

## **BDOHP Interview Index and Biographical Details**

Sir Mark Lyall Grant, GCMG 2018 (KCMG 2006; CMG 2003)

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**BRITISH DIPLOMATIC ORAL HISTORY PROGRAMME  
RECOLLECTIONS OF SIR MARK LYALL GRANT GCMG,  
RECORDED AND TRANSCRIBED BY SUZANNE RICKETTS**

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SR: This is Suzanne Ricketts recording Mark Lyall Grant on 18 November 2019. Mark, tell me why did you join the Foreign Office?

MLG: Well, I never originally intended to join the Foreign Office. I did law at Cambridge. I'd done a postgraduate course in EU law in Brussels and I was back in London doing my Bar exams. I wanted to do the Foreign Office exams, rather than join the Foreign Office - it was something I had planned to do when I was at Cambridge and I had broken my hand playing football.

SR: You wanted to do the exams just for pleasure? Really?

MLG: Yes, just for pleasure. I was the sort of boy who enjoyed taking exams! I just liked the idea of the exams. So when I was back in London, I thought I would take the Foreign Office exams, having no intention of joining the Foreign Office. Then I went through the process and the second stage and the third stage. Perhaps because I was relaxed and didn't really want to join the Foreign Office, I got through to the final stage and was accepted. I was offered a job in the Foreign Office at the same time as I was about to start my pupillage at the Bar.

SR: So did you toss a coin? How did you choose?

MLG: Well, there were a number of reasons. One was that I was already twenty-three or twenty-four and the Foreign Office was offering me the princely sum of I think it was £5,900 a year. In those days, as a pupil at the Bar, you weren't paid anything. So I felt that as I was still dependent on my parents, it would be nice to actually be independent. So, in some ways, I joined the Foreign Office for the money - I must be the only person to join the Foreign Office for the money! It was very short-sighted and shows how bad my judgement is because I would have earned a lot more at the commercial Bar. But there was another more practical reason as I had won a scholarship in the Bar exams and I'd gone off on holiday in Kenya. By the time I'd got back from Kenya it was too late to apply for the scholarship and I was too

embarrassed to tell my parents that I had foregone this money because I'd been too lazy to apply. So I thought I'd better take the money that the Foreign Office was offering.

SR: And you hadn't any history in your family of people in the Office?

MLG: No, I come from a long line of military people. My father was in the Army and his father was in the Army.

SR: And that didn't tempt you?

MLG: No. Actually, my father himself was not enthusiastic about me joining the Army. He said that he'd had a fantastic career and had been all over the world and fought in the Second World War. But he felt that the army was contracting and that the only places you would get posted in the Army were Northern Ireland and Northern Germany. Of course, he turned out to be completely wrong: there were a series of wars in the '80s and '90s. But, at the time, that seemed the most likely outcome of joining the army. So I never even thought about doing that, to be honest.

There was one other reason why I chose the Foreign Office. When I was in London doing my Bar exams, I wasn't really enjoying living in London. I thought that the prospect of becoming a barrister and then possibly a judge meant that you'd be stuck in London really for all your career. The opportunity to travel abroad interested and excited me. So I joined the Foreign Office.

SR: So this was 1980. What job did they give you and what was the Foreign Office like at that time?

MLG: The very first job I got was assistant desk officer for Namibia, at a time when we had two desk officers for Namibia. Now there's probably one desk officer covering four or five countries in southern Africa. But it was quite a busy time with the Namibian independence negotiations. So I was a Third Secretary in a typical third room with two other people - my boss and one other - writing briefs for Lord Carrington who was the Foreign Secretary at the time and answering Parliamentary questions and all those sorts of things you do at a desk in a third room. It was certainly a different time from the Foreign Office now in the sense that of the fast stream entrants that joined with me I think there were fourteen white men. There weren't any women and there wasn't any ethnic diversity either. That, of course, has changed considerably since then. There was a secretarial pool composed exclusively of

women who did the typing. There were no computers on the desks. It was a very different time. There were no photocopiers: you had to use carbon paper and all those things that one only distantly remembers now. But it was an interesting job as a first job and an opportunity to get a feel for the culture.

SR: And to learn the ropes, things like how to draft a minute and so on?

MLG: Exactly so. I had a Head of Department, Brian Barder, who went on to be High Commissioner in Australia. A very enthusiastic drafter. He put great emphasis on simple, clear drafting. I always remember it. Indeed, he handed out a wad of papers and examples that he encouraged people to do. I've always followed his example. I've always thought that structure in drafting is extremely important. So I was lucky with my first Head of Department.

SR: Do you think that, in those days, people perhaps had a bit more time to mentor the young people?

MLG: Yes, I think that was the case. My boss, Richard Dalton, spent a lot of time encouraging me. Also the fact that you had to use Tippex if you made a mistake meant that you were rather careful about how you worded drafts! So you would prepare a draft before you would dictate it to the secretary or do it yourself - you couldn't just dash it off and then decide to change the structure.

SR: Perhaps your legal background was a help in that?

MLG: I think it probably was. Spelling and grammar was never a problem for me and the legal background was helpful in terms of the structure and logic. Bringing out arguments in a clear way is something I've always attached a lot of importance to. As one gets older, one thinks that the graduates that join are less good at that because they haven't had the same training. It's probably unfair, but I certainly felt comfortable doing that sort of work from the start.

SR: So how long did you spend on Namibia?

MLG: Just under a year.

### **1981: Urdu language training, SOAS and Lahore**

MLG: It was during this time we did the language aptitude test. It was on the back of that that you were given a language to learn and therefore a posting to look forward to.

SR: You opted for Urdu.

MLG: Well I did and I didn't. I was never a good linguist at school. Languages are not my strong point. I'm tone deaf. I've never played a musical instrument and no one in my family is musical. The language aptitude test was, I think, based on Kurdish. I did well in some aspects, the written and grammatical aspects, and very poorly in the tonal aspects. I therefore qualified in the second category: I wasn't good enough to do Cantonese, Vietnamese and Thai - those sorts of languages. The second group included Arabic, so I was allocated Arabic. But, when I thought about it, the prospect of spending maybe four out of six postings in the Middle East, where fifteen countries or so spoke Arabic, I didn't relish particularly. So I asked whether there were any alternatives and one possibility that was raised was Urdu. The Foreign Office had never taught an Urdu speaker before because they had enough older officers from the Colonial Service who spoke Urdu, but they were beginning to retire. Pakistan, under General Zia-ul-Haq, the President at the time, was going through a sort of Urduisation programme. So there was both pressure in Pakistan for things to be done in Urdu rather than in English and fewer and fewer people in the Office who could speak Urdu. So they decided they would have an Urdu speaker for the first time. I volunteered cheerfully for that.

SR: And you had some family connections as well?

MLG: Yes, connections which I was half aware of at the time. I knew that my grandparents had been married in what is now Pakistan in the early twentieth century. I knew that my father had been in India, rather than Pakistan. But the full breadth of my family connections I didn't realise until actually I got there.

SR: Isn't there a town named after a member of your family?

MLG: The town, now the third largest city in Pakistan, was named after one of my ancestors who was called Sir James Lyall. He was Governor of the Punjab and an engineer. He actually built the largest gravity irrigation system in the world which built canals between the five rivers of the Punjab: Punjab in Urdu means five rivers. Because he built these canals

between the rivers, it meant that they could build new towns in what had been desert. One of them was named after him, Lyallpur. He actually designed it in the shape of the Union Jack. So this city, now with a population of three and a half million people, has a Union Jack in the middle of it which you can see from aerial photos. Unfortunately, in the 1970s, at the time of the oil crisis, Pakistan had to import oil from Saudi Arabia. King Faisal of Saudi Arabia came to visit and gave some funding and special oil deals. In exchange for that, they renamed the city Faisalabad. But the central district - the Union Jack – is still called Lyallpur. The older generation still call the city Lyallpur.

So when I went there, not on my first posting but as High Commissioner many years later, there were huge celebrations. There were articles in the local press saying ‘Welcome, Prince of Lyallpur’ and that sort of thing. I had to make a speech from the central clock tower and was made a freeman of the city. It was all slightly overwhelming. I confess that I didn’t actually report much of it to London, because there was a Labour government at the time and I wasn’t quite sure how enthusiastic they would be about all this Raj nostalgia.

But Pakistan is a very different country from India because there is no real sensitivity about the colonial era in Pakistan, for the simple reason that, whereas India fought for and got its independence from Britain, Pakistan got its independence from India with our help. So, although they would say that we messed up certain aspects of Partition, including of course Kashmir, nonetheless it was the British that gave them their independent country. There’s a lot of warm feeling towards the British which I found, even when I went there in the early 1980s.

SR: Tell me about your language training. Did you live with a local family?

MLG: I did six months at SOAS in London learning Urdu and then I went off to a family in Lahore for three months. Now it was a sign of the fact that they hadn’t taught an Urdu speaker before that I lived with a Punjabi speaking family. Punjabi is linked to Urdu but is a different language. It was a little bit confusing, because they would speak to each other in Punjabi and speak to me in Urdu. But the television was in Urdu and the newspapers were in Urdu. It’s actually quite difficult, to be fair to the Foreign Office, to find an Urdu speaking family that does not speak very good English. The good thing about the family I stayed with is that they didn’t speak any English. Urdu is actually only spoken as a mother tongue language by about 8% of the population in Pakistan, almost all of whom are actually refugees from India. The local population speaks either Punjabi, Sindhi, Balochi, Kashmiri, Pashto ...

So this was the compromise reached: I would stay with this family who didn't speak any English. That was great: it was a fascinating time, living in very humble circumstances. There was no hot water. There were no doors in the house. There was no bathroom or anything. It was showering with a hosepipe and doing your own washing. Of course I got ill: I was permanently on diarrhoea tablets. But it was very interesting and instructive time.

### **1982–85: British Embassy, Islamabad**

SR: And that led to an actual posting?

MLG: Yes. It was linked to a posting as Third Secretary in the British Embassy as it was then because the military coup had led to Pakistan being thrown out of the Commonwealth. I did press and political affairs.

SR: Interesting. And that's where you met your future wife, Sheila?

MLG: Yes, I did. Sheila had actually joined the Foreign Office straight from school, a week before I did and was posted to Islamabad whilst I was in Lahore doing my language training. She was in the Immigration Section and I was in the Political Section. It was a big Embassy in those days with a very large immigration section. We met on stage because as soon as I had arrived at the Embassy, I was approached by someone who was directing a play. Amateur dramatics, it turns out, was a big thing in Islamabad, partly because there wasn't a huge amount of other activities to do in the 1980s in Pakistan and partly because the Ambassador, Oliver Forster, was a mad thespian, really enthusiastic and encouraged everyone to do some acting. So when the Director, another diplomat, approached me and asked if I would be in *A Man For All Seasons*, I replied that I hadn't done any acting since I was at school and that I needed to get on with the job, finish my Urdu exam and understand how the Embassy worked. He pointed out that I would be acting opposite a girl I might have noticed from the Immigration section called Sheila Tresise. I said that I had noticed her and would therefore think about it! I was Mr Roper and she was Lady Margaret and the relationship developed from then. Our first kiss was probably on stage!

Islamabad was a very sociable place for single people. There was a lot of partying and a lot of socialising, mainly in the Western diplomatic community, because, while it wasn't exactly a hostile environment, it was not an environment where you could fraternise easily with the local population, particularly if you didn't speak Urdu. A lot of the Embassies got together and there were TGIT (Thank God It's Thursday) clubs at the American Embassy. (Friday

was the holiday in Pakistan). There was a Canadian club, an Australian club and we had our own social club. There were dance nights and fancy dress parties and Ascot night and a whole range of social activities where particularly single people could get together. So it was a very enjoyable first posting.

SR: Tell me about the work you did in the Chancery.

MLG: It was a mixture of political and press work. One of the tasks I had was that, once a month, we would receive a video cassette on the old Betamax system from something called the Central Office of Information. Long since defunct. I guess it would be called a propaganda ministry in some countries! This was a cassette which essentially eulogised the heroic work of the Mujahedeen fighting against the Soviets in Afghanistan. My job as press officer was to invite Pakistani journalists round to my house, show them the video and encourage them to write stories about the Mujahedeen to encourage other Pakistanis to help fight the Soviets. So I picked up a contact list from my predecessor and, after about two weeks in the Embassy, this video arrived. I invited all the journalists on the list, fed them a nice buffet and gave them whisky and then started putting on the video. By the time I'd got the video working properly and turned round, half the journalists had left. So that was my first lesson: you should show the video before giving them the buffet and the whisky. The basic point was that journalists had no interest whatsoever in writing stories about this: they were very happy to come and drink and eat with you, but Pakistan didn't see the Afghan conflict as anything more than a sort of Boys' Own adventure. The Pakistanis who went to fight in Afghanistan went for that that reason, rather than because they felt strongly about the Soviets or the Mujahedeen particularly. But, looking back at that time, what is striking is that a lot of the effort of the Embassy as a whole was geared to supporting the Mujahedeen's fight against the Soviets. Those people that we called the Mujahedeen in those days are called the Taliban today and they are the people who have been killing British troops and are now seen as the enemy in the twenty-first century. It is the sons and nephews and grandsons of the people that we used to support that are actually now the enemy: the wheel turns quite a bit.

