghan government and its security forces and the administration in a place where it can effectively run the country by itself?" Just seeing the faces of the Ministers ... their jaws dropping! This was not what they wanted to hear. Long-term commitments are not what the electorate want and not what government ministers want. Equally, they may be what circumstances require. If you're not prepared to stick it out, then you shouldn't go in in the first place. If I have a criticism of Iraq, I didn't think we were wrong ... I always thought that if we hadn't overthrown Saddam when we did, we'd have faced it in three or four years' time, probably in much more difficult circumstances. I think we went into it with absolutely honourable motives. I thought that at the time and I still do. Where you can criticise it is that we then didn't put the effort into the aftermath, the 'day after' thinking. We kind of assumed that the Americans had got it all worked out.

SR: It's very hard to get politicians engaged in anything other than the short term though, isn't it?

TD: Well, yes. I did think Tony Blair was more visionary on these things, actually, and did think long-term. Where I would criticise him is that he willed the end but not the means: we were running two pretty significant military engagements in Whitehall on a shoestring. I can't remember who it was who said that we were fighting a war but pretending that we were not, in domestic terms. That was very difficult ... the arguments over resourcing. It was being managed with an extraordinarily small number of people at the centre, trying to coordinate. With Iraq, I had quite a lot of problems getting information back from the theatre to know really what was going on on the ground. We used to keep our military commanders on a rather shorter string than the Americans. I learned that from the first Gulf War. One of the big issues when we began in 1991 was getting battle damage reports which in London we were very keen to see: what effect has this had, how many tanks have been destroyed. There were satellite pictures, but they weren't coming out of General Schwarzkopf's headquarters. We were climbing the walls as we had ministers wanting to know what was going on! We go to the Americans and ask them to get Schwarzkopf to send the pictures back. But they looked rather blank and asked us why we wanted to know. Schwarzkopf was the man in charge. He had been told that his job was to liberate Kuwait and they were letting him get on with it. They didn't want to have the long screwdriver from London or from Washington. But that wasn't the way we tended to operate: we had much tighter control of our theatre commander from joint headquarters. Again, it was a difference of approach. Although I wasn't involved, I gather rather similar issues came up during the Libya campaign with attempts to have a long screwdriver from COBR which had to be resisted in the end. It could be a bit frustrating at times. Both Iraq and Afghanistan, but perhaps less so with Afghanistan. I think we had pretty good information there. I had some military officers on the Assessments Staff and they had their own contacts through to people in the theatre. So we did have some back channel information.

It was rewarding. To be in the room where it happened.

SR: Just like the song in 'Hamilton'!

TD: Exactly. You asked me at the outset why I joined the Foreign Office. That was also part of it. Apart from the interest in international affairs, there are things going on, people are taking decisions. I wanted to know why. I wanted to be in the room where it happened. Of

course, you don't really get to be in the room where it happened. I thought, at one point, when I was Chief of the Assessments Staff, I had managed to penetrate to the innermost circle of Hell. I was up in Tony Blair's flat at Number 11 with baby Leo's toys around the floor. We were discussing the outcome of the Butler Inquiry. Dave Hill, the Number 10 press spokesman, and Jonathan Powell were there. We were discussing what the recommendations were likely to be ... and then the point came when the Prime Minister said, "If the officials would just like to go now? Can you ask Anji [Hunter] to come in?" So there is always another door to another room!

It's slightly surprising to me, in some ways, given what happened over Iraq, that the JIC did manage to keep its international credibility really very well. Not just with the close allies, but other countries were very interested in how we did things. I always used to say that the way we do central intelligence assessment is something that suits us and wouldn't necessarily suit anyone else. It suits our bureaucratic culture. We do it by consensus. When the Americans produce their National Intelligence Estimate, it's full of footnotes saying we think this but one agency judges it differently. I used to get CIA trainees visiting the UK. They would be amazed when I told them that in the best part of ten years of dealing with JIC, I had only once come across a dissenting judgement. They found this almost unbelievable. I think that it's partly our natural bureaucratic instinct, as officials, to present a united front to the politicians. In the US system, all their fault lines are vertical between Departments and Agencies. (The only point at which I appeared in the BBC 'True Brits' programme was on my way to Capitol Hill, saying that the American process of foreign policy was a system of competitive tension). Of course there are differences here between Departments, but you tend to try and sort those out, out of sight. Our fault line is really between the political level and the civil servants. That works for us, but it wouldn't necessarily work for anyone else. I was sent off to advise the government of Georgia about how they might restructure their intelligence system, on a JIC basis. I talked to all the people who were not involved in providing intelligence to the President of Georgia: they all thought our system was fantastic. Consensus. Everyone doing it collectively. Marvellous! Then I talked to the Minister of Interior who was the one who was responsible for providing intelligence to the President. He gave me about a minute and a half and then passed me onto his staff. Clearly, nothing was going to change: information is power. The Poles did try consciously to set up a system based on ours, but it didn't last. It fell down because of political rivalries. Even our close allies like the US or Australia don't have our system.

