

BDOHP Biographical Details and Interview Index

GREENSTOCK, Jeremy Quentin (born 27 July 1943)
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This is Malcolm McBain interviewing Sir Jeremy Greenstock at his home in West London on Tuesday 22nd of June 2004.

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MM: Sir Jeremy, I see from your C.V that you were educated at Harrow School and Worcester College, Oxford. Where were you brought up? Your parents?

Education and entry to the Diplomatic Service

JG: My father was a schoolmaster at Harrow School. The family school was Malvern, but since he was teaching at Harrow he sent me there because he could get a good deal. So I was brought up on Harrow Hill and lived there for the first eighteen years of my life as well as going to school there between thirteen and eighteen. I was at a prep school in Buckinghamshire called Beachborough, near Brackley, just across the border from Northamptonshire, so a very contented, traditional, middle class, private school upbringing, closely associated with schoolmastering, which my grandfather, both aunts and uncles and various other members of the family had participated in. My brother also was a schoolmaster throughout his career and ended up being Housemaster of the same house my father attended at Harrow, so it was all rather incestuous. That's why I taught and that's why I taught for only a short time, to get away from something which was in the blood and that I didn't want to do for a full career's worth.

MM: But then you decided to join the FCO. You must have been about 26 when you joined?

JG: Yes, I was teaching at Eton College and thought that, since this was a second string idea that I'd had for a career at university, I ought to try it before the upper age limit for entry was exceeded - and in those days you had to do the oral exam before you were 27. I went to Anthony Chenevix-Trench, the headmaster of Eton, and I said: "Do you mind if I give the Foreign Office a go", and he said: "No, absolutely right to give it a go if it's in your mind, and if you get in, good luck to you. If don't get in, you're welcome to stay". So it was a no-lose deal and I had a shot at that age in '69.

Starting in the Foreign Office

MM: And almost immediately the FCO sent you to MECAS.

JG: After a year. My recruit's year was spent on the Nigeria desk in the West African Department, which was interesting. Amongst us recruits we all with some humour would discuss what each of us was getting out of the lottery of first postings, and I was given the Nigeria desk and it was the Biafran War on at that time, and most of the more senior members of the Department were completely occupied with the War and its consequences and Wilson on HMS whatever it was ...

MM: Tiger.

JG: Tiger. Bulldog? Anyway ... doing Rhodesia and Nigeria together. So I was left doing Anglo-Nigerian relations at the heady age of three or four weeks in the Foreign Office and I had quite a lot fun with that desk really. And so MECAS didn't loom until after quite an interesting year on the Nigeria Desk in West Africa Department.

MM: And how did that come about?

MECAS and the Gulf States 1970-74

JG: MECAS? My best friend at Oxford, and Rackets partner, Melville Guest, had joined a year ahead of me and spoke Japanese and was in Tokyo and I thought that I might follow him. But that year the Foreign Office changed the Japanese language course from Tokyo to Sheffield University and I decided I hadn't joined the Foreign Office late just to go back to academia, so I pondered a lot about that and wondered what else can I do? And looked at Russian ... And my wife, who was brought up in East Africa, said, "I like the hot weather. If you're going to a nine-month winter post, you can go on your own". So I went back to the Foreign Office and said: 'what can I do that's abroad and hot?' So I became an Arabist. But there was no great T E Lawrence spirit of exploration involved. It really is the best way to choose a career, I think, to take a pencil and a dip-stick.

MM: What did you make of MECAS? Did you think it was useful?

JG: I thought it was a tremendous experience. I think if you're going to learn a language, learn it in the country that speaks it because you learn the life and the habits of the locals as well as the language. I thought MECAS was on the whole an excellent school, particularly with its better teachers. It didn't have 100% good teachers, but the atmosphere and the better

teaching and the ability to move around not just Lebanon, but bits of Syria, Jordan and enjoy Middle Eastern life as a student, never wearing a tie etc, was really very inspiring and I thought the language was very interesting and the standard of the course was high. I think I probably left MECAS, taking the advanced exam after 18 months, speaking Arabic better than I ever spoke it again in my life, for reasons which we may get into. But I thought it was a very good language-learning experience.

MM: Was it a particular kind of Arabic?

JG: Well, you naturally gravitated into the colloquial way of the country you were in, so yes, of course you speak Lebanese colloquial. And you pick up a Lebanese accent, and you drop the Arabic “*qaf*” which is sounded elsewhere in the Arabic world. You don’t speak the Egyptian hard “*gim*” so people recognise, Arabs recognise, that you’re speaking with a Lebanese accent when you talk Arabic. But that’s absolutely natural if you learn a language anywhere: where you have particular dialects you’re going to talk with the one that you’re in.

MM: And that of course led to your going to Dubai.

JG: Yes, the next sort of lottery choice. We were told on a particular day what the Foreign Office had chosen for us and people were scattered around the Arab world, one or two didn’t even go on to Arab postings.

MM: Oh really?

JG: I think one or two students perhaps went back home for certain reasons. Anyway, Dubai was my choice, sorry, my lot, so off I went in early ’72.

MM: And what were you actually doing in Dubai?

JG: I started as Second Secretary in Chancery. Dubai was a strange Embassy because I think it was the only place in the world, the UAE after two months or three months of independence, which had two British Embassies in it. One in the capital and one in the second biggest city, Dubai, because the Foreign Office, in its Persian Gulf wisdom, didn’t want the Sheikh in Abu Dhabi, who was going to become Head of State, Sheikh Zayed, to be

a distance above Sheikh Rashid in Dubai, his old and rather cunning rival. And therefore they gave each of them an Embassy, although Sheikh Rashid in Dubai had to recognise that Sheikh Zayed in Abu Dhabi was the Head of State and that Abu Dhabi was the capital. But in effect, in practice, the Office in Dubai was a Consulate-General and the head of it was a Consul-General, Julian Walker and then Bertie Saunders. The job was dogsbodying in the Chancery, my first posting abroad in an active office. I was also, strangely, the last Assistant Judge of the Trucial States Court, never having done an hour's worth of legal training in my life. There was a Judge who lived in Oxfordshire who was called out to do the necessary big stuff, and of course by that stage there were no new cases because the UAE was independent; so what remained were left-over appeals, things that were still running, and I only heard a couple of cases and tried to solve them by cutting the hearing short and bringing the lawyers up to my desk and saying: "I haven't a clue what you're talking about, sort this out between you. If you don't I'll have to get Judge so-and-so" and they said: "anything but that" and sorted it out! The Assistant Judgeship ended with my tenure in Dubai as my time ran out. But mostly it was political work going around the little emirates, getting to know the Sheikhs and their offices, doing a certain amount of economic and commercial reporting at a low level. Then I got promoted *sur place*, because 'Buggins' usually got promoted from Second to First Secretary between 28 and 30 and I hit that, and I therefore became Number Two at the Embassy. They brought in somebody else to fill the original slot and I got a bit more responsibility from Bertie Saunders, who became a great friend and our son's godfather. The two years I was there was about right for the volume and intensity of the work that one had to do. We did a lot of travelling around the desert and I went to Iran a couple of times, we went across the mountains to Oman, so it was nice getting to know the Arabian desert world.

MM: Sounds tremendous fun.

JG: It was more fun than work.

MM: Well, there's nothing wrong with that! What sort of cases were you dealing with when you were Assistant Judge?

JG: They were actually commercial claims; they weren't criminal cases. There were one or two criminal appeals, but I was rightly deemed incapable of looking after that, so it was

basically an action against Gray McKenzie because they hadn't paid out on an insurance claim.

Private Secretary to Ambassador in Washington 1974-78

MM: Oh I see, that sort of thing. So out of the desert and off to Washington, essentially as Private Secretary to the Ambassador in 1974.

JG: Yes, that came out of the blue. It just arrived in a telegram one day and my Consul-General told me where I was going. I hadn't applied for it. I didn't know that I was a candidate for it. But it was quite a change, going from what actually was the smallest Embassy in the world to the largest. You move from doing a couple of hours of real work a day to doing thirteen to fourteen hours of real work a day. And that was not just a mental but a physical challenge, but also an extremely interesting move.

MM: And who was the Ambassador while you were there?

JG: My first Ambassador was Sir Peter Ramsbotham, whom Edward Heath had selected to be Ambassador in Washington because Peter had worked with him on European entry; he was Ambassador in Tehran before that. He actually pulled me over to Tehran from Dubai, once he knew I was the candidate, to 'vet' me before he finally agreed that I should be his Private Secretary, and before he himself arrived in Washington.

MM: So he knew ...

JG: In those days a Head of Post agreed to every posting, you may remember. It no longer happens. Therefore he wanted to see me before he agreed that I should be his Private Secretary, since I was in a posting next door. And I took over from one Charles Powell, who'd been Private Secretary for Lord Cromer. I took over everything in Charles Powell's portfolio, his black boxes and everything, which was interesting in itself, given his immense capacity for complex work. I was pretty well untrained when I first arrived in Washington, given the intensity of the work there and the seriousness of the substance and the American relationship. A good time on the West African desk and an even better time in the deserts of Dubai hadn't quite prepared me for that sort of stuff.

MM: Harsh reality! So you must have been there when Sir Peter Ramsbotham was rudely replaced?

JG: Yes, that was quite a saga. Peter Ramsbotham was a lovely Ambassador to work for. Not perhaps the most commanding personality in the Foreign Office, but a man with huge diplomatic experience and great instinct for the right move in the right style at the right time. It was a pretty cruel blow that he was removed early. I think it stemmed, well it stemmed obviously from the change of Prime Minister from Wilson to Callaghan, from some visits that some of the newly shuffled ministers in the Labour government paid to Washington in the early months of 1977.

MM: But the visits took place in 1976?

JG: Well, there was a lot of speculation as to who had called Ramsbotham a “fuddy-duddy”. I’ll tell you what it was, it was the Callaghan government that was coming in., but also Carter was taking over from Ford and the Labour government thought that this fresh new team that was coming into the White House, mostly from Atlanta in the South East - names like Jody Powell and Hamilton Jordan and Bert Lance and Stuart Eizenstat were the young Turks of the new American administration - and to have a fuddy-duddy old Ambassador called Ramsbotham who seemed to be very old-style, there were some cartoons about him at the time, seemed to people like Denis Healey and ...

MM: David Owen?

JG: Well he didn’t come into it at that point, but David Owen did take over as Foreign Secretary in the new Callaghan government. But it was more ... one or two visitors had visited in the early months of 1977 and expected to see the freshness of the new Carter Washington. I think Roy Hattersley came on a visit and hadn’t brought his black tie and had to be kitted out in the residence with a black tie, and Frances Ramsbotham, who was also herself a dear, decided to regale him with an anecdote about which Ambassadors in Washington had heated swimming pools, because they didn’t and others did. And they were eating quite a liquid dish of *rognons* and rice and gravy and she was waving her fork and saying: “The German Ambassador has a heated swimming pool, and the Spanish Ambassador has a heated swimming pool and even the Brazilian Ambassador ...” and as her fork moved,

Roy Hattersley looked down and found that bits of gravy had hit the front of his starched shirt, and he wondered where he was and why. And there were various anecdotes like that and this led them completely to miss the fact that Peter Ramsbotham had been regarded both by the Ford campaign team and the Carter campaign team as the most professional Ambassador observing the campaign. He was the last Ambassador to dine with Carter before he closed the door during his campaign, and he and Frank Kennedy, who was the Consul-General in Atlanta, were very well in with the new Carter team. But there it was, David Owen was there being one of the youngest Foreign Secretaries and he wanted a change and so Jay was chosen, by Owen not by Callaghan of course, and Peter Ramsbotham received this as a great blow. I got a warning from John Kerr, who was Michael Palliser's Private Secretary, that this letter was coming and that I should make sure that Peter Ramsbotham got it at a moment when he was otherwise undisturbed. And I said to Bunny Shiels, Peter's P.A., who was a wonderful old-style dragon of a P.A., who worked with him in Tehran and came with him to Washington: "We've got to treat this gently. I'm going to have to steam this open and see what it says". So we steamed it open and saw what it said and therefore gave the Ambassador an hour to himself to read it. So that's what we did after John Kerr's warning, and there was absolute silence in there for an hour, and eventually we went in and got on with the afternoon's business. And he brought me in a couple of hours later and told me what was in the letter. And of course there was a press uproar afterwards and it was my first experience I think, of directly handling the press, because the British press were beginning to tear Peter Ramsbotham to pieces, and that needed some defence. And the Washington press corps, the British press corps, was quite fond of Peter Ramsbotham; wanted to talk about him, so I did some background stuff and we managed to turn around a little bit the comments on the quality of Peter's work in Washington, but of course the decision had been made. So off he went and eventually decided he would accept the Governorship of Bermuda. He wanted to be Governor of Hong Kong, but that position was already taken. And he never really got over the shock and the disappointment of it. And we had to adjust to the style of Peter Jay.