The other part of my job was putting on my shalwar kameez, going out around the country and reporting on the internal politics. I would write a monthly long letter to London, explaining what was happening.

SR: Did you enjoy the travelling?

MLG: Yes, it was great fun. Theoretically, you had to apply for permission as a diplomat to go outside Islamabad. We never accepted that restraint. So I would go off and quite often I would get stopped by the ISI, the Pakistan inter-services intelligence agency, a very powerful subset of the army. They would find me in Multan or somewhere, meeting the mayor and the local politicians and journalists. They would ask me where my permission was and I would reply that I didn't have any. Then I would get sent back to Islamabad and we would get a *Note Verbale* from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a few days later, reporting my presence outside Islamabad. The Ambassador would chuck it in the bin: we didn't impose any restrictions on Pakistani diplomats in the UK and therefore we didn't accept any need to restrict our travelling.

SR: But it never led to you being arrested or anything like that?

MLG: No, nothing that serious. I think they knew it went on and they largely tolerated it. They complained for the record. But there were sensitivities. It was a dictatorship. Politicians were put in prison and, no doubt, badly treated. The press was censored.

Another part of my job, incidentally, was advising the Home Office on political asylum applications of Pakistanis who had fled to the UK and would argue that, if returned to Pakistan, they would be imprisoned or mistreated and therefore they should have political asylum in the UK. My job was to dig, as much as I could, into their background and how they were seen by the regime.

There were also fun aspects to it. I was the cricket Attaché and, when the England team came out, I had to go round with them. My main job was to fill the boot of my Ford Cortina with alcohol and to follow the team around!

I was also the mountaineering Attaché. Sometimes it was actually quite tragic because mountaineers would come through and stay at my house. They would leave some equipment there and go and climb K2 or Broad Peak or Rakaposhi: Pakistan has something like seven of the highest twenty mountains in the world, very difficult ones to climb. Tragically, sometimes the mountaineers would never return and I would have to send the equipment that they'd left at my house back to the Mountaineering Club of Great Britain.

SR: You mentioned the Falklands War in your notes.

MLG: I went to Lahore on my language training in April 1982. So while I was there, the Falklands War was going on. I had literally left the country just as the task force was heading down to the South Atlantic. When I was in the house watching the Urdu news with the family I was living with, there were all these pictures of British ships being blown up. It was quite a worrying time, because in Pakistan there was quite a lot of ... not rejoicing exactly, but there was no concern that the British appeared to be suffering losses in the Falkland Islands. But when victory was achieved, you could visibly feel it in Pakistan, a sense that actually Britain is still a force and a country to be reckoned with. The impact the victory had on Margaret Thatcher and her ability to be re-elected in 1983 then transformed the British economy etc. It fundamentally changed my career, I think, in the sense that there was a widespread belief at that time that it was about managing decline whereas it absolutely wasn't during my career. I never felt that that was part of what I was doing. Britain was seen with a lot of respect. A lot of that did come from the Falklands victory and obviously the personality of Margaret Thatcher herself.

SR: Mark, just before we move on to Southern European Department, you mentioned Freemasonry in the Embassy. Can you expand a bit on that, please?

MLG: This is one of the strange things that happen sometimes in Embassies. I don't know whether this is a unique circumstance or not. But at some point, when I was in Islamabad, there was a lot of tension between the Home Office immigration staff and the Foreign Office immigration staff. We had maybe forty, perhaps more, entry clearance officers: fifty per cent were recruited from the Home Office and fifty per cent from the Foreign Office. The two managers were Home Office and the Head was a Foreign Office person. So it was a balanced team. But most, if not all, of the Home Office immigration staff were Freemasons. That didn't cause any particular concern for a while, although there were some accusations by the Foreign Office staff that, in their annual appraisals, they were not being treated as fairly as the Home Office staff because they were not Freemasons. I don't think myself that there was probably anything in that, but the fact is that the people who had been doing immigration work at Heathrow or wherever all their careers were a lot better at it than Foreign Office generalists. But matters came to a head at a Queen's Birthday Party. Freemasonry was illegal in the Punjab, where the capital city Islamabad is, but was not illegal in the Frontier Province, which is about an hour and a half's drive away. So every week, the Freemasons used to drive up to a place called Tarbela Dam, just across the provincial border in the Frontier Province and have their Freemason meetings. It so happened that the Queen's

Birthday Party coincided with one of these days and a lot of the immigration staff, therefore, didn't come to the party. This was noticed by the Ambassador and the Head of Chancery who thought that was pretty poor and wanted to know why they had gone out of Islamabad. So when it was explained that they had gone off to a Freemasonry event, then the other accusations of unfairness in the immigration section came out. The Head of Chancery asked me to do an investigation into Freemasonry in the Embassy. Happily, by then I was going out with Sheila who was in the immigration section.

SR: So she was your mole!

MLG: She was. She worked out who was a Freemason and who wasn't and what they were actually doing. The answer was that it was all completely innocent, of course. They were raising a lot of money for local charities and there was absolutely no indication of any impropriety or discrimination within the Embassy. So after a few weeks of investigation, I wrote this report for the Head of Chancery. It was just one of those strange tasks, as the dogsbody in Chancery, that you end up with. A bit like being the cricket Attaché.

### **1985–86: Southern European Department and Resident Clerk**

SR: So then you had a complete change. You went to Southern European Department. This was still in the days when Personnel just told you where you were going?

MLG: Absolutely. I was rather hoping actually to go into one of the European Union Departments because in those days, in the mid-1980s, it was felt that there were two key parts of work in London: one was the European Union and the other on NATO and the Euro/Atlantic. So you wanted to go into one of the European Departments or Security Policy Department. But, as you say, in those days you were told what to do and I was allocated Southern European Department. So originally I was a bit disappointed by that. But it actually turned out to be a fascinating experience: I was on the Spain/Gibraltar desk. I made four or five trips to Madrid and four or five to Gibraltar, at a time when we were negotiating the airport agreement. The airport in Gibraltar lies on the isthmus, which is disputed territory between Gibraltar and Spain. When the border was closed, it was extremely difficult for planes to fly in and out because they couldn't fly over Spanish territory. The idea was to open up the airport for both Spanish and Gibraltarian users, a bit like Basel-Mulhouse or Geneva which has two separate entrances into France and Switzerland: this was the model we were trying to build. It was actually a very interesting time. I worked extremely hard, but I

enjoyed it. I do recall that I worked 45 consecutive days in the run-up to a state visit by King Juan Carlos of Spain.

SR: And you were a Resident Clerk as well?

MLG: Yes, towards the end of that period, not immediately, I became a Resident Clerk. That was actually great fun because you get a flat at the top of the Office and, for one night a week and one weekend in five or six, you are basically the sole person on duty in the Foreign Office. You had a little room and a bed and there was a joint sitting room and dining room area which you lived in for that period. Indeed, one of my colleagues moved in and lived there full-time. It was tiring. You were allowed to go to sleep at night but, of course, you got woken up. If you did have a disturbed night, as often happened, you still had to go straight to your full-time job in the Office as well. So it was quite tough but, again, very interesting. All sorts of weird things happened whilst you were on duty. And it did give you the opportunity to get to know a lot of the more senior people in the office a little bit.

SR: And it gave you a sort of overview of how the Office structure worked?

MLG: Exactly. Yes. And you have an address book so you can get hold of Ministers and officials at any time.

SR: Were you still looking at paper telegrams? There were no computers so you had to sift through a great pile of telegrams?

MLG: Yes. At the weekends, at three different times, a whole lot of telegrams would be delivered for you to sift through. There would be an Assistant Resident Clerk who would come in and support you during the daylight hours of the weekends. It was quite jolly. Often there were other people who had been called in to deal with a crisis and you could invite them up for lunch. You could actually hold dinner parties: we did have a couple of dinners up in the Resident Clerkery.

### **1986–87: European Union Department, Internal**

SR: So then you were able to move to a European Union Department. Had you been spotted by being a Resident Clerk?

MLG: I had told the Personnel Department that I would like to move to a European Union department. An opportunity came up, so after about two years in Southern European

Department, I moved to the European Union Department (Internal). It was hard and challenging work. I was the budget and future financing desk officer. Even more so than other jobs, it was a briefing factory because every single meeting that Ministers would hold would have some stuff on the future financing negotiations, because they were the biggest EU negotiations going on at the time. Churning out briefs non-stop. Early in the morning until late at night. But it was interesting, because you felt that it was important work. But it was gruelling.

SR: Who was your Head of Department?

MLG: Stephen Wall, a great workaholic. I cannot remember a single day in ECD (I) when Stephen didn't arrive in the Office before me and leave after me. It became quite a regular occurrence to get pizzas in during the evening and we'd work through. If I left after midnight, Stephen was still there. A super-dedicated officer, but a complete workaholic and a perfectionist.

SR: Working at that sort of intensity leaves you nothing spare when there is a real crisis, does it?

MLG: No, it doesn't. To be honest, you don't get a feel necessarily for the bigger picture anyway, because you're so head down, churning out the work. I don't really recall much from that period, apart from putting my head down ...

SR: I like your description of the 'grinding heart of the FCO'!

MLG: It felt like that! It felt like you were at the heart of it. And there's no question about it, it was a grind.

SR: I'm interested in the contrast you draw in your notes between two different styles of directorship. Can you expand, please?

MLG: Yes. That was interesting, because I had some access to the Directors. Two of them at the time were John Kerr and Robin Renwick. Robin Renwick's style of management as a Director would be that he would call in the Heads of Department (and sometimes the Deputies and desk officers) first thing in the morning and he would say, "Here are the big issues. These are the things we need to do. Go away and do the following things." So you'd go away and produce the work and he would sign it off in the middle of the afternoon. When John Kerr took over, it was a completely different approach. He wouldn't turn up in the

office until about 10 or 10.30. He would sit down and read the paper, the Financial Times. He would expect the Departments to come up with all the proposals, submissions and so on, on the back of what they thought was the right way to do it. So you would do the work. You would put it up through your Head of Department and it would go up to John Kerr at about 5 or 6 in the evening. Then, John would normally completely rewrite it, saying, "It's completely wrong. It needs to be done like this." This went on until about 10 o'clock at night, redoing everything in his own style.

So two very different ways of doing things. Frankly, I don't think either was ideal. It would be better to give the overall guidance and then let the people go away to do the work rather than dictating the detail. Likewise, I think letting people just sink or swim was risky when you, as a Director, have very strong views about what the outcome should be. But it was constructive to see that.

### **1987-89: PS/Minister for Europe and Africa**

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

MLG: Less than two years before I applied for the job as Private Secretary to Lynda Chalker. She knew me because she was Minister for Africa and Minister for Europe, so in some of the Europe work I had been involved with her, both on Gibraltar but also in EUD(I).

SR: What was she like?

MLG: She was - is - a fantastic woman. A super hard-working constituency MP for Wallasey who had a very small majority throughout her time, so had to spend a lot of time in the constituency. A wonderful person. Very good with people with a remarkable memory for names: she would never forget a name or an event. She was well liked right across the Office.

SR: Did you enjoy being a Private Secretary?

MLG: Yes. You got a very good overview of the Office. That was what was great about being a Private Secretary. It is gruelling because you are the interface between the Minister and the Office. You had to interpret the Minister to the Office and the Office to the Minister. There was a lot of pressure on you. I remember John Kerr as the Director would come in and say, "Mark, you've got to sort the Minister out!" and put the responsibility on me. But, equally, the Minister had her views and your job was to make sure that the Office carried

them out. The most interesting work I did with Lynda really was on Africa, because she was the Minister for Africa and she was a big noise in Africa. Everyone knew her. In a sense, whereas you were part of the B Team in Europe, you were definitely the A Team in Africa: no other Ministers really went to Africa. So we had some wonderful trips to Africa and always would meet the heads of state and government and would be involved in very interesting issues. What I remember most from that time is the trips. Great fun.

SR: Did you ever have any dealings with Geoffrey Howe?