The JIC was invented in 1936. It has got a certain kind of history and has evolved. I still think it's a good system. Where it fell down ... I think Butler was right to say it wasn't the system that was wrong. The system wasn't applied as it was supposed to be. If you actually use the JIC machinery correctly, there are multiple layers of challenge built in. But we all got into a collective mindset over the Iraq WMD where we didn't challenge ourselves enough. It's one of the most difficult things to get over. Even knowing what we had done - and I set up a challenge team in the Assessments Staff to specifically look across the board and ask difficult questions about other things and we set up what we thought were safeguards - I think we fell into the same trap again in 2006-7. We got ourselves into a mindset, not just in the Staff but right across Whitehall, that nothing was ever going to go right again in Iraq. There was quite a lot of basis for that. The civil war was increasingly sectarian, getting worse and worse. But we had this view that whatever we did, it would all end in tears. I think the military were not averse to that conclusion, because they were very keen to get out and go to one they thought they could win - Afghanistan. So what happened was when General Petraeus said they would have a surge of American military to really turn things round, we looked at that said, "Well, it might have a short-term effect, but they won't be able to keep it up. And it won't really make changes." But, in fact, it did make a difference. When coming together with the Sunni awakening, the reaction against the extremists (which we had identified was happening, but we didn't give it enough weight), we fell into that trap again of getting into a particular mindset. Cognitive dissonance I think is the technical term: my mind is made up, don't confuse me with fact. It's the most difficult thing. As I say, even if we had challenged ourselves to look at the evidence for the judgement, we probably would still have come out where we did. But I'm not sure we did it enough, even then. And, in some respects, that was because of a reaction against what had gone before... In Iraq in particular, let's not pretend to ourselves that we are going to achieve what we want.

So I learnt quite a lot. I thought the Foreign Office didn't perhaps put quite as much effort into the JIC as it could have done. The Research Analysts were great. The policy desk officers who would come to current Intelligence Groups were often quite disappointing in their contributions, I thought. Even the Foreign Office representatives at the JIC were more inclined to ask a question, "But what about this?" rather than offering a view. I rather looked to the Foreign Office to give us an informed view. Again, we were still somewhat in that period when I think the Foreign Office lost its mojo a bit. Number 10 would tell us what to do and then we would go and do it very effectively, rather than producing ideas. I thought

when we changed from Blair to Brown, there was an opportunity there for the Foreign Office to reassert itself. But it was quite slow to do so. There was a market for original thinking, but the FCO still wanted to be told what Number 10 wanted. That was from my viewpoint, but I suppose it may have felt very different if you were sitting in King Charles Street. As in the Treasury, it was very difficult to find out just what Gordon Brown was thinking as Prime Minister. You would put in a set of papers for him each week that the JIC had agreed with a cover note, usually from me, about the points of discussion where there was a bit of controversy or the Americans didn't really take the same view. They'd come back from Blair with marginalia all over them, question marks and occasionally questions. There was almost never anything like that from Brown. But there'd been a sort of shakeup anyway with moving the Foreign Affairs Adviser out of Number 10 into the Cabinet Office when Simon MacDonald took it over, as part of the supposed reaction to 'sofa governments' and mixing up of officials and political advisers.

After John Scarlett went off to be Chief of SIS, my Chairman was William Ehrman who did it for a year. Then Richard Mottram took over: he was a joy to work for because he basically let me get on with it. He chaired meetings brilliantly with a light touch. We would sit down with the Chairman before the meeting and run through the papers. He would unerringly put his finger on the weak point in the argument. I used to get really closely involved in the late version of the paper. I would let the staff do the earlier drafts, but the one that went to the JIC I would get very involved in. Richard would always point out the sentence that I had been a bit nervous about! Then Alex Allan took over from him and unexpectedly had a medical crisis soon afterwards. So for most of 2008 he was out of action. So I was Director General temporarily: I did everything except chair the meetings.