MM: And what did that entail?

JG: Well, a complete change in some ways. In one sense I had the advantage over Peter Jay in that I'd had three years experience in the job and that I knew what it was like, and he needed me to steer him round the details of an Ambassador's work and everything else. But

whereas Peter Ramsbotham had needed a great deal of advice and reminding of the substance of what he was doing, a lot of note-taking in other words, a substantive partnership with his Private Secretary, Peter Jay didn't want intellectual or substantive input. He wanted everything to be tidily handled in terms of programme and the flow of paper, travel, and tickets. Everything else. So he turned it into much more of a logistics job rather than a substantive job. Although he learnt that it was quite useful to have a second mind at work from a Private Secretary, the style within the Embassy changed, and indeed there was a certain amount of political controversy flowing on from the change. Michael Palliser (the PUS) was quite concerned that Peter Jay was an out-and-out Atlanticist at a time when we were trying to burnish our European credentials, as a reasonably recent entrant. And he felt that the image in Washington of an Embassy that was wholly Atlanticist and not really focused on European business, was not the right one to convey in Washington. And therefore he engineered the appointment as Number 2 in Washington of a political Minister, John Robinson, who had been Ambassador in Algeria, but who was also a European specialist before that, and had himself also been a crucial part of the negotiating team for entry to the EC. And it was chalk and cheese. He and Jay were both pretty robust and plain-spoken characters, and a number of rows ensued because John Robinson didn't put up with fools gladly. And also there was the point that Peter Jay was brilliant in lots of ways, a superb speaker, particularly on economic and related subjects, very interested in the nuclear relationship and very capable of taking in all the complex details of our negotiations with the Americans on Cheveline and Polaris and all the things that were going on at that time. One thing that he didn't have, perhaps, doesn't have, is an acute political mind. Margaret Jay had a much clearer and more astute political instinct than Peter. And he thought Carter was the bee's knees. Liked his programme; liked the man. Thought he was a revelation in American politics and his telegrams and dispatches talked Carter up. Chancery didn't think Carter was going to be an effective President; saw signs that he was micro-managing; was not winning the American people over to his programme, and tried to convey this by the back door, back to London, in spite of the Ambassador's telegrams. So in some ways there were two sets of reports going on, and John Robinson, as Number 2, would normally cut through that and make sure that the two got together. But John Robinson didn't particularly have an interest in making sure that the Ambassador's view won, a) because it was Peter Jay, and b) because he thought he was wrong. So London was getting two sets of reports. And as the Jay marriage began to unfold during their time in Washington, Peter was able to benefit less and less from Margaret's direct and willing input on the political front. But the Senators and Congressmen

and members of the Administration who came to dinner, did so mostly under Margaret's influence and their interest in her views of things rather than Peter's.

MM: What a situation to be in. It must have been intensely difficult for you? As Private Secretary?

JG: Well, I will tell you a story that you might not be able to use, but John Robinson was a very plain-spoken man and there was one particular row about the way the Ambassador's stuff was going back. Peter Jay wanted to send it, so I had it sent. John Robinson called me in and said: "You shouldn't have sent it without having it cleared back down at the Chancery. Whose side are you on anyway, Greenstock? I regard you as a f***ing traitor!"- which is the one and only time I've been called that during my career. So it was that kind of atmosphere. But Peter Jay took me round the country; he did a lot of public speaking. And I went with Peter Ramsbotham as well. I travelled around the country with both. I wrote a lot of Peter Ramsbotham's speeches anyway. I wrote none of Peter Jay's. He wrote all his own stuff. But Peter was very interesting to work for as well. His considerable mind and personality and great range of friends and contacts. And he made quite an impact there but not on politics really. Not on politics.

MM: Well, back to making an impact.

JG: On the economic relationship, the nuclear relationship and the defence relationship really. Through being able to express himself very powerfully in public and in private. But it taught me something about the Anglo-American relationship, that it doesn't work, if there's a brash new-spirited team in the White House in Washington, they don't necessarily want a brash young Ambassador from the United Kingdom or anywhere else. What Americans quite appreciate from the British is wise, discreet advice. And quiet counsel. Peter Ramsbotham was very close to Henry Kissinger. Kissinger consulted Peter Ramsbotham almost before anybody else on whether he should resign from the Ford administration when he was getting very frustrated with the way something was going, and Peter Ramsbotham had more appeal at the heart of the politics for the Ford and Carter administrations than Peter Jay did, because he was different. He had something new to bring which gave them a different perspective; and they liked bouncing ideas off somebody they could trust not to release it into the public

arena. And Peter's instinct and discretion were both superb. So it was an interesting double experience. A very formative job. It started a long association with all things American.

MM: So after that baptism of fire, back to the FCO in 1978. What were you doing there?

Working with FCO Planning staff

JG: I was given a job in Planning Staff which was intellectually very interesting, in fact operationally it was very interesting at one or two points. First of all working for Rodric Braithwaite and then for a couple of months Brian Crowe. I only did about six months of that job because I was asked to go to Personnel Department, but I thought that being a Planner was extremely interesting. You saw a different side of Diplomatic Service life and work. You were given time to think and write. I was asked as part of that particular desk in Planning Staff to be the staffer to Reg Hibbert, as Political Director, in his work on transatlantic discussions. Reg Hibbert was certainly a stern taskmaster for everybody but a very educative Political Director to work with, and he was very nice to me. I suffered to some extent by having very poor French because I'd never used French, and didn't until I went to Paris. My French wasn't fully operational and I was filling in the blanks in my notebook with recklessly gay abandon; it didn't seem to get me into trouble. But that was interesting. And you got occasional assignments of inside interest. I remember there was some kind of Anglo-American summit in the Caribbean, which Callaghan went to and from which he came back saying: "Problems, what problems?" in the domestic scene. And somebody discovered - it was a Christmas/New Year summit, so part holiday - on Christmas Eve, the Private Office was asked by Number 10 to supply the damned brief for the Prime Minister to go to the summit. There were some other Heads of State, and the department had not prepared a brief for Callaghan, a steering brief, and so the Prime Minister's staff had rung up to ask us to provide a steering brief. So I had to write a steering brief in manuscript before I went home on Christmas Eve. I sent it in to the Department and said: "I'm terribly sorry. This is the best I can do. There's nobody else around. Here's my scribble", and apparently it was just quickly typed out and sent straight off to Number 10, literally cleared with nobody. It's the only time I've actually scribbled out my thoughts for the Prime Minister and they've been used all the way through.

MM: It's an example of the responsibility of officials to come up with answers.

JG: Yes, you suddenly get asked to think out of the box. And in some ways if you've been following what's going on you can write a better brief just by scribbling out your thoughts than if you have all the telegrams together across the table and try to get excerpts from every one of them. If you do that, it's probably a better flowing brief for the Prime Minister. He might not use any of it, but it'll get him going on certain topics.

MM: Well, he would certainly have a grasp; I mean that's what politicians are for isn't it?

JG: I don't know a Prime Minister who's literally used a Foreign Office brief, you know, open in front of him. They give it a glance and see if it inspires them along any lines of thought and check one or two things they don't know, and then they put it aside and say what they think. Which no doubt Callaghan did. But it was an interesting thing to be asked to do.

MM: And you were Planning Staff throughout that period.

Working for a Foreign Office Personnel Department

JG: That was for six months until early 1979. Because I was asked by the Personnel side if I'd like to take up a job in Personnel Operations Department. I decided that, much as I was enjoying my work in the Planning Staff, this would give me a chance to see the Service from another angle and it would be worth it. And I was conscious of the need to get a good variety of different disciplines in my early postings. I'd been doing high politics in Washington and that was what Planning Staff was as well. I remember writing while in Planning Staff a long paper on South Africa, about when apartheid would collapse, trying to predict that. And Personnel would be different and I thought I'd give it a go. Hibbert was startled, "Personnel Operations Department" he said: "Why on earth would you want to go there?" and assumed that I was trying to run away from him, which wasn't true. But actually it was a good move; I thoroughly enjoyed POD for two years until 1981, as one of four Area Officers, responsible for Africa, the Middle East and the Sub-Continent, all the difficult posts. Among Area Officers then were David Logan, Anthony Laden, Basil Eastwood, David Brighty, who became Deputy Head of Department; Michael Alexander was my first Head of Department, then Alan Munro; Margaret Rothwell was later Deputy Head of Department; all good people, interested in really moving Personnel into the modern age. We devised a number of new approaches, volunteering for posts for instance, publishing in the Service the posts that were coming up, the beginnings of Difficult Post Allowance. We started an initiative on better

management by Heads of Post after a trip I made to Posts in Southern Africa seeing the very differing range of styles and quality of management by Heads of Post and the difference in comfort and safety and quality of life between, say, Pretoria and Kampala, Kampala being under fire with Royal Military Police looking after the post because it was so dangerous during the last days of Idi Amin. So I thought that was a rather interesting job, you learnt a lot about the Service, and the decisions you make on the Personnel Desk are different from decisions you may make on the Political Desk, because if you get it wrong they come back through your door with a vengeance, whereas you can always disclaim responsibility for them or pass the buck on the Political Desk. You learn the different sorts of responsibility at the outset. I thought it was very interesting.

MM: So worthwhile then?

JG: Yes.

Counsellor Commercial in Saudi Arabia in 1983

MM: So who posted you to Jeddah in 1983?

JG: I had been Assistant Head of Department in NENAD in 1981 under Oliver Miles, so I got some orthodox experience in a political department, obviously working mostly on the Middle East Peace Process, or whatever it was called in those days. It was shortly after the Saddat-Begin agreement on the withdrawal of Egypt from the fight, and I visited a number of Middle East posts. I had a brilliant young Desk Officer doing Israel-Palestine - John Holmes, now Ambassador in Paris - who I thought was probably the best Desk Officer who ever worked with me. So I got myself back into orthodox political work in quite a useful way, because I was never a Head of Department later on. Then at the end of that, I was posted to Jeddah to do a stint as a Commercial Counsellor, which was a very good extra discipline to have. It's an extremely interesting job really. Possibly the best Counsellor job in the Middle East, apart from being an Ambassador, at Counsellor rank. And certainly the best job below the Ambassador in Saudi Arabia, because if you were the Political Counsellor you had to deal with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and you were constrained because it was a police state and a Political Officer couldn't go around talking to just anybody. But if you were a Commercial Officer you could talk to the merchants; you could travel around. Once you got to know a reasonable spread of people you could talk about the politics of the place. You got

much more of the politics of the place as a Commercial Officer than as a Political one, in terms of contacts and the things getting back to you. And anyway the UK's export promotion in Saudi Arabia is a large business, but also quite a difficult one, because companies were always getting into trouble with the Saudi State, or with Saudi law, or with Saudis, and needed sorting out.

MM: Were you dealing with Saudis, in the business world?

JG: Yes, the whole time. I was part of the move from Jeddah to Riyadh, so my first two and a half years were in Jeddah, which was a lot easier and more pleasant than Riyadh, and a lot more productive in commercial terms because the merchant class is basically established in Jeddah, and the inward investment and outward flow of Saudi business goes through and from Jeddah as the main commercial city and the merchants there were open and professional and interesting. In Riyadh there were several who were that, but it is a much more closed society. A much drier place in every sense of the word and more of a struggle for family life and that sort of thing. In Jeddah you could travel, you could go out to the sea, to the mountains and you could talk more freely. But it was also interesting in another way, and this taught me something about the relationship with London. Saudi Arabia was a difficult place for the British to do business, and the philosophy for the Department of Trade and Industry on export promotion was to help small companies start in the market, get them to the point where they could look after themselves and get business growing by getting the smaller guys growing. In Saudi Arabia that didn't work very well because smaller companies tended to get into trouble quickly. Couldn't easily swim by themselves. So I decided that the best thing for British interests in Saudi Arabia was to spend my time, and my section's time, maximising British exports to Saudi Arabia in any way I could, with whatever company of whatever size. Because the big companies were getting into trouble as often as the small companies and needed help, needed openings, needed information in a difficult environment. So I partly cut myself off from the Department of Trade and Industry's normal philosophy and desk office service and did things my own way and persuaded them that that was the right thing for Saudi Arabian. I consulted them and got their authority to do that, and it meant a more independent position for export promotion than in most other markets. And getting the right amount of independence for the overseas job has been something I wanted to do in every subsequent job. It was certainly very important when I eventually ended up in New York.

The move of the Embassy from Jedda to Riyadh

MM: Yes, quite. Well, what brought about the move from Jedda to Riyadh?

JG: It was a logistic nightmare of course.

MM: Why did they do it?