MLG: There was one occasion when I travelled with Geoffrey Howe, because the President of Pakistan, Zia-ul-Haq, was killed and his funeral was held in August 1988. Geoffrey Howe was on holiday and his office was therefore closed. Lynda Chalker was the acting Foreign Secretary. But Geoffrey Howe thought he had better come back from holiday to go to the funeral in Islamabad and because of my Pakistan history and my Urdu, Lynda suggested that I should go with him.

It was interesting to see how differently he operated from Lynda Chalker whom I had become used to. He was another person who worked throughout the flight out there and the flight back. He was incredibly assiduous at reading all his papers. With Lynda Chalker, of course she read the briefs on the plane, but she also liked to have a glass of champagne and chat. With Geoffrey Howe, there was none of that: he was working all the time.

SR: And famously didn't need much sleep either!

MLG: No. I remember that we had meetings all day, then went to bed at about one or two o'clock. We had to get up at six to go to the funeral. It was an exhausting time.

About three or four months before I left the Private Office, there was a reshuffle and Lynda Chalker was moved to the Overseas Development Administration. So she was replaced by Francis Maude. It was quite amusing because we were on a trip to Turkey. We were in Istanbul at the time of the reshuffle. We were at a reception at the Consul General's house in Istanbul when a call came from Charles Powell at Number 10 saying the Prime Minister would like to speak to Lynda Chalker. So I got Lynda Chalker out of the reception. It was clear what was happening because she said, "Thank you very much, Prime Minister, but perhaps I can have a bit of time to think about it?" Then suddenly she was holding the phone away from her ear and I could hear Margaret Thatcher shouting down the phone. So Lynda said, "Yes, yes. Thank you, Prime Minister. I'll take the job." What we hadn't realised,

being overseas at the time, was that it was that reshuffle where Margaret Thatcher had a lot of problems with senior Ministers, including Geoffrey Howe, not agreeing on the jobs they would go to. Then there were arguments about who would live in Chevening and Dorneywood. By late in the afternoon, Thatcher was getting onto the junior ministers and didn't want any further trouble, so she was quite sharp.

So when Lynda went off to Development, Francis Maude came to the Foreign Office. The portfolios were reshuffled a bit, so he did Europe and the Far East, not Africa. So he was in charge of China and Hong Kong issues. We did make one trip together to Hong Kong at a time when the whole issue of forced repatriation of Vietnamese boat people came to a head. Actually, the desk officer responsible for the policy asked to be moved as he disagreed with the Ministerial decision – a very rare occurrence in the FCO.

SR: What was Francis Maude like?

MLG: He was a very different character. He came from a big political family. Extremely effective. Closer to the mainstream of the Conservative Party, more Conservative than Lynda Chalker who was on the liberal wing. I was only with him for three months, but I found him a nice, serious, hard-working Minister.

### **1990-93: British Embassy, Paris**

SR: So after all these demanding and gruelling jobs in London, you finally get to go to Paris in 1990. How did that come about?

MLG: To be honest, I can't remember exactly. By then, I was married to Sheila and so we were looking for a place where she could work, a big Embassy.

SR: You'd had three big jobs in London. So you deserved a good posting!

MLG: Yes, and I'd been in Pakistan. So I think they did try to balance a difficult posting with an easier one. It was quite likely that I would go to Europe or North America as my next posting.

Anyway, Paris came up and it was a political/military First Secretary job. Again, it was very different. Paris is a grand Embassy. The office was in a sort of panelled library with three of us in it. Working on political/military issues was very interesting because of the *specificité* of the French position on NATO and nuclear and things like that. So it was quite an

enjoyable time. It was also a great time family-wise, because our son was born three months before we went to Paris and our daughter was born in Paris. So I remember Paris as a family time: it's a wonderful place for childcare. We lived in a very pleasant three bedroom apartment on the Avenue Victor Hugo, just off the Arc de Triomphe. You could walk down the Champs Elysées to work.

SR: Who was the Ambassador?

MLG: It was Ewen Fergusson. He won fifteen caps playing rugby in the second row for Scotland. A large character and a large man. He was one of those more hands-off Ambassadors who did a lot of representational work. Rob Young was the number 2. Jeremy Greenstock (and then John MacGregor) was the Head of Chancery who did a lot of the political work: I reported to them.

SR: How was your French?

MLG: Pretty good by this time, because after I was at Cambridge I did a postgraduate course in Brussels. My French was very poor at that stage, but all the lectures in Brussels were in French. So that tested my French a lot. So by the time I got to Paris my French was pretty good, although I did get mocked a bit for my Belgian accent.

SR: You do need to have a good level of French to operate in Paris, don't you?

MLG: Yes. Quite a lot of work was on the phone. Speaking on the phone in French was always more difficult. But before I went to the Embassy, I did have the opportunity to spend about two months at IFRI, the Institut Français des Relations Internationales, and worked on a paper on the future of the OSCE. That helped me get my French back together.

SR: French foreign policy is very different, isn't it? The French are very keen on *le rayonnement de la France* and being different.

MLG: Yes, they are. Particularly in the military and strategic affairs field. They were different. They have a very strong sense of *la grandeur de la France* and all that. I found them very easy to work with but, equally, although we made some acquaintances, it was the only posting I've been on where we didn't make any lasting friends. The French in those days wouldn't invite you to their home until you'd known them for a very long time. So completely different from, say, Pakistan, where people would invite you to dinner on the first meeting. Or indeed in America, where I went later. So it was quite a difficult posting,

particularly for junior staff who didn't speak French. Of all our postings, I would say morale in Paris was the worst: this is not uncommon in large embassies. The accommodation for junior staff was not that good. There's an assumption that diplomats can make their own way socially after work, so there was no social club in Paris. A lot of the junior staff who didn't speak French would go home after work and not have much social fun. Compared to the life that I knew before, for example in Pakistan with the social club and everyone getting together and all those social events, you didn't really have that in Paris.

So morale was not that good. But Sheila and I were busy bringing up our young family. She was working full-time when she could as Vice-Consul. So we both had our self-contained social life: but for junior staff it was a lot more difficult.

SR: You were at the beginning of the end, when Mrs Thatcher came out onto the front steps of the Residence, weren't you?

MLG: Yes. Well that was interesting, because she had come out to Paris for the CFE signing ceremony, I think, just at the time when she was being challenged for leadership of the Conservative Party and at the time of the first vote. The result of this vote came through while she was in Paris, staying at the Ambassador's Residence. I went out to see her. She came out onto the steps and said those famous words, "I fight on, I fight to win." It was the beginning of the end for her. It was one of the few times that I actually met Margaret Thatcher face to face, because although she greatly influenced my career, as a junior diplomat you rarely meet the Prime Minister.

### **1993: European Union Department, External – EUD(E)**

SR: So after three years in Paris, you got sent back to the grinding heart again, this time to European Union Department, External.

MLG: Yes, I was the Deputy Head of Department. It was one management layer up and it meant that actually the job was more about managing the desk officers rather than doing all the work yourself, although there was a lot of work to be done in terms of clearing briefs. It was my first, major managerial experience in the Office and therefore was a necessary rite of passage, if you like, in order to be promoted to the Head of Department, the Counsellor rank. In those days, having that management experience was essential before you could be promoted further.

It was interesting. Again, you were at the heart of the briefing machine. In those days - and sadly this has gone to the centre now - it was the Foreign Office that put together the European Council briefs for the Prime Minister. They were all collated by the deputies in the two European Union Departments: Kim Darroch was my opposite number as the deputy in the EU Internal Department.

### **1994-95: European Secretariat, Cabinet Office**

SR: And can you tell me why a posting to Brussels was blocked?

MLG: This was a strange experience, really. Towards the end of my time in EUD (E), I was put up for the job of the External Counsellor in Brussels to succeed Stephen Wright who was doing it at the time. There were two candidates: one was me and one was John Grant. The Board gave me the job. John Kerr objected: he wanted John Grant. So I was summoned down to see David Gillmore, the PUS, who said, "Look, this is a bit embarrassing, but John Kerr says he doesn't want you to do the job. Do you have any problems with John Kerr?" I replied that I didn't have any particular problems with him, although I had disagreed with him on a couple of policy issues. Gillmore asked me to leave it with him. Then, the following week, I got summoned down again. John Kerr was still refusing to have me and insisting that John Grant should get the job, even though the Board had approved me and my appointment had been signed off. David Gillmore told me, "If you want the job, it's yours. But I have to warn you that John Kerr may make your life quite difficult. He's that sort of guy. Think about it over Christmas and come back to me in the New Year." So we had a pretty miserable Christmas, really. We thought about it and, in the end, Sheila and I decided that there was no point in taking the job when the Ambassador was dead against it. So in the New Year, I went back to David - who, incidentally, said that he had never spent so much time on any Counsellor level appointment - and told him that if John Kerr was so deeply opposed to this, I would back down. So John Grant went off to do the Brussels job and I actually took his job at the Cabinet Office.

It was a turning point in my career, because really from that point on - apart from the Cabinet Office job - I switched my attention to outside the European Union. From then on, I was doing non-EU work. I've never really talked to John about it, since then, although I have seen a lot of him. Sheila has never forgiven him.

SR: Quite right! I'd be with her on that.

MLG: I sort of understood it. He was the sort of diplomat who lived and died by the deal. There were no principles with John: it was all about deals. He had promised John Grant (who had been in Brussels as a First Secretary) that when Stephen Wright's job came up, he would get it. John Grant himself was deeply embarrassed by this because he knew that I had beaten him at the board.

SR: So the foreign posting you were expecting was cruelly snatched away?

MLG: The compensation that I was given was to get the promotion anyway by doing John Grant's job. He'd only been doing it for six months as he had only left Brussels six months before. So I did the best part of two years coordinating EU work in the Cabinet Office. It was interesting, because it gave me the first overview of wider Whitehall operations. I managed a team from across Whitehall, dealing with overall British government policy towards the European Union. It was a fascinating insight into the divisions that there were on Europe in the Conservative Party in particular. By now, John Major was Prime Minister. I had to take notes at the European sub-committee of Cabinet when his Cabinet was completely split on Europe, with the so-called bastards, as he put it, on one side and the Heseltines and Clarkes and others on the other side. It was interesting to see how he struggled to reconcile the different views. Of course they couldn't be reconciled, as we've seen since in the 2016 referendum. It was evident back then in the mid-1990s.

SR: All very interesting. And you were a candidate to be Chef de Cabinet to Leon Brittan? Was that the job that Simon Fraser got in the end?

MLG: No, it was the job that Ivan Rogers got. I didn't put myself forward for that job. But the Foreign Office had put up a number of candidates, all of whom were rejected. The Foreign Office was keen to have a candidate for the Chef de Cabinet post, so I was asked to run for it. A little bit reluctantly, I said yes. By then, there were only two candidates left: myself and Ivan Rogers. I first had an interview with Lady Brittan in London (which wouldn't happen today) and then went over to Brussels and had an interview with Leon. I'm not making excuses, but I did have a stinking cold at the time. I didn't get the job but I got a lovely letter from him afterwards, explaining that Ivan Rogers had more direct experience than me, particularly since he came from the Treasury. I certainly don't regret that. It would have pulled me back to the EU domain, but the Cabinet system was a bit of a nest of vipers, managing different personalities and nationalities.

### **1995-98: British Embassy, Pretoria**

SR: So then Pretoria must have come as a complete change, although you'd already done some work in Africa earlier in your career?

MLG: Yes, my very first job was assistant desk officer on Namibia and then I was a Private Secretary to the Africa Minister, so I'd done a couple of relevant jobs. Africa is one of these continents that gets under your skin. I know everyone says that, but there is some truth in it. I was attracted by the idea of going back to Africa. This job came up, a Deputy Head of Mission job, so I leapt at it.

SR: Did you meet Mandela?

MLG: Yes, it was great from a professional point of view in the sense that the Embassy was split between Pretoria and Cape Town. Some staff moved down every six months, but they were trying to stop this constant moving about. Apart from anything else, it was quite expensive. The High Commissioner was Maeve Fort. She was very attached to Cape Town where there was a beautiful residence. The political work was in Cape Town as the parliament was there. So she was very happy to let me run the operation in Pretoria, where actually most of the staff were. It was my first experience of a Head of Mission post, most of the year. It was a time of transition from Mandela to Mbeki so it did give me the opportunity to meet President Mandela who I would still characterise as the most extraordinary man I met during my diplomatic career. There was a remarkable humbleness. He was just a nice guy. I have a picture downstairs with our son and two other children that the President posed for. He would always defer to you as though you were more important than him in a way. I remember going down to see him in Johannesburg that he would always say "It's very good of you to come and see me." I wasn't even the Ambassador, just the Deputy and he was this great icon! So a remarkable man. There was a great occasion, a concert when Prince Charles came over and brought Prince Harry who was about twelve or thirteen at the time. There was a Spice Girls concert and there was this meeting between Prince Charles, the Spice Girls and Mandela! Mandela was completely at ease, lapping it all up, while Prince Charles was slightly awkward with the Spice Girls who were all over him!