Director, Intelligence and National Security, FCO, 2009-11

SR: And then you went on to three different jobs, all newly created ones. Is that a record?

TD: Probably. Initially, it was Director, Intelligence and National Security. They had tried to fill the job of Head of Whitehall Liaison Department (WLD) and couldn't. So there was a gap and they needed to get somebody in to cover that. At the same time, issues around intelligence and intelligence policy were becoming quite a big topic. The feeling was that you needed somebody more senior than a Deputy Director to supervise this under the Director General (at the time, Mariot Leslie), partly because some of the job is giving advice to the Foreign Secretary on warrants and approvals for sensitive intelligence operations.

Some of the things we were having to give advice on were very sensitive indeed. The volume was going up as well. It's gone up a lot more since. There were some big and difficult issues about rendition, mistreatment of detainees and various repeated enquiries into the subject. They'd found it difficult to fill the Deputy Director post, so Mariot came to me and asked if I would be interested doing it at Director level. I'd been finding it quite difficult to get back into the FCO after five and a half years away. The trouble was that for almost anything I applied for, people tended to look at my CV and regard intelligence as a sort of niche role. I found it quite difficult to persuade the FCO that it wasn't a niche role: I had been dealing with foreign, defence and security policy, relating to the entire world and I thought I should get some credit for that. But it just really didn't tick enough boxes. In addition, for someone going for a Director job, the Director level job of Chief of the Assessments Staff didn't look as if you had a very big chain of command. Again, I probably only had about fifty people working for me. There was a feeling that perhaps I hadn't got sufficient senior management experience. So that was a bit of a hurdle.

So I accepted Mariot's offer. It got me back into the FCO. It gave me a pretty broad range of responsibilities. I did feel I had a certain degree of knowledge and credibility with the intelligence community. Certainly, there was a sense at that time, particularly with SIS and the Security Service and there was a growing body of work concerning alleged rendition and there was a need for more input from Whitehall in dealing with this issue not only from ministers but also from the Foreign Office institutionally. Peter (Ricketts) will recall that when he was Permanent Secretary, we did make quite a conscious effort to improve our relationship. We went to talk to the Security Service. And I had quite a number of long heart to hearts with opposite numbers in Vauxhall Cross about how to get our relationship on a better footing again. It was, by then, a long time after the Cold War. I had spent the first ten years of my career in the Cold War and, particularly with SIS, we sort of regarded ourselves as joined at the hip. Now, first, the international terrorism issue meant their main customer for a huge amount of what they did was no longer the Foreign Office. Terrorism was a Home Office responsibility. The Office of Security and Counter Terrorism had been set up and a lot of what they were doing was really focused on that. They'd got other customers – DFID wanted to look after the safety of their programmes overseas and things like that. At the same time, the Foreign Office had become a campaigning Department, notably under Margaret Beckett on climate change. There was a lot of effort, and David Miliband continued that, on things for which, frankly, secret intelligence didn't have much to offer.

We were once asked to do a JIC paper on the impact of climate change on international security. I turned it down, because I didn't think we really had anything useful to offer. You could say at that time that the climate was definitely changing, but the science hadn't advanced enough to tell us how it was going to change in any particular region of the world. Would London disappear under an iceberg *à la* The Day After Tomorrow movie, or would we enjoy the fine wines of North Yorkshire? It was summed up for me by a comment on the huge impact of climate change on the Horn of Africa: it will either suffer from vast desertification or it will have massive flooding and monsoons. Either of which would clearly have security implications. But before producing an assessment I'd like to know which. So the things that the Foreign Office had become very active and very effective at - we were a real leader internationally, I think, campaigning internationally on climate change. But there wasn't much that secret intelligence could offer. At the same time, Afghanistan and Iraq meant that particularly SIS had recruited quite a lot of ... well not exactly paramilitary people, but young chaps with shaven heads with firearms training. They were mainly providing security for others.