JG: The background is that the Saudis were a State from 1932 onwards. Up until the early 80s they were talking about not wanting foreigners in their capital, not quite as sacred as Mecca or Medina, but they didn't want foreigners and Embassies polluting the Riyadh atmosphere for the first 50 years of Saudi State life. They would allow offices and they would allow commercial work to be done there; we had a Consulate-General there, but the Embassies were in Jedda, and the Foreign Ministry was in Jedda. Then they suddenly said: "Right, I don't know what all you people are doing in Jedda; our capital is Riyadh, why don't you come here?" - and everybody had to move to Riyadh within three years! And they'd gathered everybody together on plots in a huge 40 square mile area in the desert outside Riyadh and we all had to start building. The logistics of that were a nightmare because the constructors already wanted their own nationals to do their construction and the Saudis don't make that easy for you; and at the same time we had to build a new Consulate-General in Jedda, because the old compound was too large for a Consulate-General. We sold that or gave it back to the Shobokshi family, from whom we'd rented it, and went to the north edge of the city. So building there and in Riyadh was expensive and complicated, and before the offices were finished both in Riyadh and in Jedda, the British firms doing it had fled the country. So we had considerable trouble in both places finishing these things off. But by the time that the summer heat was coming on in April/May 1986 the air-conditioning was failing, because they'd failed to put a plate under the air conditioners to catch the condensation. They'd thought that the desert was so dry there'd be no such thing as condensation. Failed to read the meteorological table. It was that sort of thing. So we all decamped to hotels at £3000 a night and that got them going pretty quickly. Anyway we had to re-shape our whole thing in Riyadh. It took some months for the new Embassy to settle down and by then we were under Stephen Egerton.

MM: So an interesting period then?

JG: Yes, I had three very interesting Ambassadors, James Craig, Patrick Wright and Stephen Egerton.

The importance of Saudi Arabia to Britain

MM: It reflects the importance of the post.

JG: Yes, doesn't it. Two GCMGs and a serious Arabist operator.

MM: Well it is important of course. Important because of oil supplies, defence?

JG: No, more than that. Egypt has always been regarded as the senior country in the Arab world, but in terms of operational diplomacy Saudi Arabia has always been more of a challenge. With the Saudis it's not just the export promotion because of their oil money and the vast business of their growing petrochemical industry. It's not just the oil that's coming out of the ground, and the need for security in the region. It's also the role that the Saudis play in Middle East politics. Cautious but quite weighty. And it was the relationship between Saudi Arabia and a lot of our fledgling sheikhdoms in the south which was important for everybody. And it was the history of the British in the Middle East which is very strong in the whole peninsula, particularly in Saudi Arabia, so that it's not just a commercial-economic, or current political relationship, it's actually a quite deep-rooted, historical relationship. The Saudis wanted all of that served.

The Saudi Arabian state and its stability

MM: Is the population very significant in terms of numbers?

JG: It didn't seem so then. We reckoned that there were about - and there was no clear consensus - about 4-5 million Saudis, and maybe a couple of million people of other nationalities. A large number of Yemenis, who were then the lower working class of the Saudi economy, and a huge number of Asians, who did the really dirty work, and a few hundred thousand Westerners. Maybe it was 5-6 million Saudis and 7-8 million population over all.

MM: Tiny actually.

JG: Tiny then, for the money they were getting. But the population growth since then, it's now 2004, would make the population close to 17-18 million Saudis. Which means they've doubled, or even tripled! Which is an extraordinary population growth, which has caused them severe economic and political problems, because the money just isn't enough and they haven't diversified successfully enough into other areas of economic growth. But it was a very interesting country to study from the diplomatic viewpoint. The struggle between the traditional Bedouin life and modern technology and culture: the invasion of Western culture into Saudi Arabia caused difficulties for the ruling family, and in the population. And their instinct to hide everything and to be as little transparent as possible, was probably a big mistake, and still is. Nevertheless it was a very strong and natural reaction for a very defensive ruling family.

MM: We're talking about almost twenty years ago, aren't we? But at that time, did you sense that they were ruling the place, in a sensible way?

JG: Not entirely, I mean yes and no, but it was a mixed picture. They'd got the loyalty of the population because the main reputation of Ibn Saud, King Abdul Aziz, was very strong. He's the only individual in history who's actually conquered the entire peninsula, a million square miles of Saudi territory. His sons were to some extent criticised and judged by the population, but the loyalty was there and they had quite cleverly divided up and separated out the armed forces, so that Crown Prince Abdullah ran the National Guard and was closely linked with the main central tribes of Saudi Arabia. Prince Sultan, the defence minister, had control of the air force, which was the next most dangerous, if you like, most powerfully equipped part of the armed forces - the ordinary army under the Defence Ministry was not very strong or very political. Then the police were under Prince Naif who ran the Ministry of the Interior, and none of those forces on their own could run a coup, except perhaps the National Guard, who were entirely faithful to the Royal family. They were all kept separate and the chain of command never came to an apex at any one point, except the King, and since King Fahd and Crown Prince Abdullah are half brothers, not full brothers, it was all quite carefully separated out. The way that they handled the flow of income from oil was partly sensible in that they diversified into a very expensive petrochemical industry. They started a hugely expensive agricultural industry from the proceeds of oil through desalination and through irrigation from desalinated water, which was very expensive in terms of energy and everything, so that they were paying seven times the world price for the wheat that they were

growing, but determined, having had a brush with the Americans on this, determined not to be dependent on imports for their strategic foods. The distribution of wealth was always a real problem. So many Saudis were reasonably well off and could get jobs and were subsidized for their marriages etc ... but Shia Saudis were not well looked after in the eastern province, and therefore there were the beginnings of a burgeoning resentment and political tension. But more than anything else the younger generation of Saudis were getting bored. They felt stifled. They didn't feel it was their country to build themselves. They felt that it was over-laid with too much control and that feeling is still there, in terms of development being very slow. And the sense of realising human potential has never really developed in Saudi Arabia. There's a lot of tension.

MM: So, a very interesting scene to observe.

JG: Yes, very interesting. It's also a very difficult country to overturn, for reasons I've given on the security front, so there's very unlikely to be an Iranian type revolution from the urban masses. The Shah was regarded as less legitimate than the sons of Abdul Aziz are in Saudi Arabia. Nevertheless the resentment over stealing the oil wealth for themselves and the poor management of the country is actually quite strong. And now of course we're moving into the urban terrorism period under Osama bin Laden, whose main objective has always been, since the beginning, the overturning of the Saudi state, not to hit the Americans except as an instrument to achieve his first objective. We knew about him in the 80s. He was regarded as a renegade even then. But he was in the Sudan at that stage. The bin Laden family, a well-known family of commercial bankers, and indeed they banked the Royal family, are pretty angry that Osama has blackened their name. But he was the very black sheep of a very senior commercial family whom I knew in my commercial world.

MM: Was he there?

JG: No, no. He would have been arrested if he'd come back to Saudi Arabia.

Paris 1987-90

MM: Right, well let's move on to 1987 and Paris, Head of Chancery.

JG: Yes, I had to explain to the Saudis that Paris was my punishment for nearly four years in Saudi Arabia.

MM: The Garden of Eden!

JG: I was to some extent consulted on that, for the first time. I obviously had to say that I was willing to run for Commercial Counsellor in Saudi Arabia before accepting. I thought I might be going home to head a Department at this stage, but Paris was a gain, a good contrast, filling in a gap in my experience of Western Europe, European Union business and French and the French, so I was very happy to take that on. Three or four months of John Fretwell as Ambassador and then most of my time was with Ewen Fergusson. Very interesting, a very indulgent Ambassador. I mean he gave you your head, and let you get on with it compared with previous Ambassadors. I've mentioned Reg Hibbert in another context, but he had a reputation in Paris of being extremely demanding and rather tough on his underlings in all his meetings and things. Ewen Fergusson was of course a marvellous contact-maker, had terrific diplomatic instinct, but a completely different personality, and was reminiscent of the style of Peter Ramsbotham. Very good contact-maker, very sharp political nose, giving other people their head, listening to advice, occasionally getting it wrong as every Ambassador does, but very much a leader from the front, running a very good Embassy, dining table and office. We lived in the Gatehouse in the Faubourg St. Honoré. I insisted on some French training, so I went off to Vichy for four weeks in the snow in January 1987. Four weeks wasn't nearly enough to repair my French, so I was struggling with my French from the beginning.

MM: It must have been an awful struggle, because it's not an easy language to speak well.

JG: No, it's not an easy language and my comprehension was certainly improved by being there, but the French demand pretty high standards of performance, and I can still picture very clearly those screwed up expressions of distaste whenever I made a mistake, or the accent went way beyond repair. It's always left me feeling slightly uncomfortable with the French that I couldn't master their language.

MM: All the subtleties ...

JG: And the allusions.

MM: Designed I'm sure to make you feel a foreigner.

JG: Yes, the bar was raised very high. And most of my colleagues were very good at it. David Manning was there, Michael Jay was there. John Weston was my first Minister; Michael Llewellyn Smith, all spoke very good French. I was a bit of an outsider in that sense, although the work was very interesting, and I was allowed to take on the business of overseeing the Consulates-General, so I got to do a bit of travelling whilst I was there. Which was lovely.

MM: How about understanding the French and their system, did you have any problems with that?

JG: No, no, not as an observer. I think it was extremely useful to have a posting in France to understand and to love the country, because it is a terrific country. It's only a few Parisians who get up your nose. The rest of them, the generosity, the friendliness, the openness of the people more or less everywhere, and the beauty of the country is very special. To get to know how to live in France and with the French, and make French friends and to get over the Englishman's bilateral difficulty with the French, even despite what I'm saying about the French, it was marvellous to get France under the belt, as it were.

The substance of work puzzled me a bit, because the British regard different sorts of things as of the first importance when it comes to diplomacy. We always want everything to be tidy and operational and pragmatic and working and to take the next step forward. The French want things to look right and be right and for the performance to be commanding, and we are very different also in the way we operate in terms of our handling of our material. They reserve information down narrow channels, they keep it to themselves, even from each other, because information is power, whereas we are brought up and trained in the Diplomatic Service to share information laterally, so that you should get the same answer on a policy question from a Second Secretary or from the Prime Minister. But in diplomatic operational terms in Paris it means you have to go to several desks on the same day to answer a Foreign Office telegram about what the French are thinking on the Middle East, you can't just go to your Middle East contact and get it and write it all down. You've got to see what he or she is

peddling from that desk and then go to another desk and set it off, and you have to be very trigonometric about it all.

MM: And of course there is the Presidency itself.

JG: Oh yes, particularly on Africa where they run their own policy separately from the Quai. I don't know if you've talked to anybody with a close view about Margaret Thatcher and some of her work on British Foreign Policy, say over apartheid in South Africa, when she worked with Charles Powell and Robin Renwick directly with the South Africans. That was happening the whole time with the French system from the Elysée, or maybe from Matignon; and I remember 1987 to 1990 contained at least 18 months for me of the 'cohabitation' between Mitterrand and Chirac, so Elysée and Matignon were at each other the whole time until Chirac was dis-elected. And so because of cohabitation you had to spend that much more time getting into the system and understanding it, because London wouldn't understand what was going on unless you explained it against that background. And that was quite a good education, if you like, in the political ways of the French. But you did have to work at it; you couldn't be lazy; you couldn't just go to your favourite contact, write it all down and send it off. It might be seriously inaccurate.

MM: Did you find though, that nevertheless, if you were having a dinner party or something, you could bring all sorts of people together and they'd all talk freely about what their core objectives or their beliefs were?

JG: Well, it depended really. They wouldn't talk all that freely, even in front of each other. A bit like the Saudis really - they didn't want to be heard by another Saudi being indiscreet with you, and there was a bit of that in the French. On the whole you'd do one-to-one lunches or small dinner parties, or you'd do social parties in which case they'd be social and you wouldn't talk about business. You'd just enjoy being French and being in Paris and discussing gossip, and the ladies would let rip. But if you tried to get twelve people around the dinner table to talk substance you could quite easily dry up. It wasn't that easy. Have you served in Paris?

MM: No, but my Ambassadorship was in one of the former French colonies.

JG: Which one?

MM: Madagascar.

JG: So you'd understand what I'm trying to discuss?

MM: Oh, all too well.

JG: That's quite a big posting for the French; it wasn't so many years ago.

MM: Yes, a very big Embassy.

JG: The Ambassador in Madagascar came back to Paris three or four years ago to become Political Director.

MM: Yes.

JG: Can't imagine that happening in the FCO even from Kenya or somewhere like that.

Under Secretary in the Foreign Office 1990-94

MM: Anyway, that was Paris and in 1990 you came back to be an Assistant, well an Assistant Undersecretary of State and Deputy Political Director.