So you had these slightly extraordinary diplomatic encounters in South Africa. Again, Maeve Fort had no interest in sport. When the Lions rugby team came out she asked me to go to the rugby, so that was fantastic. The England cricket team also came out. And for the

children, who came with us and went to school in South Africa, it was great because all schools in South Africa close at 1.30 and play sport. You have this wonderful outdoor life with safaris and swimming. Very enjoyable.

SR: You put in your notes Robin Cook and ethical foreign policy.

MLG: The change of government happened in 1997, while I was in South Africa. It was interesting in a way, because it didn't actually impinge on me as much as you would think. It didn't even impinge in South Africa as much as the Labour Party had thought. The Conservative Party had seemed to be rather soft on apartheid, if not actually supporting apartheid, and opposed to the ANC and calling Mandela a terrorist. So the Labour Party, with its very strong anti-apartheid roots with people like Peter Hain, felt that it would fundamentally transform relations between South Africa and Great Britain. Actually, what struck me as a diplomat is that it didn't change much at all, to be honest.

Robin Cook came in and talked about an ethical dimension in foreign policy. He wanted to put human rights at the forefront. Looking back, clearly they found that very, very difficult. Robin Cook's ethical foreign policy came up against the realities of government. They quickly found difficulties, whether it was selling arms to Saudi Arabia or engaging in external intervention in the Balkans. And then there was Robin Cook's own personal life ... So the whole concept of an ethical foreign policy was quietly dropped from the Labour government programme.

SR: I nearly forgot to ask you about the time when Princess Diana died.

MLG: Yes. This was in 1997 when she sadly died in Paris on a Saturday evening. I used to play golf on Sunday mornings and I remember getting up and getting into the car and switching on the radio. The first thing on the radio was that Diana had died. I was shocked and reversed the car back into the drive and told Sheila. After that, I went off to play golf. I completely misjudged the impact that this would have in South Africa. Of course I knew there would be a huge impact in Britain, but I didn't think they would be such a huge impact in South Africa. I was out on the golf course most of the morning, out of touch as the cell phone didn't work. I came back at lunchtime and Sheila was going crazy, having failed to get hold of me. All the South African media wanted to do interviews and the High Commissioner was away at the time. So I had to rapidly change and put on a black tie and

give some interviews. We opened a condolence book and there were queues miles long of people wanting to sign the book.

It was a misjudgement on my part about how big an event this would be in a place like South Africa: I should have realised that at the start. It never occurred to me.

### **1998-2000: European Union Department, Internal – EUD(I)**

SR: Now back to the European Union: you couldn't stay away!

MLG: It was unfortunate, really. My posting in South Africa was cut short by Stephen Wright, then the Director for Europe. He said there was no one else to do the job. I was flattered and cut short my posting.

SR: By how much?

MLG: By about a year and a half. It was a four-year posting and we only did two and a half years. But of course, being Head of EUD(I), the internal department, was a huge job in the Office, one of the top Head of Department jobs. I felt I couldn't really refuse. Of course, by the time I got back, Stephen Wright was no longer the Director. Nigel Sheinwald had taken over. So I went back for the last hurrah in EU work.

SR: Cutting short a posting after two and a half years is difficult. I always think that two and a half years is the point at which you become maximally useful ... you have the contacts and you know how everything works.

MLG: I know! We were really enjoying our time in South Africa although security, to be fair, was an issue. One forgets the security constraints: every night we had to lock ourselves behind a rape lock at the top of the stairs, so you were barricaded in. There were some shootings in our garden and the house next door was invaded and the inhabitants tied up and robbed. So there was quite a lot of random violence in South Africa that we didn't see even in Pakistan. Sheila was never as comfortable in South Africa as I was, to be honest.

Nonetheless, we would have liked to have done the extra eighteen months: we had planned to do some trips to Botswana and places like that which we hadn't yet got round to.

SR: And of course overseas postings mean more money. And if your posting is cut short, you probably have a house or flat which is rented out, so it can cause some difficult problems.

MLG: That's absolutely true. Actually, I've spent more of my career in London than is normal. I only did five overseas postings, whereas most people were doing six at least. But equally, there was a view that being in London gave you more flexibility on postings and also you were closer to Ministers and to the heart of government.

SR: And do you think the work in London is more interesting?

MLG: Well, sometimes. I think it varies. I've had some fascinating work overseas and at home. I think it's the closeness to power which is attractive. And you have a better overview of what the government is doing.

SR: Tell me about Keith Vaz's battle bus which you mentioned in your notes.

MLG: Keith Vaz was the Minister for Europe. It has to be said that one always had concerns about some of his behaviour and it got to a stage where I actually wrote a minute formally to my staff saying that any dealings they had with Keith Vaz's office should be put in writing. One of his initiatives was that there were a lot of myths being put out about the European Union, many of them initiated by Boris Johnson, of course, who at that time was a correspondent for the Telegraph in Brussels. Straight bananas and all this sort of stuff. He had the idea that we ought to be doing some myth busting and to improve the popularity of the European Union, we would go round in a battle bus, explaining what the European Union meant for ordinary people in Britain and why membership was a good thing.

SR: Not a bad idea!

MLG: Not a bad idea! So this bus was hired and off we went. I didn't go on all the trips, but they went to Edinburgh, Glasgow, Cardiff and various other places. I went to Bath and Bristol. We would set up in the town square with a little stall and invite people to come and ask questions about the European Union. It was quite a fun day out from the Office! I think it was probably right for government money to be spent on that, but whether it was right for the Foreign Office to be doing the job in the UK, I'm not sure. Anyway, I was in favour and I was considered to have been the most Eurosceptic Head of EUD(I) they'd ever had. But, nonetheless, I believed in membership of the European Union so I was quite happy to involve myself.

SR: Can I just ask you to expand a little? Eurosceptic in what particular way?

MLG: Well, I'd always been a bit sceptical of the European project and the way it was a sort of one-way escalator, inevitably driving towards closer political union, in a way that didn't feel natural for this country. Because I'd worked in the European Union quite a bit, I was very conscious of the weaknesses, the frailties, the lack of reform, the things that needed changing. So although I was firmly committed to the European Union, I felt that we could be more ambitious and forceful on the reform agenda. Compared to many in the Foreign Office, that was considered to be quite a Eurosceptic position.

Nevertheless, as I say, I was happy to go along with the battle bus. I'm not sure how successful it was as an operation. I think it got discontinued for lack of money after I left.

I also worked quite closely with Mr Goldsmith, the QC, on the European Charter of Rights which we negotiated. That was quite fun. We'd go over to Brussels and negotiate as part of the intergovernmental conference on the EU Charter.

SR: Had you done any formal negotiating before?

MLG: I hadn't done international negotiation as such. So this was the first toe in the water there. That was interesting work. Again, there was a big management role as it was a large department. Fantastic desk officers would come through - they've gone on to great things now. Building a team and keeping morale up when everyone was working incredibly long hours was a good experience.

### **2000-03: Africa Director, FCO**

SR: Let's now move on. You got a promotion and became Africa Director.

MLG: Yes. After the three jobs I had done linked to Africa, the Director job that I felt would be right for me was Africa and that came up in 2000. I took over from Ann Grant. There were three or four departments working under me. The first thing I remember about that job was that there was a very large Director's office, probably one of the largest in the Foreign Office and it had some very big, empty walls. Ann Grant, my predecessor, had some beautiful Ghanaian wall-hangings on the wall. But she explained they were hers and she would be taking them with her. So I wondered what to put on the walls. I'd heard that, as a Director, you have access to the Government Art Collection (GAC). So I went to Tottenham Court Road, where the GAC is, and explained that I was the new Africa Director and wanted some African related art and that I needed big pictures because of the large, empty walls.

The lady said that they had lots of African art; it was one of their biggest collections. So she pulled open one of the trolleys where the art is hung to reveal a huge great painting: the Slave Market at Dakar. I said I didn't think that was going to work: I couldn't have that sort of painting on the wall with African visitors. So she pulled out another one: Negroes Working on the Rubber Plantation in Congo. No wonder it was their largest collection, because nobody wanted that kind of art on their wall! So I asked for some modern African art. But they didn't have any. In the end, I had to have some completely abstract, large paintings on the wall because there was nothing African related at all! Those paintings are still presumably in the Government Art Collection.

SR: And there is a policy of never selling anything.

MLG: Yes. All pretty embarrassing.

But it was a time when there were all sorts of different crises going on. Particularly Zimbabwe, which always seems to have been in crisis. It was the time of Tony Blair's African renaissance, so there was quite a bit of Prime Ministerial interest. Jack Straw was the Foreign Secretary and he was quite interested in Africa too. We did some joint visits with his French opposite number, the first time there had been a joint French/British ministerial visit to Africa. It was also the time of the intervention in Sierra Leone where British troops went in to protect the UN peacekeepers who got into difficulty. Then there was a hostage crisis when we sent in the SAS to rescue hostages in Sierra Leone. So all that was exciting work, working closely with the Ministry of Defence. And working with DfID, not always easy. DfID had most of the money that was spent in Africa. They had a couple of Heads of Mission positions in Africa at that stage. John Kerr, the Permanent Secretary, was at this point negotiating a deal with his opposite number in DfID on how to work together with DfID and Foreign Office staff in Africa. There were all sorts of difficulties about that, mainly to do with money and the fact that DfID paid all their local staff much more than the Foreign Office did: this led to resentment. So there was quite a lot of inter-Whitehall work that I did during this time.

SR: Did you travel much?

MLG: Yes, a lot. With the Foreign Secretary but also on my own account, going to some places where I was the most senior British visitor for hundreds of years - Equatorial Guinea was one such.

SR: I am intrigued by a curious mention in your notes, Mark, of ‘monkeys in a smart London hotel’. What was that all about?

MLG: The thing about working on Africa is that extraordinary things always happen. In fact, I used to lecture on a course for newly appointed Ambassadors before they went off on their postings. I set a multiple-choice quiz about things that might happen when you are an Ambassador and what you should do. I chose all the examples from events that had really happened in Africa. For example, a Head of Mission getting drunk at the Queen’s Birthday Party and insulting the Foreign Minister and then getting PNG-ed: what do you do about it? Or an Ambassador whose deputy refuses to get out of bed in the morning: how do you react? There was a Head of Chancery who had shot the cat belonging to the First Secretary ... All of these things happened while I was Director for Africa!

One of the examples that sticks in my mind was getting a phone call, while I was sitting at my desk in the Office, from the manager of a smart London hotel. He was very worried because the Central African Republic delegation headed by the Prime Minister had just checked in and left their luggage. Blood was coming out of one of the suitcases and he wasn’t quite sure what to do. I told him not to do anything and that I would speak to the Head of Protocol and send him back to the hotel. Then, in the presence of the Head of Protocol, the suitcase could be opened. An hour or so later, he rang back to tell me that the suitcase had been opened to reveal three dead monkeys! In fact, it turned out to be bush meat. So we then had the question of what to do. The Head of Protocol explained that the suitcase should have been dropped off in Paris and wasn’t supposed to have come on to London. I explained that it was a violation of the CITES agreement to transport live meat between countries: it was illegal in France as well as in the UK. I had to go to the Minister for advice as to whether we should cancel the visit and send the Prime Minister home or continue the visit, the first ever by the Prime Minister of the Central African Republic to the UK. In the end, we decided that we would send home the Head of Protocol, but that the Prime Minister could stay.

SR: And the monkey meat was disposed of safely?

MLG: Yes! These were the sorts of things that happened in the Africa Directorate that, maybe, don’t happen in the rest of the world. My quiz contained about fifteen bizarre things like this.

SR: Real 'Yes Minister' stuff, isn't it?

MLG: Exactly!

SR: On a more serious note, you mentioned the impact of 9/11.

MLG: 9/11 happened while I was there. I remember my secretary rushing in and telling me to turn on the television. There it was. Slowly people from the Directorate gathered and we all watched as it all unfolded on live TV. In fact, as it happens, I was due to fly to Washington the following day. Obviously, that was cancelled. Immediately, you could see that this was going to change a lot of the work I'd be doing going forward.

SR: What else is there? Why did you mention 'Who Wants To Be A Millionaire'?