So, for various reasons, there was some drifting apart and less understanding. I remember Nicola Brewer, when she was Head of Southern Africa Department, saying she thought that some of her staff were scared of intelligence. If they read an intelligence report on the then extremely clunky IT that looked important, what should they do with it? How did they do something with it? If they did the wrong thing, would they find themselves breaching the Official Secrets Act? So there was a nervousness around. Our generation never felt that. We did make quite a conscious effort to try and improve things. We got senior officers to come to talk to staff at the FCO, we tried to set up more exchange programmes. But it was quite difficult because people were very busy. We also looked at the regularity of briefings between FCO staff and the agencies, in both directions. This was particularly useful to Ambassadors going to post. My opposite number at Vauxhall Cross and I did a joint note with a set of recommendations to formalise these improvements. Some of them were accepted. There was a bit of a tendency for everyone to say that the real problem was IT which was clunky and difficult to use. It was just something that we needed to keep working at.

There was quite a lot of work involved in dealing with the warrantry. It was my reintroduction to things like the tension between security and privacy. I remember talking to David Miliband about a proposal that had come up which was very much justified on national

security grounds - it was largely to do with support of the police in dealing with serious crime that would have involved some assistance from GCHQ. I commented that it would be politically rather sensitive as it could be seen as really expanding intrusion into individual privacy. He was very dismissive. “Oh, you civil servants here in your Whitehall bubble! I don’t think you understand just what the average member of the public thinks about this. My constituents up in South Shields like having CCTV cameras on every street corner: it keeps the hoodies at bay.” Interesting reaction from a Labour Foreign Secretary. He was very good to deal with, though I’d sometimes feel this every meeting with him turned into a seminar. Actually, every Foreign Secretary that I dealt with on national security oversight - everyone from David Miliband through to Jeremy Hunt - all took it very seriously. I never had any concerns in that respect. I didn’t always agree with the decisions they took, but they generally took advice. Actually, I particularly liked Boris Johnson in that if he didn’t like the advice you had given him, he would have you in to talk about it. Philip Hammond never did, at least not with me.

It wasn’t ideal as a job, because frankly one really needed a Deputy Director underneath to spread the workload. We did finally bring WLD out of the closet: I had always thought it a bit odd that we had this sort of myth that the Foreign Office didn’t have any institutional dealings at all with the intelligence agencies. This of course was a hangover from the days when, officially, GCHQ and SIS didn’t exist. The idea that any of our adversaries wouldn’t have managed to work out perfectly well what Whitehall Liaison Department did was pretty silly. So eventually we did agree to call it Intelligence Policy Department. That also made it a bit easier to recruit staff when they realised what they were applying for: people were quite interested in it. It’s a Department with a lot of junior positions. Essentially, their job is to move documents very securely around the building or around Whitehall. They are extremely responsible jobs, but they’re not well paid and some of them are often quite boring.

So it was again one of these slightly odd things. One was a Director but had a relatively small span of command, although one was dealing with a very broad range of issues, often very sensitive ones.

Director, International Cyber Policy, FCO, 2011-12

I did that for a couple of years and then the cyber post was created. That was really Robert Hannigan’s idea. Credit to him: Robert had seen that cyber was going to be a big thing. I don’t think it’s an accident that Robert went on from being FCO Director General for

Defence and Intelligence to being the Director of GCHQ. This was the beginning of 2011 and Robert thought we needed to have a dedicated unit working on this and developing a policy. The Americans had a fairly senior person in the State Department by that time in charge of cyber. There were also people in the NSC looking at cyber policy.