JG: Yes, and I think I was lucky to get that. Patrick Wright had become PUS straight from Saudi Arabia in 1986. 1990 was his last year as PUS; he wanted to try me out at the AUS level at home. I hadn't done a political department or had a political appointment. My predecessor in the job I was appointed to, was David Ratford, who then became Ambassador in Oslo. He had had the whole of Europe as a single AUS, East, West, EU politics, Deputy Political Director, the whole lot, and I was appointed to that and I thought: "Blimey, there's an awful lot to take on here!" Before I got to the desk, it was divided up with one AUS for Europe and the Balkans, and an AUS for Western Europe and the Mediterranean-Western Europe and Gibraltar and the Cyprus-Greece-Turkey complex. But old Eastern Europe and the other side of the Iron Curtain was broken up and given to another AUS. I think Michael Tait was doing it. So the job was much smaller by the time I got to it, and I hit it as German

re-unification was coming to a climax, and John Weston, who was Political Director then, got on with that, told me to deal with the rest of the area of Western and Southern Europe; used Hilary Synnott, who was Head of Western European Department, as his adviser and staffer on the reunification negotiations. And I just observed it. I wasn't part of it, which was a correct management of position by John Weston, because it was so operational and I hadn't by then got myself under the desk. But there was a lot to do; I did a lot on Gibraltar, a lot on Cyprus. I did a lot of travelling. I did occasional EU Political Committee meetings, when John Weston wasn't able to do it. I went anyway for experience. So from Paris through that job was six years of constant Western European business. Again of a very useful, formative kind, because I was very short of it up to that point in my career, so it filled in a big gap of important Foreign Office substance.

MM: What were your views about, let's say, the Common Foreign and Security Policy?

JG: I enjoyed the Political Committee. I thought it was a very interesting collection. Most Political Directors were reasonably independent or reported directly to their ministers, so they had a certain amount of flexibility to discuss the evolution of policy. And I thought that that was one of the parts of the EU which I could respect and which worked quite well, although I was very conscious that there were a lot of Ambassadors around the table who weren't either informed in the same way that we were - the information flows were different - they didn't have as much information from Defence, or Intelligence, as we did. We were closely attached to the Americans and we brought in a whole range of stuff that we'd learnt from the Americans, obviously discreetly packaged into those discussions. Nor were they used to the exercising of power through diplomatic policy. They just liked talking about it and feeling as if they were part of a nice closed shop. So that sometimes dragged the discussions down to a low common denominator or a rather facile discussion. Sometimes the French, Germans and British would get their act together and sometimes the Italians would join us and we would have some very interesting discussions, and we would move things forward. And through this period the Balkans started blowing up. The Middle East was obviously a constantly sensitive subject. There was a lot of internal stuff; there was a certain amount of POL-MIL with the Americans.

MM: POL- what? I'm sorry?

JG: Politico-Military subject matter, as security, the political end of security, started coming into European discussions, but there was no security policy as such, in those years. We were reserving that side of things very much for NATO. But the input of American policy which was very POL-MIL-oriented – space - arms control, that sort of thing - there were some Political Directors who were always trying to edge into it, but then they ran up against the difficulties of having non-NATO members in the discussion - the Irish, amongst others - and so the complexity of that was quite interesting, and steering through it and getting our way out of all of that was, again, quite interesting.

In the middle of my period as AUS there was a change in my portfolio because, well, the Balkans blew up in 1991, the June war of Croatia and Slovenia against Serbia. The PUS re-ordered the portfolios, I think David Gillmore must have been PUS by then, and I was asked to take on the Balkans in addition to my other stuff, and the break-up of the Soviet Union and the move towards democracy of all the countries of Central and Eastern Europe went to the other AUS. So Michael Tait ceded the Balkans to me, and Bosnia and the Balkans became my number one subject. And a lot of time was spent on it and a lot of time in European Political Committee and with European ministers was spent on it. So that was quite a progression on my portfolio.

MM: Did you have much to do with the peacekeeping arrangements, or was it mainly Bosnia?

JG: Well it hadn't reached the peacekeeping stage. At this point it was sheer war. Peacekeeping came after Dayton.

MM: But I mean leading up to Dayton?

JG: I stopped being Deputy Political Director in 1993, so Dayton was at the end of 1994, no sorry the end of 1995. So it was the break-up of Yugoslavia, the business of dealing with Milosevic. A couple of times I saw him on my own. It was travelling around the Balkans and getting to know the people trying to run these new countries and it was all the international politics and diplomacy of it. At the same time remember, the Soviet Union was in the past, and these new countries were reforming themselves and the relationship between Western and Eastern Europe was having to be redesigned and we were, as it were, helping to

lay the structures of the new free Europe, which was an extremely interesting period of diplomacy.

MM: What did you make of Milosevic?

JG: Well, he was certainly an interesting personality to deal with - very cunning, very intelligent, and very sharp. Clearly mendacious. He needed to be. He was prepared to talk to people, and he did. I think I saw him with Ministers or maybe with the Ambassador, who was Peter Hall in the first instance, who knew his stuff in Serbia as well as anybody; and later Ivor Roberts. Milosevic was a pretty nasty operator. It was clear that he was a ruthless politician trying to exercise power as far as he could push his influence. A formidable tactician. In peace he became a pretty bad strategist. Everything he touched in the end narrowed the range of Serbia, progressively through Yugoslavia to Bosnia and Serbia, and then he lost the northern part of Bosnia, and then Kosovo. I mean progressively through his period he was losing bits of the Serbian empire, which I think is testimony to his strategic skills. But he was the most compelling politician. Wasn't quite the nastiest politician I met. I think Franco Tudjman has to take that prize. He was that much less able and that much more vain and blind to what was going on, but still pretty cunning and unpleasant. And those two were at least of the stature of minor Heads of State or Government. The other people we were dealing with were mostly small town mayor standard, jacked up suddenly into high positions, claiming importance for a few years or a month. It was an area I didn't know at all. I had to learn from scratch in terms of its traditions, its history, ways of doing business, indeed just its geography. A very compelling area actually. Somehow it's the most beautiful countries that turn out to be the most brutal in terms of human interaction.

MM: Yes, I knew absolutely nothing about it. Never been there. I've been there on holiday. You never really grasp the scale of it until you've been there.

JG: Yes. I mean there was quite a lot of international diplomacy going on during this period. Lord Carrington was brought into it, as part time negotiator for a Bosnian solution. Working with José Cutileiro of Portugal, out of the Western European Union. Then David Owen came into it. Cy Vance: the Owen-Vance combination came along. Then the Norwegian ex-Prime Minister, Stoltenberg, and then Carl Bildt. There was a series of very interesting international negotiators with the double hat of the UN and the EU, so I did a lot of work with

them and in the end got to know Carl Bildt as well as any of them because he, not being a Brit, nevertheless depended on the Brits a lot for operational help for his office in Sarajevo. We fed him intelligence and that sort of thing, which he couldn't get from anybody else. Obviously Carrington and Owen got it as well. We tend to do that with international negotiators whom we both trust to be discreet and whom we want to help. Somebody said to me at one stage: "You're not going to get to the top of the Office until you've been tested in a crisis; and your crisis was managing the Balkans and the conferences in London, and the tension and the need for quick operational decisions, and your management of the Balkans area was your test in that respect", and it was a very interesting challenge.

Dealing with Ambassador Richard Holbrooke and other key individuals

MM: Did you come across Richard Holbrooke?

JG: Well, yes, eventually, yes. First when I was Minister in Washington, but that's the move to Washington at the end of 1993. I'd had John Weston as Political Director, from early 1990 to mid-1991, then Appleyard from 1991 until the end of 1993, then Pauline Neville-Jones. And as Pauline came in, I left for Washington which was a job I was gunning for, because I wanted to pick up my American line of business, having had nothing to do with the United States during the 80s, except where I met them within Saudi Arabia or in France. I was very little in London at that stage. The 80s was the US era which I knew at first hand not at all, but wanted to pick it up again. I thought that Number 2 in Washington would be an extremely interesting political assignment, and so I got that under Robin Renwick, and naturally enough he asked me to lead on the Balkans. And you'll remember that the first couple of years of the Clinton Presidency, 1993-94 indeed from 1992 onwards, we were scrapping pretty hard with the Americans over Bosnia policy. It was probably the most divisive issue of international politics between us. It was that deep in the end.

MM: Because?

JG: Because they were very clearly pro-Bosnian, wanted sanctions to be lifted for the Bosnians and for Serbia to be bombed - the policy known as "lift and strike" - and we thought that that would just prolong the war, would not bring people to the table. The Americans would end up supplying the Bosnians with arms; the Serbs would be very difficult to defeat militarily, but the Bosnians would never let go, so you'd have a much longer Civil War in

Yugoslavia than if you got them to negotiate, and the Americans felt that this was an injustice to the Bosnians, because they'd been attacked so aggressively by the Serbs. And that injustice lay at the root of supporting the Bosnians and crushing the Serbs. They regarded us as being hopelessly and historically pro-Serbian, and the Germans tended to think that as well, because they were very pro-Croatia.

MM: The Germans were pro-Croatia?

JG: Yes, this was a triangular thing. The Germans were pro-Croatian. The Americans were pro-Bosnian and we were regarded as pro-Serb, although of course I would maintain we were absolutely neutral in what we did, and I mean we were, but we weren't just going to lie down in front of an American policy which we felt was going to prolong the violence. And indeed in the end, in 1995 the Americans gave up and took over our policy.

MM: What about the French? What line did they take?

JG: Well, they tended to agree with us, against the Bosnians, and in the end they turned out to be even more pro-Serbian than we were on the ground, and there were French officers on the ground trying to protect the Serbs that we were trying to capture for war crimes. Although that shouldn't perhaps be laid at the door of the French state. We and the French saw pretty much eye to eye during this period. The Germans were quite close to us as far as the Bosnians were concerned, but they were heavily swayed by their Croatian population and by the media.

MM: Oh so *that's* why the Germans were pro-Croatia.

JG: Yes, there were about 4-500,000 Croats in Germany, and of course it went back to the Second World War where the Croats and the Germans were on one side and the British and the Serbs were on the other, in the Balkan escapades with Mihailovic. So that was pretty fierce stuff, and Holbrooke became the Assistant Secretary of the State Department for European Affairs in September 1994 and he'd come out of an ambassadorship in Germany. And what happened was that I had to scrap with him over this. And he tried the usual treatment on me and found that I was prepared to stand up to that – all the bullying and machinations. But also he's Dick Holbrooke. I've got to know him very well through the

various assignments we'd been through together, and he's a pragmatist. He wants a result, so he's prepared to talk business, and he has a very clear and sharp understanding of what he needs to project American power, which surprisingly few American diplomats are actually very good at. So you learnt a lot from scrapping with Dick Holbrooke. You learn to look after yourself, but you also learn to look for results, because he does look for ways to move forward. He's very inventive. You have to watch that he's not going to run away with the ball in a direction the UK doesn't want. If you stand up to him, he's prepared to listen and indeed change. So that was fairly dramatic. There was a lot of diplomacy through 1994-95. There was that dreadful moment in Bosnia when a State Department visiting team, in fact Holbrooke was there, was on a mountainside in armoured cars, and they rolled off the mountainside and killed his Deputy Assistant Secretary of State and the wonderful Pentagon guy who was doing Bosnia at that stage, and that was a tragic personal moment for Dick; he felt that very strongly.

Minister in the Embassy in Washington 1994

MM: Apart from that, what about the election in Washington? Were you as Minister mainly concentrating on the Balkan problem?

JG: Yes, it was a wide-ranging job. It was the only Minister position remaining. All the other Ministers had been cut by the inspectors before we got there. So I ran the Embassy in a routine way as main manager of business under the Ambassador; took the morning meeting and monitored from then onwards. The Ambassador would come once a week to the morning meeting; and then the core team, the counsellors and the defence attachés would go to their own meeting with him on Thursday mornings. Robin Renwick, who was really another very interesting diplomatic operator to sit at the feet of, had a lot to do on Northern Ireland and the relationship with the Clinton administration. It was a very difficult period at that stage, when Gerry Adams was being let into America to talk and to raise money for the IRA. The Clinton administration were fairly favourable to that. Obviously there was a huge amount of routine business to do with the Americans; at least I was always active. So I was mainly operating with Chancery on the political stuff, but again I had to oversee the Consulates-General and I had to organise the collective gatherings of Consulates-General, visit them all, write their reports so that I'd know what they were up to. I had to have an observer's view of what was going on throughout the Ambassador's realm, in that sense. That took up a lot of time. It was constant work ranging from the State Department to the

NSC (National Security Council), work with the Pentagon, and there was a certain amount of travel. I was only there for 14 months, so all this was packed into quite a short posting. Not something I was expecting, but John Coles wanted me to be a candidate for Chief Clerk when Andrew Wood moved on. And I was brought back for that, but actually Rob Young got the position and not me. I was brought back to just sit and wait for that, but I had been a candidate in front of the board for the DUS job, and my name came up when the next DUS job was available. In fact Rob Young left a gap when he moved sideways from DUS for Middle East and Eastern Europe, and I moved into that job to replace Rob Young rather than be left in Washington. I think John Coles regretted that I'd had such a short time in Washington, but felt that I ought to be back on the board to be a candidate for Political Director when Pauline eventually moved on. So I left anyway after 14 months, which was a pity because you can't achieve that amount in just a year in such a posting. And we had a lovely house.