MLG: That was another strange episode that happened while I was Africa Director. I was asked by a friend of mine, Mary Nightingale, a TV presenter, whether I would be the 'phone a friend' when she appeared on the celebrity version of the programme for charity, along with Des Lynam, the sports presenter. It was to be aired on Christmas Day. I agreed, but didn't think much more about it. She told me it would be filmed at the beginning of December, the 5<sup>th</sup> or the 6<sup>th</sup>, so if I was called up it would be any time between about two and six o'clock. Anyway, I had basically forgotten about it and I was at a pre-Christmas office party, off-site. Suddenly the phone went: "This is Chris Tarrant from 'Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?'" So I rushed upstairs to a quiet room while he was talking. I can remember the question distinctly: "Which of the following words comes from the Greek meaning to dance: a. chorus b. orchestra c. proscenium and d. stage?" I said that it was either a. or b. I wasn't a hundred per cent sure, but I went for a. chorus. Then the phone went click. I rushed downstairs and asked the host if he had a dictionary. I looked up chorus and it said *From the Greek χορός (khorós), a dance.* Thank God for that! But then, five minutes later, I got a phone call from Mary telling me that it was the wrong answer. The correct answer was orchestra. I explained that I had looked it up and told her that she should complain. She said that she couldn't do that because a couple from East Enders was now in the chair and she and Des Lynam were in the green room. Des Lynam was Mr Cool and didn't want to make a fuss. This was the £64,000 question: they had already got £32,000. So I looked up orchestra and, sure enough, it also comes from χορός, a dance. Actually, in Greek, it's the same root. So that was the end of that. We had a Directors' meeting in the Foreign Office every morning and I warned people at meeting that I had embarrassed the Office on TV by getting the question wrong.

But a couple of days later, I was at a dinner party and telling this story. One of the guys was a journalist from the Daily Telegraph and he said he wanted to write the story. I told him to speak to Mary and she agreed. So he wrote the story saying that in answer to her question, both the answers were ambiguous and that she should have got the money. This got picked up by the Sun and the Mirror: the tabloids were making a great fuss about it. Because of this, Celador then admitted that they'd made a mistake, only for the third time in twenty years, the full £64,000 was paid to the charity. I of course said that wasn't enough as they could have gone on to win a million pounds!

So, on Christmas Day, we set the video recorder. We were watching it with my parents and the kids, just before the News at Ten. This was 2002. We'd heard about my next posting to Pakistan. I'd never seen the programme before. It was very embarrassing because Mary was saying, "Oh, Mark will know the answer to this. He did classics at Cambridge – he's bound to know the answer!" And then we saw her looking shocked on being told that I hadn't given the right answer.

Then we watched the News at Ten. It was Trevor McDonald in those days. After the first 'bong', he talked about a massive bomb in the diplomatic enclave in Islamabad. Diplomats killed. More bongs. "And finally, a scandal about 'Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?'" So my kids were saying, "Dad, isn't that where we're going?" That was the Christmas Day bomb in the diplomatic church in Islamabad. Four months before we went out to Pakistan. So it all connected up. And I was vindicated in the end!

SR: You'd think they would have checked the answers rigorously?

MLG: As I said, it was only the third time in twenty years they had made a mistake. The problem was that both answers were correct. But it was a gloomy start to our posting in Pakistan.

SR: If I may, before we move to Pakistan, can I just ask you about the Number 2 Appointments Board? Had had you been on a Board before?

MLG: I had briefly been on the Number 3 Board. In those days, the Number 1 Board - all the DG level people - did all the senior Ambassadors; Directors sat on the Number 2 Board and made the appointments for the more junior Ambassadors. Then there was a Number 3 Board that did deputies.

It was my first real experience of appointment boards. One I remember was the appointment of Craig Murray as Ambassador to Uzbekistan. Because Craig Murray was in the Africa command at the time, it was my job to introduce him. I knew that Craig had had quite a chequered history: he'd also caused a bit of a stir when he was the Deputy High Commissioner in Ghana: that's when I came across him. There was a high level UN meeting in New York where Tony Blair was present. President Rawlings of Ghana was also there. Rawlings said, "It's all very well for you to accuse African countries of corruption. But a British diplomat in my own country has admitted that British companies are also corrupt." Not surprisingly, Tony Blair was a bit taken aback by this. So the instruction came down the chain, ending up with me as Africa Director, to find out who the British diplomat in question was. After some enquiries, the evidence pointed to Craig Murray, speaking at a British Council seminar in Ghana. He'd apparently said (with typical honesty) that it takes two to be corrupt, the person paying the bribe and the person taking the bribe.

Now, around the same time, there were the elections in Ghana. As part of his political role, Craig Murray covered the Opposition's election campaign. He became very friendly with the candidate who was a guy called John Kufuor. There were reports that he was sleeping overnight at the headquarters of the Opposition and things like that which went further than would be expected of a diplomat. But, lo and behold, John Kufuor won the election. Somewhat surprisingly, Jerry Rawlings allowed that to stand. There was a peaceful transition of power and John Kufuor became the new President. His best friend was Craig Murray, the Deputy High Commissioner. The then High Commissioner was a bit put out at the fact that his Deputy was best friends with the President, but he was leaving. A new High Commissioner came in and found it very difficult to get any access to the President. I was a bit torn, to be honest. From the British Government's point of view, having access to the President was important. The fact that it was the Deputy rather than the High Commissioner was certainly awkward, but not terrible for HMG.

All that was background to the discussion when Murray was put up as a potential Ambassador to Uzbekistan. I introduced him and explained some of the history. I argued that Craig was a brilliant guy: he had got a First at Dundee. He'd been on University Challenge when Dundee had actually won. He was a scientist and an original thinker. He was the sort of person that the Foreign Office needed to be able to accommodate. But I pointed out that, being the number two is manageable - once you are the Ambassador, you are in a position of some responsibility and therefore there was a risk.

One of my Director colleagues, John Macgregor, then said “Well, how much trouble can he get up to in Tashkent? Let’s give him a try and, if he does well, then he’ll be ready for a bigger post.” Everyone nodded their heads in response to John’s intervention, and so Craig Murray was appointed as Ambassador in Tashkent. About a year later, perhaps a bit more, when I was in Islamabad, I read Craig Murray’s telegram from Tashkent and I confess that I laughed out loud, remembering this conversation. He’d sent a telegram round to all diplomatic posts, accusing the British government of condoning torture and attacking Jack Straw and the government for their approach to Uzbekistan. I always think back to that conversation we had at the appointments Board. We knew it was a risk. We decided it was worth it. But it turned out to be a very painful episode for the Foreign Office as a whole and indeed for Jack Straw personally. After all sorts of accusations of misbehaviour by Craig at post, there were internal investigations and months in which Craig Murray and the Foreign Office were locked in quasi-legal dispute about whether he could return to Tashkent or indeed stay on in the Foreign Office. Eventually, he left and was paid off, much to Jack Straw’s horror. He then ran against Jack Straw in his constituency for what he called the Anti-Torture Party. He’s written a very interesting book called Murder in Tashkent in which he is fairly honest about his own failings. Indeed, I think that he collaborated in a play, called The Ambassador and the Belly Dancer. It ran, much to the Foreign Office’s embarrassment, at the Whitehall Theatre, just near the Office!

### **2003-06: High Commissioner, Pakistan**

SR: Good morning. I’m with Mark Lyall Grant on 25 November 2019. Now we come onto Pakistan. Was this the most challenging job you ever had, being a High Commissioner in a hostile environment and keeping up morale?

MLG: Well it was very challenging. But I would also say that, in some ways, it was the most enjoyable of my diplomatic postings because our post in Islamabad was the largest we had in the world at that point.

SR: How many people?

MLG: About 160 UK-based staff and around 600 local staff. A very large visa and immigration section with more than 50 UK-based staff working there. I think there were ten government departments represented. So it was a big post. But it was also enjoyable and challenging for two reasons. One is that the number of major issues that concerned the

British government emanated from or were linked to Pakistan, particularly in the threat area: terrorism, drugs, nuclear proliferation, the conflicts in Afghanistan and Kashmir, the return to democracy and, of course, all the immigration issues like forced marriages and things like that. So there were a lot of issues that the British government cared a great deal about. Also, as British High Commissioner in Pakistan, you had a great deal of influence. There were four countries really that had a big influence in Pakistan: China, the United States, Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom. So that gave you very significant influence and access at senior levels.

SR: You mentioned earlier that there had been a rather horrible terrorist attack just before you arrived.

MLG: Yes, there were a number of terrorist threats in the months before we arrived in April 2003. On Christmas Day 2002 there was a bomb in the diplomatic enclave which killed a number of diplomatic dependents. Security was definitely a big issue. I had an armoured car and a bodyguard and so did Sheila. We lived on a compound and we had a lot of security around the compound and the diplomatic enclave more widely. So I think the diplomatic community, when I arrived, was a little bit nervous. But, having said that, the threat was targeted: it was from Islamist militants and so, in a sense, you knew where the threat came from and you could take prophylactic action to mitigate those threats. So it never felt particularly threatening where we lived in the compound. And, as High Commissioner, we did also have the ability to travel round the country extensively too with protection: I never felt inhibited from visiting the country.

SR: Did you find that the protection got in the way?

MLG: It was actually relatively low-key for me, compared to, say, the Americans. There was an amusing incident shortly after I arrived. The American Ambassador, Nancy Powell, invited me to play golf. She had a full US close protection team of six people. I had my Pakistani bodyguard. So we were quite numerous going down the first fairway, as you can imagine with two caddies, two ballboys and all the protection. The US protection team was very heavily armed and, afterwards, my protection officer came up to me and said, "Sahib, I think I need a bigger gun." He'd been so impressed by what the Americans were carrying! But I never felt it justified to have a full protection team.

SR: So what did you spend most of your time doing? What was your number one priority?

MLG: I think really it was some of the threats: the India/Pakistan issue and Afghanistan. And terrorism: at that time, about 50% of the terrorist threats that were detected in the United Kingdom were linked in some way back to the Pakistan/Afghan border. Either the terrorist threats had been planned there or people had been trained in terrorist camps on the Afghan border. So that was a very big issue. For instance, there was a transatlantic terrorist plot while I was there, masterminded essentially from Pakistan, to put bombs on transatlantic planes from the UK to the United States. We worked with the Americans to disrupt that plot successfully. That was an example of the sort of daily work that was being done.

I do remember one case when I was back in the UK on leave when the top three stories on the ITN News at Ten all related to Pakistan: none of them were good stories. There was the terrorist threat I've just mentioned, a bitter custody battle between a Pakistani father and a Scottish mother and allegations of ball tampering at the England versus Pakistan Test match. So those were the sorts of issues we dealt with. But there were a number of others, particularly related to the consular side. Two of them were very high on my agenda: one was forced marriages. I had gone to Leeds and Bradford before going out to Pakistan and was struck by the police chief in Bradford mentioning that about 350 Pakistani origin girls would go to the police every year - nearly one a day - suggesting that their parents were trying to force them into a forced marriage. At the High Commission, we had on our books about a hundred cases. We helped to rescue up to 30 girls a year: these were teenage girls - British nationals - who had been essentially tricked or forced by their parents to marry a cousin or relative in Pakistan against their will. And, of course, the cases that we dealt with were not those that went to the police station in Bradford but who had been typically taken by their parents on holiday to meet the grandparents in Kashmir, say, from where a large population of the Pakistani population derives, and then the parents would take away their passport and leave them. They would be married off, perhaps in a debt of honour, to a neighbour or uncle or cousin in Pakistan. We would get to know of this occasionally from the siblings, more often from friends at school who would tell us that they knew a friend had gone on holiday but hadn't returned to school. We would track down the family, wait until the girl was on her own in the house and visit her, ask her whether she was in a forced marriage and, if she was, we would tell her that we could return her to the UK and put her in the Land Rover and take her to the High Commission and then fly her back to the UK.

SR: But didn't that mean that the girl would be going back to stay with the parents who had put her in that situation in the first place?

MLG: That's a good point. She would be met at Heathrow by an NGO well-versed in this sort of area. Sometimes there would be reconciliation and sometimes there wouldn't. We did hear of one distressing case, a girl of around fifteen I met in the safe house in Islamabad. She went back to the UK and was encouraged to reconcile with the family and then was killed in an honour killing by the brother. So that was a tragic end to that particular case.

That area of forced marriages was a very new one for the Foreign Office. They established a Forced Marriages Unit which is still going, I'm happy to say. Pakistan was not the only country. There are a number of others.

SR: It's difficult work, isn't it? Emotionally demanding.