We'd treated it all as a security issue for technicians: hardening our software and things like that. Actually, there were some classic diplomatic issues around it as well. Almost immediately, the job got rather taken over by the decision to have an international conference on cyber security in London which was eventually held in late 2011. So I started with three staff and was suddenly landed with this rather large challenge. I remember Robert saying, "Oh well, if there's not enough interest in this internationally, we'll just have something at Wilton Park. It won't be a major thing." Eventually, over a hundred countries attended. Some of it I found very stimulating. Producing the policy was very interesting: I pretty well wrote the initial Chair's non-paper for the conference myself. The problem we were faced with was the Russians and Chinese saying the internet ought to be controlled by governments and there ought to be an international treaty that banned 'internet terrorism'. I think the Chinese would have included BBC Online in that! Clearly, the idea that we should have state control of the internet ... they didn't like at all the idea that it was run by private enterprise from the United States. They were pushing for a UN convention - which, given the speed at which the technical environment was changing was clearly an impractical idea which was not too difficult to see off. You also had the Americans talking about freedom of expression and letting a hundred thousand flowers bloom and so on. We were somewhere in the middle, actually: though of course much more towards the American end of the spectrum on privacy and security than the Russians and Chinese. But there was also a very large group in the uncommitted middle ground - countries like India, Brazil or South Africa - who were developing online infrastructure and hadn't really worked out what sort of governance they wanted. You could see they were quite attracted to the 'Let's have all this done by governments' line. So we were trying to compete with that at the same time as we were becoming worried by threats to cyber security, mostly hacking and cyber criminals. We produced a paper. The idea we presented was to pitch to the uncommitted middle ground, largely on economic grounds: to say the free and open internet brought huge benefits for developing countries who would be able to engage in e-commerce without needing to invest in a heavy physical infrastructure that the developed world had needed. But this could all be lost if you had the dead hand of state control. There were also quite a lot of things I did

believe at the time, about the benefits of a free and open internet or cyberspace in breaking down barriers between peoples and cultures, enabling the free flow of ideas and scientific developments and so on. It was all very attractive and had some resonance. What I certainly never foresaw - perhaps it's generational, perhaps my kids would have pointed it out if I'd consulted them - is what would happen with social media. The explosion in social media and things like the echo chamber effect where people talk to and follow and engage with others who think like they do. Far from breaking down barriers, this seems to me to have actually reinforced them. It has led to a coarsening of political debate and international discussion in a very unhappy way. And, of course, the freedom and openness has become more and more exploited, for example by governments promoting fake news and propaganda, by criminals for grooming online and running various scams. To the extent that I think our current government position has moved rather more closely towards more regulation and more state control. It is a matter of great regret. I did not conceive of this in 2011.

It wasn't the happiest job I've ever had because, although I did some travelling including to China to try to persuade them to come to our conference and developing programs for cooperation on countering cybercrime, I had various medical problems halfway through. And six weeks before the conference, I ended up in hospital with a double hernia operation so I missed the whole thing. Happily, the Foreign Office threw an enormous number of people at the whole thing and it was regarded as a great success. Afterwards there were a series of conferences following on. The South Koreans hosted the next one.

Foreign Secretary's Intelligence Adviser, FCO, 2012-18

After the conference had happened, there was a feeling that they didn't necessarily need a Director doing this. There were more staff now involved, so it could be folded down into the broader national security operation. Then, at the same time, Vivien became Ambassador to Denmark in 2012. I then wanted to find something that I could do not only from London, but also from Copenhagen. You couldn't really do that with a lot of line management responsibilities in London. William Hague felt there were a number of things to do with intelligence operations or various areas of activity that needed to be looked into in some depth and reassure him that everything was fine. So this rather odd position was basically created for me. Because I had spent the best part of fifteen years, in one capacity or another, either as a consumer of intelligence, an overseer of intelligence or an assessor of intelligence, I was very familiar with the whole system and had every clearance under the sun. So I

became the Intelligence Adviser to the Foreign Secretary. Again, Robert Hannigan was largely instrumental in that.

SR: Did you have a staff to help you or were you operating on your own?

TD: I had somebody who could make appointments for me. I shared the Director, National Security's PA.

I did a series of reviews. Some were wide-ranging. Some were on quite narrow issues: was the risk in this particular line of activity worth the candle? There was one post-mortem on something which had gone rather wrong in Libya: how did it happen and what were the lessons to be learned? I also did a review on how good the Foreign Office was in responding to early warnings. This came about because, after the American experience in Benghazi, when Hillary Clinton was up in front of various congressional committees and asked about what she knew and when she had known it, William Hague wondered how we would get on if that happened to us. Actually we had closed in Benghazi: we had decided it had got too dangerous, luckily (although only after our Ambassador's convoy had been shot at). So I looked at our procedures for responding to warning information: that was actually very interesting. I made a number of recommendations, all of which were accepted and probably none of which were implemented. Should we have a special, dedicated team, doing nothing but scan the horizon? My conclusion was no: it should be everybody's job. 'Many eyes on' was the phrase we used. But you had to be absolutely clear, when somebody did press the alarm bell, whose responsibility it was to respond. It hadn't necessarily been that clear previously. It was really looking at threats to the network, to our own people, rather than more generally in trying to predict the outbreak of war, for example.