Deputy Under Secretary in the Foreign Office 1995 and a visit to Moscow

JG: My family were pretty disappointed to lose a nice base in Washington. They liked exploring the United States, but there you go. And back we came to the rigours of living in London, to this house we are sitting in - we'd got it in early 1992, because my tall son was hitting the ceiling in our older Victorian house. And I had had this strangely mixed job of Middle East and Eastern Europe as DUS, which didn't have any particular structure to it, and which was effectively cut at the end of 1995 when the inspectors so decided in a structural review at that time. It had got me into Eastern Europe, which I didn't know very well. I'd never been to Russia. I visited Brian Fall in Moscow in the summer of 1995. I arrived very late in the evening. I think we had a short meal and drink and as I went to bed he handed me an envelope and I took it into my bedroom and opened it up and it was a note to me explaining why he thought that the job of DUS Eastern Europe, looking after Russia, amongst other things, was redundant, and what did I think I was doing? Was I trying to get into the chain of command between London and himself? So I went to bed; went to sleep; got up in the morning; went down to breakfast and then he took me into the safe room for a morning meeting and discussion of what was going on, and I very carefully and deliberately explained why I had come; what I was doing; how I could be useful to the Embassy as an advocate for them in London - an extra wheel for negotiations amongst other things, and basically took him head on, but also in front of his staff, and he never raised it again after that point. In a

sense he was right, my job was cut six months later, but I was not prepared to be shooed off the territory in that way.

MM: A strange greeting.

JG: Yes. But Moscow was fascinating to visit in 1995. I came back from Washington in March 1995, so April to December 1995 was this strange DUS job, which included a certain amount of Middle East diplomacy where Ministers weren't able to get there for several months. It was useful to have a DUS to turn up and pretend to be a Minister. And Eastern Europe, I visited the Baltics for the first time in my life. I went round to see Poland, Czech, Hungary, Slovakia. Went to central Asia for the first time in my life – saw Almaty and Tashkent, saw Samarkand; saw the mountains south of Almaty, got to see the most extraordinarily out of date and smelly sheep-skin factory just outside Almaty, saw what it was like to rely on that sort of low-grade industry in the old Soviet Union, flew in the most extraordinary rickety aircraft I've ever known, belonging to Uzbek Airways. So all of that was extra experience of what the world was made up of. What fun it would have been to spend time doing the Silk Route. But I did have just a glimpse of the beginnings of the Pamirs, still virgin territory as far as I'm concerned.

Impressions of Moscow

MM: What did you think of Moscow?

JG: Of Moscow as a city? Well, a city like that of course needs a river in the middle to give it relief. And the buildings on the river are very grand. The Embassy is right opposite the Kremlin, under the Kremlin walls and up into the Kremlin circle. It's a very impressive city and as you get away from the impressive centre - perhaps people have this experience in London, I don't know - but it all gets rather drab and grey with lots of concrete and glass, and the Soviet style of architecture takes over from the Tsarist, the rather grander Tsarist style. But you don't go to Moscow and walk across Red Square without being pretty impressed by the greatness and the history of the city.

MM: And then the people?

JG: Well, yes, you can't really get at the people in a two or three day visit, when you don't speak Russian, but you can see the sort of stolid character of the people just looking at them in the street, doing their shopping, etc. The Soviet style of diplomacy was still running pretty strongly. Indeed their training as diplomats and their language training, and their skill in playing their hand and indeed in hiding their hand, is considerable. They are formidable diplomatic adversaries.

MM: A formidable people altogether I think.

JG: Yes, they've just been terribly badly led most of the time, I think.

MM: So anyway, I suppose the Political Director's job in the FCO must have proven to be an interesting challenge. This would be when?

Political Director in the FCO 1996-98

JG: January 1996 until June 1998. An extremely interesting job, I think. To my mind, the best job in the Office for two reasons. The PUS is obviously the senior job, but the PUS's feet are tied down with all sorts of administrative tasks, and representative diplomacy which he has to do. The Political Director is independent; he can set his own programme; travel a huge amount; he's negotiating the whole time. You're dealing with the meat of diplomacy at the top senior level in a very interesting way. So long as you have a good relationship with your Minister, and you respect the calendar and obviously the things you have to do, then the scope for independent negotiation, for bringing things back as negotiator, is very high. I absolutely loved the job. I thought it was fascinating.

MM: 1996 would be ...

JG: You're talking Malcolm Rifkind, with the Conservative Government in huge tangles over Europe, and from the Foreign Office's point of view getting into some fairly distasteful corners as a result of a shortage of votes in the House of Commons, and against some of our policy and diplomatic instincts. So all of that sort of got in the way and got washed up in official activity. We weren't really able to save them from the consequences of their actions because it was all so political. I had a certain amount of negotiation to do over the Balkans. I came in just after the Dayton peace accords. Pauline Neville-Jones went to Dayton, but

Jacques Blot of France and Wolfgang Ischinger of Germany, who were my two closest European colleagues, both worked on the Balkans and peacekeeping at the UN, and handling of the new countries of the Balkans was a large part of the job in those years. Quite a lot of contact group activity with the Americans. Richard Holbrooke reluctant to do it, but John Kornblum took over in early 1996, and Kornblum was not the most flexible of creatures, but he was at least prepared to get into close conversations about all of this. So there was a lot of travelling to other capitals for one reason or another. A lot of European business was taking place. The Political Committee was going strong, so I reckoned I was on a plane or a train once every two days in the working season. About 150 journeys a year. That was quite tiring and weekends easily got given away, but then the business was very compelling.

MM: What was our situation in relation to the EU?

JG: The Spaniards and the Portuguese had come in, so we were twelve. The Political Committee was still running the Common Foreign and Security Policy, the CFSP, so security had crept in from the early 1990s. We, with French and Germans, were the main players in all of that. And probably, occasionally, we got out-manoeuvred by the French on something small, but on the whole we were able to get what we wanted out of the Political Committee with good staff work and good diplomacy within the Political Committee.

MM: What would be a good example of the kind of matter that you were negotiating over?

JG: The Balkans. I mean, the Balkans developed a contact group with the Americans, the three main Europeans, and the Italians who insisted on being part of it, and the Russians, so that was a contact group of six, which met fairly regularly to deal with the Balkans and which had to translate the decisions it took on Balkans policy into the Political Committee, so there was a considerable amount of resentment amongst the other European countries that the contact group were trying to settle things ahead of time, and we had to be quite diplomatic in explaining what we were doing; why the contact group had to bring the Russians along; what needed to be done, etc. The “smalls” as we called them, Luxembourg, Belgium, Dutch, Danish, Greek, Irish, and the resentment of the Spanish and Portuguese, had to be handled with care. To some extent, the same sort of thing was going on in the Middle East, during the Middle East Peace Process. In the Madrid Process, I remember, obviously the Spanish were much bigger players on that issue. And there were shades of colourings between support,

outright support, for the Palestinians and greater sympathy with the Israelis. We were usually with, sometimes with the Germans, often with the Irish, prepared to give more time to the Israeli point of view than most others in the European Union. So there was quite a lot of work to be done to save our policy from getting into trouble. From being pulled in the pro-Arab direction in a way which would have caused us considerable difficulty with Washington. So we were now very used to the Blair Washington/Europe split, it was happening even in the Conservative government in all sorts of detailed ways. The Brits constantly found themselves having to find a position in Europe that was nevertheless still sustainable with Washington because there is so much business to be done with America in the latter context. We don't want to be dragged into Europe and we don't want the French and Germans to be too anti-American, so some of the Balkan peacekeeping issues, some of the continuing issues of NATO with Russian influence growing strongly in this period, the leftovers of disarmament in the OSCE - the Russians were very keen on the OSCE and the development of the European Charter, which never got going, and they were given just enough meat to stay within the NATO-Russian relationship, so the Russians were constantly trying to flex their muscles and get into the European instruments and institutions, and the Americans were constantly carping about what Europe was doing, and how we didn't pay enough attention to their point of view. So we were a group, and I did a lot of work and in many ways sympathised a lot with the French and German teams on this, but I had to do it in a way which didn't lose us either the Americans or the Russians, particularly on the Balkans but also over NATO diplomacy. The Central and Eastern Europeans had to be massaged also through this period, because they wanted to have some attention and to have their independence recognised by the European Union. So there was a huge amount of negotiation to be done; constant meetings in different places and travelling and soothing of feathers.

MM: Of course this is on the political side, but presumably on the economic side of things, we would be much more closely allied to the French and Germans and so on because of our membership of the EU?

JG: Yes, but that was done by people other than the Political Director. That was done by the UK Representative in Brussels; it was done by Treasuries and Departments of Trade. There was another side of the Foreign Office or the European Union to deal with this, which I didn't oversee, which was run by the economic DUS, which at the time was Paul Lever, once Michael Jay had gone to Paris. So I was free for political organisation. A lot of work with

the Ministry of Defence; a lot of work in Bosnia and so on. Lots of travelling to the Balkans. So it was a very political job and I didn't get tied down in the arcanery of the Commission and of Pillar One in the European Union. We were very distinctly Pillar Two, and that was nation states and not Brussels. So I was very glad not to be drawn into the economic side. I much preferred the raw political area.

Relations with Ministers

MM: And how about dealing with Foreign Office Ministers? Did they interfere at all? You needed to consult them on things I'm sure ...?

JG: Well, no civil servant can work without policies set by duly elected Ministers. Malcolm Rifkind was very business-like, very intelligent, unique brain, read his papers, made pretty good judgements on the whole. Just occasionally he strayed off into concerns about his own position in the party, over Europe; this sometimes stopped him having a free run on the basis of policy considerations, and the Conservative party was becoming increasingly depressed in that last year, demoralised. Saw a certain amount of John Major in meetings, which I always thought he handled with great intelligence and diplomacy. It was very interesting to see how he fared. Then the elections in May 1997 brought in Robin Cook, whom I'd seen a couple of times to brief before the elections, as a duty to the Opposition, and we had to get used to a rather different master. But I evolved a very good new working relationship with Robin Cook. It was essential with Robin to get your business done quickly. He didn't like civil servants hanging around expatiating on stuff. He just wanted to know what you knew, that he needed to know, to give your advice and get out. But if he could trust you to despatch your business in anything from four to ten minutes, then he would see you more often. If he thought you would spend twenty-five minutes, then he wouldn't want to see you. He wasn't necessarily going to read the paper you put up to him. He would if it was something he was involved in or interested in. Shades of Peter Jay in several ways, although a sharper political mind. In those areas where he paid attention he was brilliant - as much voltage as I've seen from a Foreign Secretary; highly respected in Europe as a capable Minister. When it came in 1998 to chairing the Council of Ministers when we had the Presidency, he was regarded as one of the best Ministerial chairs at that Council that his colleagues had experienced. Surprisingly different reputation in Europe from the one he had at home. But it was also his personal side. He could be sometimes quite brusque with officials, quite difficult to work for. I didn't particularly find that - it washes off my back anyway. Just get on with it. I didn't

mind bringing things back for him to claim credit for if they went right, or say it was my fault if it went wrong. I would try again. He gave me time and space to do negotiation.

Throughout some of this period there was a certain amount to do on Gibraltar. Gibraltar and NATO were causing us some problems and I had to do some negotiations with the Spaniards, which got through that. I had to serve him as Senior Official Adviser when he was Chair of the Council of Ministers; I had to chair the Political Committee. So for six months of 1998 it was very intensive, while we were in the Presidency, it had to be prepared for; it had to be done properly, but I rather enjoyed chairing the committee and I like to get through the business.

MM: Who were the other participants of this committee?

JG: The 15 Political Directors of the European Union, so all your colleagues that you knew from the previous couple of years - that's the turnover on this job. But they're your equal colleagues in all the European Governments at Political Director level, and therefore there's a certain bonding in the club.

MM: But sometimes Robin Cook would chair these meetings?

JG: No, no, I'm making a distinction between the Political Committee, which is the committee of senior officials, of Political Directors, and Ministers, who met once a month. We met twice a month, separate from the Ministers and ad-hoc at other times. So in a six-month period you might have fifteen meetings as Political Director, and for one weekend you'd bring them to London and we had a private dinner at the Victoria and Albert Museum. So it is a club and your diplomacy is direct and quite intimate amongst friends and colleagues in the European Union, and when you disagree, you disagree with a certain friendly style and blame it on your Ministers for not solving it, but you don't destroy the relationship. Obviously you get the occasional prickly characters, who don't like you, but on the whole it's a very, intensively warm committee that does a lot of useful business.