MLG: Yes, it is. There was another case involving a gentleman called Tahir Hussain. He was a young British Pakistani who arrived in Rawalpindi aged eighteen. In circumstances that were never 100% clear, he killed the taxi driver who picked him up at the airport. He was on death row for a further eighteen years. Obviously, we had some consular responsibility for him: we visited him regularly in jail. After he had been on death row for such a long time, the Pakistanis decided that he would be executed. I managed to get a stay of execution for an extra three months and then a further three months. Eventually, I helped to secure his release and his return to the UK. That took up a lot of time, directly lobbying the President and the President's Chief of Staff to explain the circumstances which, as I mentioned, were highly disputed. He said he was sexually attacked by the taxi driver and had killed him in self-defence. The prosecution were never quite clear about their version of why he had killed this person. But the family of the victim had been pushing very hard for the death penalty and had refused any attempts to pay blood money and things like that, which was quite a common practice in Pakistan. So it was a very difficult case. Eventually, it was successfully resolved just as I left post.

SR: You said you were able to lobby the President. Tell me a bit about the personalities.

MLG: The President was General Pervez Musharraf. He took over in a military coup three or four years before I arrived, but he was keen to move the country towards democracy. He was very different from Zia-ul-Haq, who was the President and dictator when I was first in Pakistan twenty years earlier. He was a very liberal minded leader but, nonetheless, it was a military government. They were bad things happening in terms of democracy for the opposition, but he was moving it in a more liberal direction. So he was the key decision

maker on virtually everything that happened in the country and a close relationship with him was important, as it was with other senior military people as well as the civilian government - he established a civilian government with a civilian Prime Minister. It was therefore a question of knowing all the key players and being able to exert influence on behalf of British interests as and when required.

SR: You mentioned Benazir Bhutto in your notes. When did you come across her?

MLG: Yes, that was one of the things I got involved in which was a little bit unusual for an Ambassador. I was asked by President Musharraf to make contact with Benazir Bhutto as a kind of intermediary, really. She was in exile at the time, partly in the UK and partly in Dubai. Largely due to some polling we had done ourselves which demonstrated that the Pakistani People's Party, of which Benazir Bhutto was the leader, was the most popular political party in the country. If Musharraf wanted to return to a proper democracy in the country, he could not exclude the People's Party from participating in the elections. In order to do that, there had to be some understanding with Benazir Bhutto which would allow her to come back to the country and take part in the campaign.

SR: Did you have to get special permission from the Office to do this as it was quite an unusual thing for an Ambassador to do?

MLG: Yes, I did get special permission from the Office. They were happy for me to do that because it was part of our objectives to facilitate the return to democracy in Pakistan. So although it was slightly unusual, I did get clearance from London. I went to see Benazir Bhutto, whom I hadn't met before. I had lunch with her in Dubai. I then subsequently met her on two or three occasions. Funnily enough at the Punch and Judy café at Harrods, where she always liked to meet. Eventually I put her and the President in direct contact: they had a phone call and then other intermediaries met and I backed out. Six months after I left Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto did return but, sadly, she was assassinated. That was a very tragic ending to that story. But it was fascinating getting involved.

In a minor way, I was also involved in some of the back channel work done between India and Pakistan. I had a sort of division of labour with my American opposite number: he took the lead on some of the Afghan issues and the counterterrorism issues relating to Afghanistan, whereas I took the lead on the domestic political stuff and the India/Pakistan issues. So again, quietly, we helped set up the back channel between India and Pakistan,

which made a great deal of progress and, by the time I left, essentially a deal to resolve the issue of Kashmir - a bone of contention between the two countries for seventy years and the trigger for three wars - had been reached. Unfortunately, that was the time when President Musharraf got into difficulties domestically with the Chief Justice campaigning against him. The Indians decided to wait until there was a full transition to democracy before doing the deal. That, in my view was a strategic mistake by India because, if you want to resolve the Kashmir issue, actually you have to have the Pakistan army on board: this was an opportunity to do it with Musharraf as President. So that opportunity unfortunately slipped away but I spent a lot of my time working to try and help facilitate an agreement between the two countries.

SR: You mentioned that you represented one of the four foreign powers that were listened to in Pakistan. You must have therefore done a lot of public diplomacy and I'm wondering whether your family history, with Lyallpur and everything, was a help or hindrance?

MLG: It was definitely a help. It wasn't just the links back to Lyallpur, it was perhaps more so that my uncle had been at Quetta Staff College and I was the third generation of my family who had met their spouse in Pakistan! My grandparents were married in what is now Pakistan, my aunt had met her husband there and I met Sheila there on my first posting. I think that resonated with Pakistanis and made it easier to break down barriers. So I was able to go on Pakistan television. I did a cooking programme.

SR: Doing British specialities?

MLG: Well, I cheated. It was one that my cook had made earlier! I served traditional bangers and mash, but I have to admit that the sauce was made earlier by my cook. So we invited the TV crew in and we all sat down: it was a fun bit of public diplomacy. But I think all of that came from the fact that I did have links with the country which helped.

In addition to that regular work, there were exceptional things. One which sticks in my mind was the 2005 Kashmir earthquake. 75,000 people were killed and over 100,000 injured: it was a really massive tragedy. A huge amount of work was required in follow-up. I'm very proud of the way the British government responded to it: we managed to get some UK branded NGOs, funded by DfID, on the ground in Islamabad the following day, going through the rubble of some of the buildings that had actually collapsed in the capital, quite a long way from the epicentre of the earthquake right up in the mountains. That gave Britain a

lot of credibility. Then it was a question of negotiating for the arrival of some British troops that came: they stayed for three months going into the area, rebuilding the schools and things up in the Kashmir area. Organising and cooperating with all the aid that was coming in from the UK from charities and also from DfID. So that was a big event and there was a lot of public diplomacy around that as well.

SR: And I think you had lots of visitors?

MLG: Yes. What was nice about being in Pakistan was that it was not like, say, Paris, where you get too many visitors and you hardly ever get breakfast or lunch to yourself! It's also not like Mauritius, where you're desperate for visitors and send letters back pleading for junior Ministers! We had just enough visitors, but not too many.

SR: They presumably stayed three or four nights?

MLG: Yes, they often wanted to go to Lahore, or Karachi or Peshawar. So when they came it was quite intensive. We had the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary, the Home Secretary, senior military and some royal visits including Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall. They paid their first official joint overseas visit to Pakistan, shortly before we left. So, yes, we had a lot of visitors. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, I remember, was an enjoyable one. We had some interfaith dialogue.

SR: Can you expand on the mention in your notes of 'bugging issues'?

MLG: The particular issue that arose was the Pakistan Embassy being rebuilt in London. They found some bugs in that and accused us of planting them. Which was a bit rich given what happened before, when they had actually bugged the Ambassador's Residence in Islamabad: one of my predecessors had discovered a tape recorder on the coffee table in the main room of the Residence, sort of sellotaped to the underside! In the hot weather it melted ... That led to a wider sweep and they found various other bugs around the Residence. But when the Pakistan Embassy in London found some bugs, obviously that caused a certain amount of concern and had to be dealt with.

But there were some fun occasions too. I remember receiving a telegram when the England cricket team were out. It was one of those DEDIP telegrams, only for the Ambassador. It was the time when they had won the Ashes in the UK in the summer of 2005 and were out in Pakistan in October/November time and, because of what had happened in the Ashes, had

received honours in the New Year's Honours List. But, as you know, when that happens you get informed in advance and asked whether you accept. So it was actually quite a complicated operation because the team that was in Pakistan was not absolutely identical to the one that had won the Ashes. So I had to ring up the manager and tell him that there was some good news and ask him to separate out those who were in the Ashes team from the others. So I went down to Lahore with some champagne: they had just lost the Test Match, so they were in a terrible state, all sitting around in a grumpy way in the hotel room. I had to check that they were all British nationals ... not a given as there were quite a lot of foreign-born players. Then I had to get their full names and find out whether they were willing to accept the offer of the honour. They all did. It was the sort of thing you do as an Ambassador, although not part of your normal diplomatic duties.

SR: One for the memoirs, definitely. And still on cricket, tell me about Imran Khan.

MLG: We knew Imran.

SR: Was he still married to Jemima at that stage?

MLG: Yes, but they were separated (and then divorced in 2004). The children were going to school in the UK, but living in Pakistan. He was raising money for a cancer hospital in Lahore. So he was on the diplomatic circuit, if you like. He was beginning to move into political mode and becoming rather more conservative in his thinking. I remember there was one charity event held next door at the Spanish Ambassador's Residence where we were on a table with Imran Khan. He took umbrage at the cabaret show that was on offer and stormed out.

SR: Why exactly?

MLG: It was a British cabaret act and the performers were wearing slightly skimpy clothes. He said this was very poor taste and walked out, looking to his political future. But I think one can say there was a certain amount of hypocrisy given his playboy lifestyle in the past! But it was the start of his political consciousness and he was deliberately moving into a more religious mode at that point.

### **2007-09: Political Director, FCO**

SR: So how did the next job come about?

MLG: I was interested in being Political Director. But I think I got the job largely on the back of a visit Michael Jay, the Permanent Under-Secretary, made to Pakistan. We had a meeting with President Musharraf and, in the traditional Pakistani way, the President was sitting in a chair and we were sitting at 90 degree angles on a sofa. Michael was going through his talking points on terrorism and Afghanistan and, at one point, the President was explaining why the Pakistan army had not done more to tackle terrorism. I interrupted and said, "Well, Mr President, hold on a minute. You told me that three months ago. What you said would happen isn't happening. Why not?" I think Michael was a little bit shocked that I was speaking like this to the President. But, equally, he could see from the way President Musharraf reacted that I had the sort of relationship that I could do that. He was impressed that I was prepared to be robust in pushing back against the President and thought that was a sign of someone who would make a good Political Director. I think that helped me secure the job.

SR: It's an immensely difficult job, isn't it? The list of things to do is endless and there is lots of travelling.

MLG: Yes as Political Director you are the principal official adviser to the Foreign Secretary, really covering all the issues, particularly all those outside the European Union. So it's a job where you have to decide where you are going to put your effort. It's obviously a big management job too. For the first time, I was on the FCO main Board. I was the Sexual Diversity Champion. So you do quite a lot of management of the Directors: it's a question of enabling them to do their job in their particular areas, whether the Middle East, Africa or the Far East. But, at the same time, putting your own weight behind any particular issue and dealing with the crises and advising the Foreign Secretary. So it is a big job. It was interesting because it came at a time when Margaret Beckett was the Foreign Secretary under a Labour government. Then David Miliband took over. Two very different characters as Foreign Secretary. Very shortly after David Miliband took over, a big issue came up on UK/Russia relations: how to deal with the aftermath of the Litvinenko assassination. That was something I worked very closely with David Miliband on, very early on. But there was also the whole question of Kosovo independence, there was the Sri Lanka civil war coming to an end and, in particular, the E3 + 3 negotiations on the Iran nuclear programme took up a lot of my time and, eventually, a certain amount of David Miliband's time as well as it escalated to Foreign Minister level. But there was also Iraq going on. Afghanistan. And crises in Georgia, Gaza, the Middle East, Sudan and so on. So a whole range of issues to deal with.

Quite a bit of crisis response. Quite a lot of travelling: it was the most intense travelling. There was certainly one year where I travelled every single week of the year except for two. A lot of it was short haul flying to Brussels or taking the train to Brussels on a Sunday afternoon and coming back after the Foreign Affairs Council. I went twice to Washington in one week which got some criticism in the Daily Mail ... as though anyone would want to travel twice to Washington in one week if it wasn't absolutely necessary!

But it was fascinating, because you got a very good overview of what the top priorities of the Foreign Office were. And when David Miliband took over, he is very much a policy wonk, if you like, and he wanted a lot of longer term think pieces about where British foreign policy should be going. Should we be more French in our outlook?

SR: And what is the answer to that?

MLG: Well, the answer to that is that yes we should. But it was not politically or constitutionally possible for us to be more French. But the conclusion of the study I did for him was that it would be in our interests if we were more French in our approach. He agreed with it.

SR: It was a great loss to British politics when he retired from the scene, wasn't it?

MLG: It was, undoubtedly. I saw quite a bit of him and Louise when I was subsequently in New York.

SR: And how did you get on with Margaret Beckett?

MLG: Reasonably well. She was only there about four or five months. Quite a private woman, so I didn't really have the time to build up a close personal relationship with her before she left.

SR: She was quite dependent on her husband, wasn't she?

MLG: Yes, she always travelled with her husband. When we flew over to Brussels for the Foreign Affairs Councils and things, her husband would normally come with her.

### **2009-15: Permanent Representative to the UN**

SR: So you were Political Director for two and half years?

MLG: Yes. The job in New York came up unexpectedly because John Sawers had done only two years before he returned as Head of MI6. So the job became vacant probably a year or more earlier than expected. There was a bit of a pattern of Political Directors going to New York: it had happened with John Sawers who was my predecessor as Political Director, so it was a well trodden path. I think I was probably the obvious candidate to go to New York, although I hadn't previously done multilateral work overseas before.