I'd been interested in early warning issues, ever since I'd been in the Cabinet Office: it's supposed to be one of the JIC's roles. Generally, my feeling has always been that we don't do badly at strategic warning: the problem we have there is that, with a strategic warning, something is going to go wrong in five or ten years' time. Ministers tend to say, "Well, who cares: there are more immediate issues to tackle." David Cameron at one point complained that nobody had told him that Yemen was going to be such a problem. Actually, we had written JIC papers in 2005 saying that Yemen was going to fall apart: it was going to run out of water and oil and was not sustainable. We didn't say exactly when. But we weren't far off. Similarly, the system gets criticised for not foreseeing the Arab Spring. That is true in that we didn't see it in the round. But we certainly predicted that the succession to Mubarak

would be messy and probably violent: they hadn't really planned for it. But the difficulty is turning warning into action for events that may be ten or fifteen years off.

We're not good at tactical warning because it's really, really difficult. I think we make up for that by being very good at crisis response. I think the classic example there is 7/7 where, actually, strategically, we had given a warning in a JIC paper about six weeks before to say there would almost certainly be a mass casualty terrorist event in London 'within the next two or three years'. We even specified the transport network as one of the potential targets. What we didn't say was it was going to happen on 7 July 2005, because if we had known that, we would have stopped it happening. But I think the crisis response to 7/7 was extremely good. We had the Underground network running again, largely, within twenty-four hours. Not bad. People have criticised it in detail but, overall, the COBR system worked well: we had even exercised a very similar scenario about three weeks before, making sure that everyone knew where their desks would be, where the intelligence cell would go. And we put effort into how you write the first intelligence brief for a COBR meeting and that sort of thing: a template with basic questions like what happened, who did it and what are they going to do next?

My review for the Foreign Office got a bit mixed up with consular responses. One of the things that came out of it was the problem of information overload. Coming back to the point about having too much information, I think I actually wrote in the covering minute that I put forward to Simon Fraser and Matthew Rycroft that the average Foreign Office desk officer today has access to more data than ever in our history. But their capacity to process, absorb and use that information is probably less than at any time in our history because there is just so much. That began to get me really interested in the whole question of data and big data and how to make better use of it. I got quite involved in that later on, around the time of the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) when all Departments were looking at what they should bid for more money for. There was a fairly small group of us who became rather devoted advocates of how you could make better use of big data. There was a certain amount of resistance at the Board level in the Office. There was a feeling it was a gimmick and had nothing much for the FCO. I thought it was less for foreign policy than for the delivery of public services. If you collect the management information, then questions like 'When do you need to reinforce your consular services at particular times of the year because that's when most British tourists visit?' can be answered by targeting services. There's definitely scope there. Eventually it got accepted and we did put some investment into both

big data gathering and into what we now call the Open Source Unit which basically gets information from the internet and feeds it to policy makers. It really came into its own after the Salisbury attack where they tracked what Russian social media was saying about Salisbury. That enabled us to target our counter-disinformation effort much more precisely to rebut the fake reports that were coming out from Moscow. I think the Unit is now well established and a useful part of the system.

Snowden and his revelations and all the political and legislative fallout from that meant we had a new Act of Parliament which brought in more warrantry requirements and judges reviewing the ministerial signing of interception warrants and things like that. More generally, there was a much greater focus on intelligence actions altogether, particularly when there was a risk involved in cooperating with a country that might mistreat a detainee. The number of submissions on those sorts of issues has grown exponentially. Philip Hammond reckoned that 70% all submissions that came to him requiring a policy decision were coming from the Agencies. All those were being filtered through a very small number of people: the Head of Intelligence Policy Department, the Director for National Security, or me. So there was a very heavy workload: some of the files were very thick. Part of the job is to make sure that the Minister focuses on the key issues and doesn't get bogged down in the extraneous details. Otherwise the machinery clogs up.

By the time I finished, in my last year, I was spending much more time on actually helping to keep those wheels moving: because I had been around so long, there wasn't much that came forward that I hadn't seen before. To a degree, I was the institutional memory.

SR: And I think they still call on you now?