MM: And you keep it all out of the press?

JG: Yes. I mean we don't talk to the press about what we do.

MM: Yes, it must be absolutely essential to keep it from them.

JG: Yes, you trust people. Occasionally word slips out, but it wasn't so interesting to journalists. It was pretty boring stuff for the general public to read about. But it is essential for clearing away the undergrowth of European diplomatic differences, or indeed initiatives together, before ministers do the public stuff. And you'd have to be a pretty assiduous journalist to consider it all worth writing about. Occasionally during the Balkans talks there was the occasional journalist scrapping with Dick Holbrooke over a comment, and you might be approached by journalists to get a perspective on what the Ministers might be up to, but the work of the Political Committee is not above the parapet of journalistic interest.

MM: Very interesting really.

JG: It was a very interesting job, and again, as I mentioned earlier, enough independence to feel that you could be creative, and that you weren't just calling back for instructions all the time. As long as you knew where your Minister wanted to end up, you could choose your route to get there. Break a few eggs if you had to, in your own way.

MM: So Robin Cook would give you a brief interview - an opportunity to say what you were doing, what did he do for the rest of the time? I mean, why was he so short of time?

JG: Well, any Foreign Minister is extremely busy. I mean, he has to meet with a huge number of colleagues around the world. Either they come to you, or you're travelling. He paid a lot of attention to the Middle East. He had a lot of parliamentary constituency work to do. He did a lot of media. There were crises that he had to deal with even if he wasn't dealing with them before, like Sandline, Sierra Leone, all of that. He worked very assiduously, very astutely on Libya, Libya and Lockerbie, during his period as Foreign Minister. He spent a great deal of time and attention in the House of Commons, which he was very good in. He didn't spend a huge amount of time talking to his colleague Ministers because, in my view, he was to some extent a political loner. He would clear his lines with the Prime Minister, but he wouldn't necessarily get into constant and deep conversations with him. We had to do a certain amount to clear our lines with Number 10, so the Political Director has to make sure that his lines are cleared with the Diplomatic Adviser at Number 10 - like Rod Lyne or John Holmes in that period, both very easy to deal with. So you're

watching him do a certain amount of that, and you're doing a certain amount of that at home, when there was plenty of trouble overseas to cope with. Robin Cook was someone who selected areas of policy to go deep into, when as I say he rolled up his sleeves and socked it for Britain if necessary. People like Douglas Hurd, and Malcolm Rifkind and Geoffrey Howe would read everything and pay attention to everything. They wouldn't necessarily be as prepared as Robin to wade in and boot people up, verbally, to get British policy through a difficult period.

MM: So you've got a high opinion of Robin Cook ...

JG: Yes, of course I know that he can be an ungracious individual. His staff in the Foreign Office didn't seem to enjoy working for him all that much, because he doesn't say thank you very often. He did to me, but I think we had a relationship of some mutual confidence, and we got to know each other's style. It was my job to get to know his and the other way around. You worked it out. I thought he got some things right actually.

Appointment as UKRep to the United Nations

MM: Would he have been largely influential in getting you this job in New York as UK Permanent Representative to the United Nations?

JG: There was a period when I was running for Washington, which I would have been quite interested in, as Ambassador, because when Robin Renwick left, he was succeeded by John Kerr, then John Kerr became PUS, and there was a gap. Christopher Meyer had just gone to Bonn. I was a candidate. There were one or two other people who were interested. I had the credentials of having been in Washington twice before. Christopher Meyer had been my predecessor in Washington so he had good credentials, too. But he'd only just gone to Bonn. So I think Christopher's and my name were put up to Number 10. Tony Blair decided that Christopher was the type of person that he wanted, and I think he was right. No complaints there. The Office would have seen that I'd tried and failed to get Washington. The obvious next option to suit my profile - Michael Jay was firmly established in Paris, and I wasn't naturally suited to Paris - was New York, so I put down a very firm marker for that. It would have needed Robin Cook's support for my name to go to Number 10. But first of all, your peers need to choose you for the job on the Personnel Board, and you have to have the support of the PUS. John Kerr wanted me to get the job and Robin Cook thought that I was

up to it, and Tony Blair eventually agreed. There were other candidates, two other candidates, but I think I probably had the strongest profile. The Political Director is seen as close to the centre. In a way it was mine to lose. They needed to decide at a senior political level that I was wrong for that particular job, that I wasn't a natural candidate. But then I'd never been to the UN before and lots of people had. David Gore-Booth was the main challenger. He was a high performer, but he'd had some brushes involving Cook. He was a bit disappointed. But it did help being Political Director at home.

MM: But the Prime Minister had a man who helped him with the job, to help him say yea or nay?

JG: Yes, because you turn up to every European Council, to brief him. You turn up to the briefings at Number 10 when the Foreign Ministers of the area come through. I remember there was one occasion, quite an early visit by the Prime Minister to Paris, I think it was late summer 1997, when there was a multilateral meeting taking place in Paris and a bilateral meeting with Chirac beforehand, and I was told that the Prime Minister's aircraft was leaving from Heathrow at the end of a holiday weekend, so it must have been Bank Holiday or something - and that I should be at the airport by 9 o'clock. I had gone down to the Isle of Wight to visit some friends there and was driving back at about five in the afternoon when I got a telephone call on my mobile saying: "The Prime Minister's aircraft is waiting, why aren't you there?" And I said: "Where? When? They're catching the nine o'clock flight". "No, it's been changed to five thirty" - and I said: "Well, nobody told me. You'll have to get somebody else. I can't do it. I'm in my shorts and T-shirt driving back from the Isle of Wight". My wife said I'd better go straight to the airport and I thought: "I'm not going to the airport like this. I'll catch the last flight to Paris". So I scabbled to get on the last scheduled flight and finally arrived in the middle of the evening in Paris. And there in the Salon Jaune in the Paris Residence was the Prime Minister having a briefing meeting and I came in. There was a silence - the Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary, Minister of State there, Diplomatic Adviser, Ambassador to France, and as I came in everybody was silent and the Prime Minister said: "Where have you been?" Nobody had told him what had happened and I said: "I'm terribly sorry Prime Minister, but nobody told me your flight time had been changed" and I got a sort of grunt. And this was just before the choice for the posting to Washington, so I'm not sure that that did me any good. The only place left in the whole room - I'd have liked a quiet corner - was on one of the main sofas, right next to the Prime

Minister, so I couldn't hide. He said: "What do you think I should say to Chirac about Yeltsin". There was going to be a meeting about Yeltsin the next morning, and I said: "Well". I muttered a few points. I had to invent an answer. It was all slightly embarrassing, and when I got back to London I resentfully tore back into the travel system in London, and there were some shamed faces. But the fact was that I hadn't double-checked, which I've done ever since. It wasn't the best impression for the first Prime Ministerial visit, so he got to know me then.

MM: So you took the job in New York and this was your first acquaintance with the United Nations, was there any preparation?

JG: Not really. I left the Political Directorship on the first of July, at the end of the Presidency, and I arrived in New York on the 13th. You could do nothing personal while you were doing the Presidency as Political Director, so we had to pack up in 10 days and I called on a few people, obviously Foreign Office Ministers, Number 10, Department of Overseas Development, DfID as it became known, and went out. I came back for a holiday break in August; but I decided I had to get out and see what was going on because there was a lot happening. I was in at the deep end.

MM: Who was Deputy Representative?

JG: For most of my time it was Stewart Eldon. But for my first two months it was Stephen Gomersall, who later became Ambassador in Tokyo, who was just sitting out the end of his time, he saw me through my early weeks. I arrived on 13 July. I went back for a holiday in August, most of the second half of August and a few days in September, and then after Labour Day everything picks up again. October was the first full month I spent on the Security Council and it was the UK's turn as President of the Security Council. So it was a crash start. I learnt pretty fast that Stephen Gomersall was very astute, he'd been there for four years, very able and practised in the ways of the Security Council. The Deputy in New York is to a great extent an alternate. There is so much work to do over the different organs of the UN that you need somebody with the rank of Ambassador to sit in other negotiations and indeed in the Security Council when you can't be there. The Americans have I think five people of Ambassadorial rank. The Russians have three or four. You can have as many as you like. In the UN the UK habitually keeps to two, but you need a very good Deputy. You

need a good Political Counsellor to manage the political work in the Security Council and be the communicator with all the other Counsellors in the delegations. There's a lot of bread and butter staff work to be done to get your Security Council work properly prepared and drafted, and talked through and indeed negotiated. So it is quite a strong team. You're borne up, bolstered by a good team of negotiators and drafters, but in the end you're out there on your own, and you've got to react with your own mind. There's not much time to consult.

MM: You're in a room with a lot of other people and the microphone's in front of you.

JG: Yes. You have to remember that most of the business of the Security Council is done in informal consultations behind closed doors, not in the horseshoe ring but in a room on the side, where you sit not very far from each other across from all. The President sits at the top two lines of tables and desks, seven down each row - the President at the top in a sort of 'U' shape and you're not quite this close across, with a gap in the middle, but you're right next to each other. You're speaking into a microphone because you're being interpreted the whole time. The work of the Security Council is very intensive, but I made an early decision that the British Ambassador in the United Nations couldn't just spend his time in the Security Council, which is fifteen members of the UN out of a membership of 190. You have got to spend time outside with a lot of other Ambassadors, very important ones, for development and human rights and the other business of the UN. We are, as Permanent Members, distinctly unpopular in that role. Permanent Membership is of itself extremely unpopular in the UN. It's seen as an elitist privilege, which is severely resented, particularly by the Third World, and you have to lay off for that. In the Security Council, you have to earn the UK's position on merit by being a problem-solver and not just be a bully for your own country's business, which not all Permanent Members get right. The French are very good at taking the same view that they have to work the whole system. Some of the American Ambassadors are very good at getting to know the whole system. Both Dick Holbrooke and John Negroponte took care to call on every other UN Ambassador, which I never did, to make the point that the US is capable of going to the small people and calling on them. But they regarded the Security Council as the power organ of the UN. Within a couple of days of arriving I went along to a meeting with the Economic and Social Council and spoke up to indicate that I had wanted to come along and learn about the subject. So ECOSOC, although it's not really a very functional institution in terms of doing the business of development, is a theatre in which you have to show yourself from time to time.

Iraq as a subject at the Security Council

But what your Ministers want you to do is to get the Security Council right, because that's where the politics are played out. So you have to spend a lot of time on that. And from the beginning Iraq was a very big subject. It was the main subject of my October 1998 Presidency and it was the aftermath of Kofi Annan's visit to Saddam Hussein in February of 1998, which had gone sour on him. Saddam didn't play ball with Security Council as I was arriving in July, when he could have got the nuclear file closed by the inspectors, and we were into real trouble by December 1998. This was the decisive subject when I arrived and I had to cope with it quickly.

MM: Did you get into difficulty with the French over that?

JG: Yes, the French, Russians and Chinese, I mean my particular difficulty in the Security Council was the experience and personal rank and power of the Russian representative, Sergei Lavrov, who had already been there for three years when I arrived; extremely articulate in both Russian and English. Very fierce on any policy mistake he thinks you have made; very determined to try and block the Superpower from having a free run on a subject like Iraq; and constantly critical of our policy the whole way through. The French were critical from time to time.

MM: Why was that?

JG: Chirac has in mind his special relationship with Iraq from way back and he was equally determined to prevent the United States from having a free run. So the Security Council members were split on Iraq throughout the five years that I was on Security Council.

MM: That's a long time isn't it? There was this agreement by the Security Council on the terms of Resolution 1441, and then for reasons that are not entirely clear to me, the British decided that they would need a second resolution authorising the use of force ...

Financial complexities at the United Nations

JG: Well, you've hopped three years forward. I don't know if you want to talk about other things before we get to the crunch there. I will talk about 1441 later. Throughout those five years I and my staff were very much engaged on the issue and spent a lot of time carrying it out.

One of the examples of when the Americans threw themselves into non-Security Council diplomacy was over trying to solve the very contentious issue of UN finances. The Americans had, at Congressional insistence, stopped paying their dues and Dick Holbrooke decided that this had to be sorted out. He didn't want the United States paying more than it had to pay, but didn't want them paying nothing because that was doing a lot of damage to the image and credibility of the US. So there was a hugely intensive and Holbrookian negotiation to change the American share from 25% to 22% and everyone else had to take up the slack on that. Yet everyone else wanted to have their shares reduced too. So he had to beat heads together and sell all sorts of people down the river, including us at one stage, to get this settled. Because the UK had had an economy and a currency that had gone up in economic terms over the previous year and the other European and Japanese economies had gone down, our share went up proportionately much further than most others, and London was giving me a good deal of grief over it. I was being told by the PUS that I was performing rather badly on the whole thing. So I had to go back and fight for a rebate from Holbrooke if I was to give my approval to his dastardly scheme for this change, which didn't fit the US's share of world GDP at all. So eventually I scored a rebate from him, with other members of the permanent five, which should have amounted to three or four million pounds, which would have kept the Foreign Office happy. And so we put all this up to John Kerr, the PUS, late at night on Christmas Eve, and he agreed to this deal with some distaste, because he was having trouble with the Secretary of State. And so it was settled. It was a brilliant Holbrooke negotiation. Nobody else could have dealt with Washington to bring them along including Congress; he was ringing Helms almost every night and handling it with the whole of the UN system. It was virtuoso diplomacy. But we completed it. This was in 2000, as Clinton was going out of office. And so was Holbrooke, and by the time he left, on January the 20th or whatever, the three or four million pounds had not been paid and never has been paid. We never got that money, because the next Administration never recognized a gentleman's agreement that Holbrooke and I had agreed orally.