SR: Can you describe what it was like? Again, it is quite a gruelling job: lots of sessions of the Security Council, long hours. Did you find it as demanding as any of your other jobs or did it fall into more of a pattern?

MLG: It was very demanding and fascinating. I did it for five and half years and extended twice, so I was the longest serving Ambassador we've ever had at the UN. I think that was an advantage, undoubtedly. It gave you time to get to know all the people, but also experience does count, whether you're working in the Security Council or whether you're working in other parts of the UN system. Many foreign Ambassadors had been there for ten or fifteen years or more. You build up a certain amount of authority and experience by being there a while: I think it's a mistake for people to go for a very short posting to a place like New York, because you do become more effective the longer you've been there. For instance, by the time I left, my Russian colleague had been there for twelve or thirteen years: longevity does help do the job well.

Of course it's a fascinating job, because you're dealing with some of the most intractable issues in the world. Issues of very high importance for the British government. You are one of the most important players, because you have one of the five permanent seats on the Security Council and that puts you on a level which other countries can't match at the UN. That gives you a lot of responsibility and a lot of authority. Britain plays a very active role in the multilateral system in the UN. It's extremely important to us and, if Brexit happens, will be even more important to us in the future. We have invested more than most countries in the multilateral system and the UN is the apex of the multilateral system, the only place in the world where all 193 countries are represented. There may be 150-odd Embassies in Washington and 120-odd in the UK, but the only place in the world where all 193 countries are is New York. If you want therefore to talk to the North Koreans or the Cubans or the Iranians, you can do it in New York very discreetly in a way you can't in capitals. So that makes it important. But also all the big conflict, international peace and security issues come

through the UN Security Council and therefore it's a fascinating forum in which you are negotiating with the Russians and the Chinese on a daily basis. There were lots of crises while I was there. First, there was Libya, then there was Syria, then there was Ukraine: I suppose they were the three biggest conflict crises while I was there. Every single day, you are dealing with another intractable problem, whether it's the Middle East peace process or South Sudan independence and then civil war, Mali, the Central African Republic, Yemen, Congo, Somalia ... it was non-stop in terms of the pressure.

SR: What about your Security Council colleagues? What were they like?

MLG: They were fascinating. The P5 is very important, so obviously you get to know them very well. The Russian, Vitaly Churkin, was there a while before I arrived and still there when I left. Sadly, he died in office a couple of years ago. He was really difficult to deal with, particularly on the many issues where we disagreed, like Libya, Syria and Ukraine in particular. But he was a very well educated and sophisticated guy. There were issues on which you could - and had to - cooperate with the Russians. And, of course on social occasions, it was important to have a relationship with all your colleagues, because however much you were attacking them on one issue, you might need them to cooperate on another issue. So you had to get that balance right. He was actually someone who, on a personal level, was quite easy to get on with.

The Chinese changed twice while I was there. None of them were very effective, in a way. It's interesting how China is very subservient to Russia on the Security Council. It's very different in other aspects of the UN, in the General Assembly they are more active, but in the Security Council they are very subservient and subordinate to Russia.

SR: And your French colleague?

MLG: My wonderful French colleague was called Gérard Araud. He was there during most of my time before he went off to Washington.

Then I had two American colleagues. First, Susan Rice who then went back to Washington as National Security Adviser and I dealt with her again, at a later stage. Then Samantha Power took over from her. Two very different women and important colleagues.

SR: Did you spend much time doing deals with your colleagues before things arrived at the Security Council?

MLG: One could talk for hours about the Security Council, but 75% of the drafting of resolutions in the Security Council is done by the UK, France or the US. We did at least a third. So, overall, at least 25% of the business was drafted by the British. But normally, you would coordinate within the P3 early on if you were drafting something and they would do the same. Then you would maybe expand it to the P5, and then to the wider 15. It didn't always work like that. Sometimes, on issues where you knew the Russians and Chinese were going to be difficult, you might bring in some of the elected members at an earlier stage. But it would be rare to go forward with a resolution which is fundamentally opposed by France or the US. You would try to resolve those issues quickly. I did have some big differences, particularly with Susan Rice: we had many more differences with the Americans than with the French, who are probably our closest allies on the Security Council. I learned fairly early on, when I got a call from Number 10 saying, "What's going on? What are you doing? The Americans are lobbying against you" that you need to secure your home base before you go up against the Americans. I was able to persuade Number 10 that the Americans were wrong and that I was doing the right thing and they accepted that. But it was a lesson to me that, when going into some controversial territory with the Americans, you need to clear your lines first in London. On the big strategic issues there weren't that many differences, but there were, on tactical and procedural grounds, quite a lot of differences with the Americans. The one big difference was probably on the Middle East peace process. Indeed, whilst I was there, we co-sponsored a resolution on Israeli settlements in the West Bank, topical at the moment, which the Americans vetoed. We not only voted in favour but co-sponsored: I think that was one of the very few times in the history of the United Nations where we voted two away from the Americans. An extremely rare occurrence. This was President Obama's time but, nonetheless, there were significant differences between us and the Americans. Even more so now, under President Trump, of course.

SR: What do you think about the suggestions that the Security Council should be enlarged or reshaped? What about the EU?

MLG: Well, on Security Council reform, certainly the British government has always supported reform. It's true that the make-up of the Security Council is anachronistic in the sense that the emerging powers, particularly India, Brazil, Germany and Japan, deserve to be considered one of the big powers in the world and therefore represented effectively on the UN Security Council. So we have supported expansion of the Security Council, including more permanent members. The difficulty is that it has been discussed for nearly 20 years

now and there is no agreement on exactly how it should be done because, for every country that wants to join, there is a neighbour who opposes it. So Italy opposes Germany, Korea opposes Japan, Pakistan opposes India and Argentina opposes Brazil. So those neighbours have formed what's called the Coffee Club, quite a big group who are opposing any further permanent members of the Security Council. China is very opposed to either Japan or India becoming permanent members, because they have a monopoly of the Asian seat, as it were, on the Security Council. So, for a combination of reasons, although we have strongly supported expansion, it hasn't happened yet. I doubt, myself, whether it will happen in the near future. But it's important to accept that, although the Security Council is not representative, that does not take away from its legitimacy so that its resolutions are still binding on all member states, whether members of the Security Council or not: that has legal force. So it should happen. But I don't think it will for quite a long time.

The European Union is quite interesting because it doesn't connect in very well with the UN. The UN is an intergovernmental body: it does not have any legal personality. This is very different from the European Union. So the European Union has no formal status at the UN as a grouping. It's not an electoral grouping that is recognised by the UN: it's a regional group. It has the ability to speak in some debates but not in others. It was striking that, after the Lisbon Treaty was enacted, the European Union wanted to translate the wording of the Lisbon Treaty into some procedural enhancements of the EU's role at the UN. I think it's fair to say that the British government was not that enthusiastic about it, but we had agreed the Lisbon Treaty and were prepared to go along. The resolution was drafted and put to the General Assembly where it got defeated. This was extremely embarrassing for the EU. The opposition was led by Jamaica and a number of small island states, because at the UN, although 105 of the 193 countries are designated small states with less than 5 million people, they are very strong in defence of the intergovernmental nature of the United Nations, where one country has one vote at the General Assembly. So Tuvalu, with a population of 11,000 people, has one vote and China, with 1.4 billion, has one vote. They did not like the idea of the European Union ganging up as a grouping. I was very struck, when I went to New York in 2009, that the G8 was accepted fully by member states as a rich man's club. If the rich men wanted to get together, that was absolutely fine. But the relatively new grouping of the G20 was greatly resented, not just by countries number 21 to 40, but more widely because, within the G20, were a number of champions in the developing world such as South Africa, Brazil and Indonesia. The G20 appeared to have aspirations of global governance. Everyone

at the UN said that the only legitimate forum for that is the United Nations. So they are very resistant to things like the G20 and the EU which appeared to be undermining the intergovernmental nature of the UN. Which is why all this talk of an EU seat at the Security Council is complete bunkum. No other country would accept that as it would undermine the intergovernmental nature of the UN.

SR: Did you see much of the Secretary General?

MLG: Yes. Ban Ki-moon had been the Korean Foreign Minister and I did see a lot of him. He was obviously a key player and it was my responsibility to have a good relationship with him. It did help that he was a very keen golfer, as many Koreans are, and I play a bit of golf. I got a lot of useful lobbying work done on the golf course!

So he was a key player, as were all the people in the Secretariat, in which there were some British nationals. Some of the most difficult issues I had dealing with Prime Ministers were getting senior British people into jobs at the UN. One of the biggest rows I had with David Cameron was over his wish to have Andrew Lansley appointed to a senior job. He wasn't really qualified for the job at all, but the Prime Minister was very keen that he should be appointed. So that led to some awkward diplomacy both with Ban Ki-moon and with David Cameron. Eventually Cameron accepted that Lansley was the wrong person and Ban Ki-moon was never going to choose him: Stephen O'Brien was appointed, so we did manage to get a British person into the job.

The fun thing about the job is that you do have some personal direct contact with the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary. So when we were negotiating the critical resolution authorising military action on Libya, I spoke to the Prime Minister a number of times on the phone. He was doing direct lobbying of other countries to try and get the votes for the resolution. And of course he would come out to New York once a year for the General Assembly, although Nick Clegg stood in for him on one if not two occasions, I think. The Foreign Secretary, William Hague, was also a frequent visitor to New York.

SR: You mentioned hard and soft power in your notes. Can you expand on that?

MLG: It was quite interesting because I was in New York in 2014 at the time of the Scottish independence referendum and there was a lot of joshing of the UK about what happens if Scotland became independent. There is no doubt in my mind that, had the Scottish people voted for independence, that would have been very damaging for our international reputation

and influence. A lot more damaging than Brexit ever could be directly. You do get a slightly different perspective from New York. From there, our membership of the European Union was not seen as a key part of the British identity. Indeed, in some ways, it was seen as a constraint on the UK operating internationally. There are a number of reasons for that. One is that the EU competence doesn't fit very neatly into UN authority, because there are areas of EU competence, like human rights, which were actually inhibiting to us operating on human rights at the UN. For instance, in a debate, you'd have the European Union speaking on behalf of the 28 countries (actually in fact speaking on behalf of nearly 40 countries including the candidate members and associate members). So you'd have a speech which, by definition, was the lowest common denominator sort of speech as it had to be agreed by all the members of the European Union. That would then be followed by a whole succession of countries like Cuba, Venezuela, Zimbabwe, Syria and Iran speaking essentially against human rights or in defence of their own version of human rights. In terms of the debate, it would look as though the two sides were equally balanced, when of course they were not equally balanced in terms of numbers. By contrast, there are areas like finance and budgetary issues where the EU does not have competence, but actually would have been very useful to speak with one voice at the UN: EU states together made up about 40% of the contributions to the United Nations. So the competences didn't really match. But, more importantly, when people look at the UK, they look at our history and our culture, our economy, the English language, the elite institutions, the Premier League, the West End, the Royal Family ... those are the sort of attributes that I have represented essentially overseas for the last 40 years. Of course, you're promoting and defending the interests of government of the day, and I've worked equally for Conservative and Labour governments. But, fundamentally, that's what you're representing as an Ambassador overseas. Those attributes haven't changed from before we joined the European Union to today, even after Brexit, if and when that happens. So that's where a lot of people outside the European Union look. When you see it from that point of view, you realise that the soft power that we have, allied to the real hard power we have (our military, the budget, the size of our economy, permanent membership of the Security Council, membership of NATO, the Five Eyes community and so on), is what makes us attractive as a nation to students coming to study or businessmen looking to invest or tourists coming to visit. That is something that we're really going to have to maintain. It came home to me a little bit in 2012, during the London Olympics. That was a huge thing and we made a lot of it. It was the theme of one of our Security Council Presidencies. We had a resolution passed in the General Assembly, the first one ever that was co-sponsored by

all 193 countries, a sort of peace resolution. A slightly traditional, ineffective resolution calling for all wars to stop during the two weeks of the Olympics but, nonetheless, it's a symbolic thing. It really did happen in ancient Greece during the Olympics, but unfortunately not these days. We managed to get even the Syrians and the Iranians on board. It was an indication of our soft power that people really wanted to come to the Residence to watch the Olympic opening ceremony and that sort of thing. Using our soft power is going to become even more important to us after Brexit.

SR: Yes, but not easy to do with diminishing budgets in the Foreign Office.

MLG: Indeed.

SR: Can we turn to Syria? You said there were some interesting issues around the crisis in August 2013.