TD: Yes, I still am that memory! I still have my Office laptop, rather extraordinarily. In fact I've just been asked to go and do a review of something that I was involved with before retirement.

SR: It's nice to be wanted!

TD: Yes it is. I like keeping a foot in the door. I suppose that will go on as long as my clearances last.

It was unusual. It was an example of how things have changed. This job was dealing with very highly classified material all the time and yet I was able to spend 50% of my time from

2012 to 2016 working out of the Embassy in Copenhagen. The IT has revolutionised everything. I think I am the first person to attend a JIC meeting by VTC. Subsequently that has become standard practice: that's the way Ambassadors get plugged into the meetings.

So throughout those years, I was usually the FCO rep on the JIC as well. I attended my first JIC meeting in May 1997 and my last one was October 2018. That may be another record.

SR: You've had a very unusual career. Not on the standard lines.

TD: Yes. Most unusual in that I was essentially home posted from 1996 until 2018. When I joined, they used to say that you should expect to spend two thirds of your career overseas and one third at home. I think that changed to more like 50/50. Actually, I've probably spent two thirds in London and one third overseas. People sometimes ask me if I regret not having been an Ambassador. I suppose I do a bit. Certainly Vivien loved being Ambassador to Denmark. Of course it is a nice place to be an Ambassador in! I've always found it more rewarding to send the instructions than to carry them out. Probably the biggest regret I have was that I didn't spend much time over the final five or six years having a lot to do with foreigners and 'doing diplomacy'. Apart from the Five Eyes allies with whom I spent a lot of time. I tended to be more of a Whitehall warrior.

SR: But perhaps, as a result, you've had more stimulating and intellectually demanding jobs?

TD: I think I've had very intellectually demanding jobs. I've never regretted anything, although I have sometimes wondered about the cyber job. Perhaps my view was coloured by the fact that I had various medical problems that year and missed out on the culmination.

I've never done a job that I have not enjoyed enormously and found stimulating. Of the twenty something years I spent in London, half of those were in other government departments. I feel I've seen Whitehall at its best collectively, pulling together. Things like managing the Desert Storm crisis but, equally, the 7/7 response, the Litvinenko response. (That probably led to the COBR meeting with a greater variety of agencies around the table than had ever been: everyone from Number 10 to the Health and Safety Executive.) Seeing how decisions are made. We're better at managing than we are at strategizing, I think. That may just be the nature of politics these days.

SR: Do you think the traditional Whitehall mechanisms are somewhat under threat at the moment?

TD: I can only go by what I read in the newspapers. Clearly, Brexit has put the system under enormous strain.

SR: The normal tensions that exist between politicians and civil servants seem to have been taken to new levels.

TD: It is clearly a caricature to say that civil servants are Remainers trying to frustrate Brexit. All governments when they come in are suspicious of the civil service. When the Labour government came in in 1997 after 18 years of Conservative rule, they were clearly deeply suspicious. I'm rereading Alistair Campbell's diaries for the early years of the Blair government. Fascinating to see how much of it is reflected now. Problems with the real status of Special Advisers. Questions about him and Jonathan Powell. There are a lot of parallels. I can't help wondering if someone in Number 10 has read that - I hope they have. There are some things he said they wished they had done. But the idea that civil servants aren't there to try and deliver the policy of the government of the day is so much built into popular culture. Yes Minister was a great comedy, but it has a lot to answer for.

SR: Bullying and intimidating your staff is not the way to get good policy implemented.

TD: Exactly. Certainly in the past I've known rather senior members of the Office who did behave in a very bullying manner. It didn't seem to harm their careers at all.

SR: Do you think things have changed?

TD: They have. We were talking in our first session about how rarely one saw the equivalent of what was then the Assistant Under Secretary. Now, any new member of the National Security Directorate has an introductory chat with the Director and an induction pack. The Foreign Office is still hierarchical compared to some other departments, but much less than it was. It's become a friendlier place, more informal. And much more diverse where gender is concerned. Our first female Ambassador was appointed only two years before I joined the FCO in 1978 and, as I said, there was only one woman on my induction course. I know a very effective colleague who was forced to resign after he was outed as gay, around 1990. In these respects, the Office has changed out of all recognition, for the better.

SR: Is that a good, positive note on which to stop?

TD: I think so.

SR: Thank you very much indeed.