Russian distrust of the Americans

And Holbrooke didn't press them to. So, okay, it was done and it was an oral agreement, but it's reminded me of something that the Russians constantly throw at the Americans, which is that they don't keep their promises. The Russians over this last five or six years of diplomacy have been surprisingly, in old fashioned terms, surprisingly obliging in terms of going along with Western diplomacy on a whole range of things, because they've wanted too much from the Western system from a position of weakness. But when it came to the later Iraq story, Putin dug in on a couple of very serious occasions because the Americans were offering him something that he regarded as an insubstantial diplomatic repayment for going along with the Americans on Iraq, and he wouldn't accept their word. On one or two occasions I said to the Americans: "I'm afraid I understand why." I just wanted to give them a tweak. Because I've always tended to tell the Americans privately when I disagree with them, when I think they've not taken the right road or misjudged something, or just misbehaved, and this has occasionally annoyed them. This continued into my period in Iraq. But you have to, otherwise they take you for granted. I learned with Holbrooke in Washington, back in the mid-90s – you have to stand up to them. Anyway, there was that.

Negotiations over Africa and Anglo-French co-operation

There was plenty of work on Africa. Alain Dejammet, the first French Ambassador there for my first year of my time in the Security Council, was wonderfully experienced and knowledgeable and clever, if rather long-winded. Note takers with Alain Dejammet would put down their pencils when he started talking at the Security Council and only take them up again when he went into the third reprise. There always was a third reprise, which was more succinct than the first two. He was succeeded by – Alain by the way wrote that marvellous booklet - "Dormir aux Nations Unies" – "Where to Sleep in the United Nations Building" – a wonderful jokey little pamphlet on where the best places for having a kip were when you had had enough. His successor was Jean-David Levitte, who was Chirac's Diplomatic Adviser up to that point, and thought about the United Nations in very much the same way as I did - from his own national position of course - and about the Security Council as something to be evolved pragmatically rather than reformed in formal charter terms. Remember Security Council reform is in the background the whole time - enlargement to the wider membership. He and I got together, particularly on Africa, and came to realise that if France and the UK drove something in the Security Council, even if the Americans didn't like it very much, we usually got it through because our constituencies would add up to a classic majority the

whole time. When we and the French were split, usually the whole Security Council was split and we and the Americans together couldn't command a majority in the Security Council, and we didn't over Iraq. Levitte and I worked very closely together. He had no hang-ups about the Anglo-Saxons, partly because he hadn't got a drop of French blood in him. He had a Russian father and an Anglo-Dutch mother and is as French as they come in terms of fighting for his own country's interest, extremely subtly and cleverly, but he can cope with the Brits and was on good terms with the Americans. That was a very productive period, and we restarted the whole business of missions of the Security Council to countries that were of peacekeeping concern. It started with East Timor. I went on a mission that helped to persuade Habibie to release East Timor from the jaws of the Indonesian military, and then we went into a whole series of missions to Africa to try to deal with the Great Lakes and Sierra Leone, which sometimes Jean-David and I led; Holbrooke led the first one to Africa. We tried to stop the Ethiopian-Eritrean War in May 2000 and failed to do it. And went on a series of other missions to Africa. It was very interesting. One went to the Balkans. One went to Afghanistan. The whole business of evolving the Security Council into an operational instrument of peacekeeping diplomacy, including with Presidents in their own countries, evolved quite fast in our period. There had been a big gap from the early 90s. The UN peacekeeping arm in the Security Council got rather demoralised after Ruanda and Somalia in 93/94 and didn't really pick up again until 1999/2000. But then we began to evolve some quite useful diplomacy on Africa in particular, and got some things right. Eventually we got Sierra Leone right. Slowly, and with plenty of black spots, we got the Congo getting better. We kept Angola out of trouble to some extent, although it's remained a bitter place for some time. Sudan, Somalia we failed on. Ethiopia, Eritrea we eventually succeeded in. Ivory Coast has been difficult. Sierra Leone turned into Liberia which has remained difficult. But we went for it head on, which I think was the right way to go. The Security Council had to evolve more detailed and more professional mandates and bring in the advice of NGOs to a greater extent, and to have a better relationship with the Secretariat over the preparation of mandates in the resolutions. Adding to all of this you have to throw in 9/11, which was of course a bitter day in New York and I've talked about it elsewhere, but everybody has their own story and mine's not particularly interesting.

Reaction to the 9/11 terrorist outrage in New York

MM: Were you there when ...?

JG: I was driving to a European Union Tuesday morning meeting, a regular meeting of the EU members close to the UN building, and my driver said: "It's on the news that some 'plane or something has just flown into the Twin Towers." We thought it was an accident, and as we started the meeting the news continued to come in and we realised that it was deliberate. And then I was the first one to say, when we realised that it was two airliners: "This has to be Al Qa'eda?" We stopped and went back to our offices and watched the Twin Towers coming down - a truly shocking experience. But out of that came the diplomacy on counter-terrorism. An immediate resolution. Unanimous, completely supportive of counter-action by the United States, backed up in the General Assembly. And then came UNSCR 1373, which was that detailed Resolution setting out the obligations of all member states to take action against terrorism in their territory. I was asked to be Chair of the Implementation Committee of that, which is unusual for a permanent member - it's normally the elected members who chair the Committees. That was thrown into my work as an extra for the next eighteen months, and I had to run that Committee, which took up a lot of time on top of everything else. Increasingly I was pushing work down to the desk officers to do themselves, which they quite enjoyed. It was a very deliberate move to delegate authority. So the United States got sympathy for that. Gradually over the next two years, that sympathy began to run out as people began to see that the Bush administration was not one that they could naturally feel sympathetic about, because of what it was doing elsewhere. During the whole Afghanistan campaign and into 2002 the Americans received a lot of support; and it was only when they came back to the business of Iraq and decided to make their own decisions, and failed to capitalise on other areas of business like development and the environment in the way that other people were expecting, that they began again to lose the sympathy of the Third World, which I regard as a missed opportunity for American policy and diplomacy. I think that they should have started realising that persuasion is as powerful a weapon as economic and military force. "The third dimension of power" as Joe Nye calls it - this year's Ditchley Annual Lecturer - a Harvard professor at the J F Kennedy School of Diplomacy, who has spoken a lot about, and has written a book about, the three dimensions of power. In a free world you can't ignore persuasion and free choice.

So gradually through 2002 we came back to Iraq and getting the inspectors in again and the story is well told in other books. Anthony Seldon has just brought out a new book on Blair, which has a chapter on Iraq, to which I contributed a number of things, which tells the story

of Blair's input into Iraq diplomacy. The Bob Woodward book is also full of stuff – the second Bob Woodward book 'Plan of Attack' – anyway I've given a lot of interviews about 1441 and the Second Resolution. Just to summarise it for you, it was Colin Powell, with the help of Blair, who persuaded Bush to go to the UN to try one last time on 12 September. Bush came to the UN and said that he would work with the UN for the necessary resolutions to deal with Iraq and to get the inspectors back, but Iraq would have to respond or else, was mainly the message. Iraq then allowed the inspectors back in. The 1999 Resolution – 1284 – was already there as a basis, but we decided it was too out of date at that stage, and needed to be brought up to date, so a new Resolution was going to be necessary. And then there were eight weeks of negotiation for 1441, in the later stages mainly between Ministers and not between Ambassadors in New York, which is unusual. Obviously we did some supporting work but the main negotiation was done on the telephone between Ministers. Eventually after a lot of wrangling and a lot of infighting in Washington between hardliners and the less hardliners, we got 1441 – a surprise at the end as Syria came on board - as 15 to nil. We didn't know until ten minutes beforehand that they were coming on board. Colin Powell did not come to the actual vote, but I spoke to him just as the vote took place because he was grateful for British help – and that seemed to be quite a diplomatic victory for Bush and Powell and for the Brits in support – an American triumph really.

The inspectors then went back in and we rather sat on our hands over Christmas and New Year on the basis of 1441, even though we had papered over some cracks with the final language. In the early months of 2003 those cracks started to widen again, particularly with the French. Some mistakes were made on both sides, but the French and Americans fell out basically. They weren't talking rationally to each other. The French were determined to try to stop the Americans getting to the stage of using military force which they clearly were preparing for, and giving any pretext for the use of force; whereas we were fixed to the area of WMD and the failure of Saddam to meet the terms of 1441. The Americans rather let us down. Every new speech seemed to bring up a new reason for having a go at Saddam, and putting 1441 into the background. So, I suppose it was I primarily who persuaded London that we needed to go for a second resolution to try to get it clarified one way or the other, even though we had to be clear that the second resolution wasn't necessary in legal terms for the use of force. But it would be a lot clearer if we could do it with international support. To get that, I felt that we had to find a smoking gun - that is, find WMD on the ground - and advised that we shouldn't actually agree to use force until we had international support,

which would be got by finding WMD. The French and the Chinese were indicating to us privately that that would persuade them. But no smoking gun was found. The Americans weren't going to stop their preparations for war. The Prime Minister battled with them for more time because he felt that three months of inspections wasn't enough. We went through all those Security Council meetings with Powell, Villepin, Straw, all debating publicly. It was all very intensive and quite bitter diplomacy in many ways, and there was very little hope, as time went by, of finding a diplomatic solution. I am convinced that the Prime Minister genuinely went on trying to solve this without resort to force, to get Saddam to leave the country or to get him to cough up his WMD under the impulsion of Security Council diplomacy. But we couldn't persuade the Security Council to unite behind that thought because it would have meant automatic approval for the use of military force if the final criterion wasn't met. And what was the final criterion? I tried a late effort at a benchmarks exercise over a ten-day final chance for Saddam, but the French and Russians weren't interested and the Americans weren't terribly interested either. So we gave up on 17 March and I was asked by London, somewhat to my distaste, but one obeys instructions on these occasions, to blame the French in person and by name for having threatened the veto whatever the circumstances – the famous “quelques soient les circonstances” – earlier in the month, and diplomacy collapsed in shards around us and the war started a couple of days later.

So that was my sort of swan song – a major piece of diplomacy – although the final months of my tenure up to the end of July was spent trying to start repairing the breaches once the conflict was over. We got a Resolution through at the end of May which again was unanimous – 1483 – which set the basics for the legal occupation of Iraq and for the relationship between the UN and the occupying forces, and which established a mandate for a UN Representative which became Sergio de Mello. So by the time I left - after one final African mission to West Africa, which I led at the end of June - I left New York with the Security Council pretty well rent by Iraq, but having begun to work efficiently on many other subjects. It was a fascinating field of diplomacy. You were dealing with the whole world, sometimes without much power to get things done. There was a huge failure on the Middle East peace process. There were failures and successes on Iraq, but an eventual failure. And quite a lot of very useful and accumulative work on East Timor, the Balkans, Africa and the practice of the Security Council – all under a fascinating, charismatic and very friendly Secretary-General, Kofi Annan.

MM: Going back to the French veto – what was their exact reason for saying “quelques soient les circonstances”?

JG: Well you have to go into Chirac’s history and mentality. He kept on saying from January onwards really, when he realised the Americans were not merely serious, but were making preparations, that war was going to be the wrong answer in Iraq, was going to be destructive of much wider Middle-East diplomacy; was going to have the region in flames; was going to, obviously, affect the French relationship with Iraq; was going to make things very difficult with Iran; was going to be bad for oil diplomacy and very bad for transatlantic relations. He couldn’t see all of that being less important than deposing Saddam. But perhaps the major reason that he just dug in was that he did not want the Americans having a unilateral free run for the use of force without being under the remit of the Security Council and international rules and international diplomacy. He went on a lot about unipolarity and multipolarity in the world and did not want to see the Americans creating a practical basis for themselves and the unilateral decisions they were making on global security. He just dug in. He just wouldn’t really talk about it, and the Americans weren’t prepared to humour him or discuss his view of things. And typically Chiracian, he overdid it in certain ways. He expressed himself too strongly. He made it too personal. Villepin sort of helped him in that, in his overblown oratory at the United Nations and his rather mercurial moods that Colin Powell got quite fed up with. But you cannot deny that the French had a point when you look back now and we’ll maybe have to see how the whole thing ends up at the end of the Iraq story – who was right. The French could very well be right, but expressed themselves in pretty un ...

MM: But they could have given the Americans permission, so to speak, the cover of a Security Council Resolution as we wanted to do? I mean we thought surely – I mean Mr Blair must have thought that it was going to be possible to deliver the Security Council to the Americans so that they could be authorised?

JG: Well both London and Washington knew that 1441 was enough of a basis. The French at one stage about three months before the war said: “Don’t try to put down another Resolution. It’ll end in tears. And we will recognise that what you’re putting the weight on

is 1441. You must make your argument based on 1441, but don't try and make us agree explicitly to the use of force, because we won't go along with that".

MM: But you can use force under 1441?

JG: Well they said they would be against it, so there was a trap in what they were proposing; the trap being that we wouldn't really fulfil the terms of 1441, which said that there had to be further deep discussion before force was used. My interpretation of that was that there should be discussion around a draft resolution. And although a resolution itself was not legally necessary, it was politically necessary, and it was much better to be clear about it and make people take a decision on where they stood. If we did what the French suggested, they would turn round and say that we hadn't actually lived up to the terms of 1441, and that we hadn't tried to continue diplomacy till the last moment. So I thought it was a trap and to some extent it was a trap. Anyway the Prime Minister was pretty clear that he wanted to try to the end. He had to defend his domestic constituency. He had to face the House of Commons and we gave it a go. He thought that American and British persuasion might be enough to bring ten members of the Security Council over, and indeed ten members of the Security Council did agree with our policy at one time or another. They never agreed with it together at any one moment. The French were pulling them out as fast as we were bringing them on board. All somewhat unseemly.

MM: How were our negotiations with the French? I mean did they make it plain to you – the French Ambassador at the UN, their Security Council Representative – make plain that they were going to oppose?

JG: Yes at the end. But they didn't have to make it plain in New York. Chirac had made it plain publicly, and Villepin had made it plain to Straw. But he was also saying it in the Security Council and so were the Russians. The Russians I don't think would have vetoed without the French. The Chinese would happily have gone along with either of the two and wouldn't have taken any initiative. If the French had come round to our side, I think the Russians and perhaps the Chinese might have abstained. All of them might have abstained. That's why we were so disappointed that Chirac was determined not just to abstain but to veto. It was quite a strong decision I think. And you know the bad blood is still there.

Future of the United Nations

MM: Yes it is. It's very hard to see how one could get over that. Is the future of the United Nations doomed by it?

JG: Absolutely not. The UN is so much more than the Security Council and is the only global institution, and as a forum it has been very successful since the Second World War in putting most interstate wars to bed. It's the breakdown internally of states and rogue states that have become the problem. The UN is all the agencies and the Secretariat, as well as the intergovernmental forum. The General Assembly is pretty weak, but the Security Council still does a huge amount of other business, which is necessary. But it was a bad episode for the strength of the Security Council.

MM: But do you think the Security Council should be reformed in some way?

JG: Yes. British policy - and I agreed with it - made perfectly clear that we wanted a Security Council of 24 with ten permanent members and wanted Germany and Japan to come on board. To do that you need to bring on three developing world countries. But it's not negotiable within the membership of the UN and hasn't been for the last ten years. The Brits support that.

MM: Would it have to be unanimous?

JG: No it had to be a two-thirds majority. There wouldn't be a veto on it. It would have to be passed in the General Assembly. I don't think in the end it would make a huge difference to the difficulties that the Security Council has to face from permanent membership and from being a very small number amongst 191 members of the UN. I think we would have considerable problems in having a pragmatic and operational Security Council with 24 rather than 15 members. So personally I don't think we would be supremely better off with 24 than 15, but I do think it would be a just and right move to make the Security Council more representative of the full Security Council membership.

MM: Do you think that in view of the fact that we're trying to create a European Union that exists in name why not simply have a single representative of the EU in the Security Council?

I know that this would be difficult to achieve, but it would mean the French and ourselves giving up permanent membership? There might be more justice in it.

JG: There's no more justice in it, because the UN is a collection of member states. Everybody speaks in front of a member state's label. Even when the Arabs or the Non-Aligned or anybody else speaks, they speak from behind the national nameplate and they say: "As I speak, I am also representing my Group". They say that, but they speak as a nation state. This is a collection of nation states, and that's how the UN works, so it would be a departure for the EU to act collectively together. And there are two primary reasons why it would be a bad idea. One is that the EU is not yet a cohesive and powerful enough diplomatic unit to be effective at the UN; and the second is that in the Security Council you tot up the votes, and whereas if we stayed nation states we would be entitled to four votes, as the EU we would be left with one, and we would be outvoted constantly. Those four votes would be very valuable when you need three-fifths of the Council to pass a Resolution, or two-fifths plus one to block it. We would be a very powerful unit as four, but actually would for two reasons be less powerful as one. One because we would be one, not four. The other because the diplomacy of getting the EU position together with constant committee work would be hideous, and the flexibility and diplomatic speed of manoeuvre would be lost, something which the British and the French happen to be particularly good at. So it would be bad news in terms of the practice of our diplomacy. The principle might make the EU feel happy. But it would make everyone else feel even happier, because the power of the Europeans would have been curtailed. But that's not the way Europeans think internally; or rather, it's the performance as the EU that counts.

Retirement from the Diplomatic Service

So that was retirement in normal career terms in July 2003 and that's the end of my DS story. Although my retirement was postponed – the clock stopped until the end of March 2004 – it was really a political appointment to go to Baghdad, and that story will have to be told at some point.

Political appointment to Baghdad

MM: But I think this would be a very good place to tell it, since it follows clearly and obviously from your experiences at the United Nations.

JG: Yes, and with the Middle East. There was an irony in coming back to the Middle East when I thought I'd lost my Arabic, and certainly I stopped trying to practise the Arabic language since Saudi Arabia in 1986. I had never set foot in Iraq in my life before I arrived there. And it was an irony also for a permanent member of the Security Council to go out to implement on the hoof one of his own resolutions, as it were. I said no when I was first asked.

MM: Who asked you?

JG: Alastair Campbell, who came across on a private visit to New York to attend a friend's funeral and stayed with us. He said: "The Prime Minister wants me to ask you this". I said: "Well I appreciate very much being asked, but I've got plans for this next year and have already got a retirement job, even if it doesn't start until the summer of 2004. And I think the Foreign Office has got people who can easily cope with it". And then I was quite often on the 'phone to David Manning, the Adviser at No 10, and I explained why I'd said no. He said, "Well, I'm afraid the Prime Minister may try again." I said: "Okay, fair enough". I recognised that I'd got some of the criteria required and could hardly refuse to talk about it. So the Prime Minister did come on the line and in those circumstances you don't actually say no, when your country is in some difficulty and you've got some of the qualifications that have been set down, and your Prime Minister asks you. But I said I'd only do it for a defined period. I didn't want to do it open-endedly and I didn't want to be extended from the period agreed - "if you agree, Prime Minister". This was June 2003 and we discussed that my stopping at the end of March 2004. I said I'd come along, and he said: "Well let's do it on that basis".

So I went to see Bremer in Washington before I left New York at the end of July. I'd known him when I was Private Secretary in the 70s in Washington when he was Kissinger's Private Secretary, but we hadn't really met since. He'd become a bit more neo-con-ish than I remembered. He seemed to be very happy that I was coming on board. I insisted on a holiday in August, because I hadn't had any leave and had worked almost every weekend in the previous year and said I wasn't going to Baghdad without a break. So I took almost a month's leave, within which nasty things happened in Baghdad. I had been looking forward to working with Sergio De Mello, as well as with Jerry Bremer, and he was killed on 19 August. I was watching on a television set in Woodstock, where we had a rented weekend

cottage, in the Catskills. That was bitter. From 1 September onwards I worked in London, meeting everybody, and talking to everybody in London before I went out on 10/11 September and got down to it – taking over from John Sawers via David Richmond, who was the interregnum Special Representative after John Sawers left, and then became my Deputy, and who had been appointed by the Foreign Office to do this job. So I came in over his head. He had to swallow that and get used to it. He was very good about it. That was another reason why I insisted on leaving in March, to give David Richmond his time in the sun as Special Representative, however much poison there was in the chalice. He was happy to stay anyway, although I think if I'd decided to stay on until June, he would have said: "Well, I'll go." We stuck to that arrangement.

So I dropped into another deep end. This was of course as much about working with Americans as working with the Iraqis. Very dynamic and powerful leadership from Bremer, particularly in the practical areas, getting the economy going again; currency change; electricity, oil running. The politics was what I was there for and when I asked one or two questions about his political programme I was told very firmly by Bremer to shut up. So I realised I had to work rather more subtly in expressing a different view. Got to know his political team; the young Turks in the Governance Section, as it was called. Very clever, very able political theorists, but they didn't know Iraq from Mexico City. And so the British collective experience of Iraq and the rather atavistic memories of the 1920s and 30s had to be fed in with some tact and care into all of this. That took up a lot of my time. I got to know the Governing Council. I got the usual Arab flattery that didn't mean very much: "you Brits understand us so much better than the Americans". What they hate is the rather direct American style, whereas we can be more circumlocutory and use Arabic in a certain way.

MM: You would speak in Arabic?

JG: Well not to do business, but I would use some phrases in Arabic and I would start off with those who didn't speak English in Arabic, and then have interpreter to do the business, because I couldn't handle complex language. To give Bremer his due, he was learning Arabic all the way through his tenure. He had a half-hour language lesson every morning at 7 o'clock. So there was a certain amount of political coming and going, if you like, but Bremer listened. They were mainly operational things. But the Americans are quite a closed group when they're working on an operation, and they are supplying 95% of the power and the

resources. This was an American operation. They were generous in allowing us into their office and into their discussions, but they weren't spontaneous in asking for advice.

American advice is more valuable to an American than any other kind, and so you had to work through that. But the other people round the place got to know the value of the British input and other people came along and said: "I need your view on this". They went along to the British military and British economic people there and said: "What are your views on this". So it got into the Coalition Provisional Authority system.

I took care to do two things away from Baghdad while I was there. One was to come back to London every month and talk to people here about what was really going on – telegrams aren't enough. This was virtually a war situation. And the second was to visit every neighbouring capital for the six months I was there. Each of the six neighbours I visited, sometimes at Head of State level, with the Syrians and Jordanians; and sometimes at Foreign Minister level, and sometimes at any level I could get to at the time. So there was a certain amount of diplomacy of that kind. We were always supportive of the Americans and had our arguments in private. My job was to support Bremer and get his stuff done. But there was a certain amount of separate regional diplomacy. A certain amount of trying to get London to see what Bremer needed, because he was fighting with Washington at the time, and that had to be done. I went to Washington myself with Jack Straw. Once to New York and regularly to London. But London weren't really having much effect on Washington because it was running the show and Washington doesn't really listen to foreigners. The Blair-Bush relationship was very good. The Powell-Straw relationship was very good. But neither Bush for one reason, nor Powell for another, were actually having much effect on operational decision-making, because Rumsfeld and Cheney were running it.

MM: A typical American situation.

JG: It's always quite dysfunctional within Washington, and a little bit within the CPA; but also some extent natural Washington power-broking and power delivery of a very impressive kind. But some mistakes were made and some of those mistakes are still being lived through.

MM: Still I'm sure they're learning?

JG: Sometimes they're a bit late. The Abu Ghraib thing is very damaging in image terms. The soldiers there thought that they were doing what they were asked to do, which was to soften up the prisoners for interrogation. A bit over-enthusiastically, I think. And although our team had the papers which described the ICRC Report, the ICRC never drew my attention to it, and my office only drew attention to the things that had to be amended on the British side, which were done immediately. But because I was involved in negotiation over the transitional law, I didn't pick up the whole Report and read it, which was an error. I just didn't realise it was going on. But the whole experience was very intensive obviously, a rather dangerous six months with close protection day and night.

MM: Where did you live?

JG: I started off in what's called a trailer – a sort of caravan hut – with a bedroom and a shared bathroom. On the other side of the trailer was another bedroom. I was allowed a double bedroom to myself – that was one privilege. And then I moved into the spare room at the British Residence when they set up the British office in a house on the compound. We were all within the protected zone. We had American protection, but that didn't stop the rockets coming in and didn't stop the danger at the point of exit and entry to the green zone. Didn't stop the danger of driving around town and being fired at, though I never was, by terrorists. I had to take quite a lot of care over my own civilian staff – the British seconded team - and sometimes I restricted their movements. There were about 100 of them, with some military included in that. I talked to them regularly about how we should look after ourselves and it wasn't until after I left that the first British civilian in that team was killed – Bob Morgan – the BP guy, who was killed about a month later by a magnetic mine.

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