MLG: Yes, David Cameron writes about this in his book. He looks at it from the London end and mentions the New York end, but only briefly. It was actually one of the more difficult days I've had as a diplomat because this was following the use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime in Syria in August 2013. President Obama decided that the right response would be military strikes against the airfields in particular from which the helicopters had taken off with the chemical weapons. He clearly wanted French and British support and involvement in what would have been Cruise missile strikes against Syria. It was at a time when the civil war had been going on for maybe a couple of years and maybe 100,000 people had been killed. When you bear in mind now that over 500,000 people have been killed, it was quite an important moment. I woke up and the political coordinator, the Number 3 in the mission, rang me to say Number 10 had tweeted out that the UK was putting forward a resolution authorising military action against Syria. So I immediately rang Kim Darroch, the National Security Adviser, and asked what was going on, as we weren't proposing any resolution on this. He explained that life had got quite difficult in London - remember that London is five hours ahead of New York time - and they were looking to have a vote in the House of Commons, but there were difficulties with the Liberal Democrats in the coalition government. We needed to demonstrate that we had tried to secure military authorisation, but it wasn't possible to get the Russians to agree.

I then rang up my Russian opposite number, Vitaly Churkin, to tell him that we were going to propose a resolution authorising military action in Syria and that I assumed he wouldn't have

any difficulty with that. He replied, “You must be joking! That’s totally unacceptable.” So I rang Number 10 back to tell them I had spoken to the Russians and that they would veto any resolution.

About an hour later, I had another call to say that the Liberal Democrats were now on board but that there was now a problem with the Labour party, so Number 10 wanted us to draft a resolution and discuss it with the P5, to show that the Russians were going to veto. So I rang up my desk officer, Reza Afshar, one of the best desk officers I’ve ever worked with, to tell him that I needed a resolution authorising military action against Syria. In half an hour he had produced one: he had drafted all the resolutions on Libya before, so he had some experience of this! While he was doing that, I rang up the French and the Americans to explain the situation. They were horrified, of course. They said we didn’t need UN authorisation to have military strikes and that it was going to be very damaging. I explained that if they wanted the British government to be with them on this we had to go through this process and demonstrate that the Russians would veto the resolution. They were very unhappy but agreed to go this first step.

So I called a meeting of the P5 Ambassadors. It was about 11 o’clock New York time by now. I put the resolution on the table and explained that we wanted a vote on it that day. The Russians said they couldn’t accept it and had already told us that they would veto. The Chinese said it was unacceptable. The French and the Americans gave me some lukewarm support. I went back to Number 10 to tell them I had circulated the resolution, but it was quite clear that it was going to be vetoed. A couple of hours later, they came back again and said that it wasn’t enough; the goalposts had been shifted and things were looking pretty dodgy in Parliament. They asked me to circulate the full text to the 15. That was the point at which I said no: I wasn’t prepared to do that as it would be totally unacceptable to the French and the Americans. If we put the resolution to the vote we wouldn’t even get enough votes to secure a veto and it would be extremely damaging to our relationship with the French and the Americans.

They did accept that advice. As we know, the government’s resolution failed. The Opposition motion failed as well. In the end, we couldn’t join in any military strikes on Syria and, as a result of that decision, President Obama decided not to go ahead as well. The French were left slightly high and dry. It was an important moment because, had those military strikes taken place as they would have done if Parliament had voted in favour, it

would have changed the dynamic of the conflict and might have changed it for the better. It certainly couldn't have changed it much for the worse, I think, compared to what's happened since, with 500,000 people killed. But it was an indication of a mismatch between what was politically required in the UK domestic terms and what was realistic internationally. I think, over time, the parliamentary convention that Parliament had to be consulted before that sort of military action was taken had gone too far and I'm pleased that Theresa May has since authorised military action without a vote in Parliament, because that swings that convention back a little bit more in favour of the executive which I think is the right place to be ... although I notice that the Labour manifesto said they would introduce an Act which will make it compulsory to go to Parliament first. I think, in retrospect, probably David Cameron shouldn't have recalled Parliament. It was the very fact of recalling Parliament that perhaps created the drama that made it more difficult to secure the resolution. Had he authorised military strikes without recalling Parliament, there would have been criticism but I think it might have changed the Syria dynamic for the better.

SR: And you said that was probably your most difficult day in your entire diplomatic career?

MLG: Yes. I was under massive pressure to deliver something in New York. I feel that at every stage I delivered what Number 10 wanted, but they shifted the goalposts, as the goalposts were shifting in the UK! I know that David Cameron feels that Ed Miliband let him down very badly, in a sense, because Ed Miliband couldn't deliver his own party. It certainly put me in a very awkward position for a while.

By contrast, defending the British position on the Falklands was something that happened every year when Argentina came to try and press the case for handover of sovereignty or direct sovereignty talks with the United Kingdom. We obviously pushed back very strongly against that. That was always rather fun to do because I had full licence to be very robust in defending British sovereignty over the Falklands at the UN!

### **2015- 17: National Security Adviser**

SR: So after five and a half years at the UN, you went, in your own words, 'into the bear pit at Number 10'!

MLG: Yes, Number 10 is a very different environment from what I had been used to. I expected it to be quite difficult and it was. It's very political. There are a lot of political advisers and hangers on.

SR: Where were you actually located? Right in Number 10 or more in the Cabinet Office?

MLG: In the Cabinet Office, just the other side of the connecting door with Number 10, so you were only about 30 yards or so away from the Prime Minister's office. The National Security Adviser's office was deliberately placed there by Peter Ricketts, the first National Security Adviser, who decided that it was best for it to be at half a remove away from Number 10. As National Security Adviser, you have three roles: one is as personal adviser to the Prime Minister on foreign, security and defence policy; and the other two are as Secretary of the National Security Council (NSC) and as Head of the National Security Secretariat, in both of which you work to the Cabinet Secretary. As the Cabinet Secretary sits in the Cabinet Office, outside Number 10, it seemed appropriate that the National Security Adviser should be in that position as well. But, of course, you are in the inner circle of the Prime Minister's advisers and you spend a lot of time in the Prime Minister's office and in Number 10. So it's a sort of hybrid role. But the politics of it are very different from working in the Foreign Office.

SR: It was something to which David Cameron attached great importance. Convening the NSC was his first official act as Prime Minister.

MLG: Absolutely. It was set up in 2010. It changed its nature a little bit over that time. It served a particular function, I think, during the coalition period, and then had a slightly different function when there was a purely Conservative government. It had a different function under Theresa May and no doubt it will be different under Boris Johnson too.

It was an innovation which, I think, was long overdue and I strongly support. I'm pretty confident that it will survive any change of government, even if Jeremy Corbyn became Prime Minister with a very different outlook on defence and security issues. It would maybe look at issues in a different way.

So Theresa May chaired the Council differently from David Cameron. With David Cameron, it was looking at some strategic issues like the relationship with China, for example, or overall Syria policy or the 2015 Defence and Security Review. But he also dealt with some more operational issues: the day-to-day handling of the Libya or Syrian crises. With Theresa May, she asked me to move the agenda a bit more onto homeland security. Whereas before there had been maybe 75% on international security and 25% on domestic security (although of course the two are heavily linked), it was more like 50% /50% under Theresa May. So we

looked more at port security, immigration policy and issues like that which we hadn't looked at quite so much with David Cameron. So each Prime Minister can mould the National Security Council to whatever their priorities happen to be, which is why I think it's a good innovation and I think it will survive. It has given a formality to the decision making process at the centre of government on the most important issues which had perhaps got lost under the so-called 'sofa government' of Tony Blair.

SR: And it brings all sorts of different strands together, with the intelligence chiefs and so on, doesn't it?

MLG: Yes it does. It has a very good balance because it has not only the national security community ministers, but also the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the business Secretary, the Attorney General, and it also has the Chief of the Defence Staff, the Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee, the heads of the intelligence agencies. The National Security Council can bring in Ambassadors. So it's a very good hybrid, official ministerial body to look at some of those longer term issues. Then you back that up with COBR (Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms), emergency meetings which can be held at very short notice to deal with real-time emergencies and short-term tactical issues like response to flooding in the North of England or terrorist attacks in London. So those two complement each other quite well.

SR: Did you do much travelling?

MLG: Yes, quite a lot. Of course, you travel with the Prime Minister on all the overseas trips outside Europe and some inside Europe as well. You do some travelling on your own, troubleshooting on behalf of the Prime Minister. Not as much travelling as when I was Political Director, probably, but still quite a heavy travelling commitment.

SR: And what about the Foreign Office's relations with the NSC?

MLG: It varies a little bit. I think it's fair to say that there is a little bit of suspicion of the role of the National Security Adviser from the Foreign Office. That has always been the case.

SR: But it's always been a Foreign Office person.

MLG: When Charles Powell was working in Number 10 as Margaret Thatcher's foreign policy adviser, in many ways he was doing a lot of the role that a National Security Adviser does now. That led to great tension with Geoffrey Howe and others in the Foreign Office.

So there is a potential tension. I would have regular bilaterals with Philip Hammond and then Boris Johnson as Foreign Secretary. They were a little bit suspicious of my role ... usurping their role as primary adviser to the Prime Minister on foreign policy issues. So you have to manage that. I hope I was able to reassure them that I wasn't undercutting their authority: my job was a coordinating role, not usurping their role. But, of course, when there is tension between the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary for other reasons, as for instance there was between Theresa May and Boris Johnson, then it was more difficult. If the Prime Minister does not trust the Foreign Secretary, then obviously the National Security Adviser is caught a bit in the middle of that. But I tried to keep out of the political space as much as possible. That was difficult, particularly with Theresa May, because she had two very difficult political advisers in Number 10 who were very protective of her, but very intrusive into other policy areas in an unhelpful way. That made the role less enjoyable, but also less effective. It was much easier with David Cameron. I knew David Cameron from New York. He had appointed me as National Security Adviser. He had Ed Llewellyn as his Chief of Staff, who was well used to dealing with civil servants so it was a very easy relationship: there were no particular problems. It was a lot more difficult with Theresa May because of her political advisers.

SR: I assume you are referring to Nick Timothy and Fiona Hill?

MLG: Yes. They were extremely difficult for everyone to work with.

SR: Tell me about the first May/Trump encounter.

MLG: Well, there's a limit to how much I can say, obviously. The arrival of Trump was an important event. I went over to New York twice, actually, before the inauguration to have talks with the Trump team, one of them with Boris Johnson. Then, immediately after the inauguration, I went over with Theresa May to the White House and we had two and a half hours of meetings and lunch with President Trump. A fascinating encounter, but I can't say much about it for the public record.

SR: What about the ill-conceived offer of a state visit?

MLG: The Prime Minister was keen to invite President Trump on a state visit and had wanted to do it even earlier. I'd advised against it at that point, but she felt that on her first official visit there, it would be right to have that on offer at that point. I think it was probably too early on in the new presidential term for it to have been offered. But she personally felt it

was the right thing to do to cement the relationship. Of course, Trump is the sort of President who attaches a great deal of importance to the Royal Family, so having a state visit was certainly something of significance for him.

SR: How did you get on with the intelligence agencies?

MLG: That was an important part of the role because, as National Security Adviser, you largely oversee the intelligence agencies and particularly hold them accountable for delivery of their objectives against the financial envelope which they're given. That was always an interesting and rewarding part of the job, because it is remarkable how well the three agencies work together now, compared to other countries that I've seen, including the United States. They do work to a single departmental plan, a single overall budgetary allocation and the money is set out for certain objectives and it's up to them to decide which agencies are going to deliver those particular objectives. My job was to push that process along and hold them to it. They are all big beasts, the heads of the three agencies, they're very proud of their organisations and the cultures, but recognise that some compromises sometimes have to be made to those cultures in order for them to work effectively together. They didn't always welcome the oversight mechanism of the National Security Adviser. But, by and large, they went along with it because that was the constitutional position.

SR: So you spent two years as National Security Adviser?

MLG: Yes, just under two years there. I'd planned to do a full two years but it was clear that, when Theresa May came in, she was quite suspicious of anyone who had been appointed by David Cameron. She was beginning to move everybody on. Most people left straight away. But I agreed that I would stay on for some of the time. I think she always wanted Mark Sedwill to take that job because she had known him from the Home Office. I knew Mark very well - he's a good friend since he was my deputy in Pakistan, in fact. He was obviously the right guy to take over.

SR: But do you think it's a good idea for him continue being Cabinet Secretary and National Security Adviser?

MLG: No, I don't. It's a bad idea. What it has meant is that, essentially, he's delegated a lot of the national security role to his two deputies. So he doesn't travel with the Prime Minister overseas, but keeps the home fires burning here. As I said before, because the National Security Adviser works to the Cabinet Secretary on some issues, I really don't think it makes

sense for the two jobs to be combined, to be honest. I think that once Mark moves on, they will be separated again.

SR: I'm surprised he's been able to sustain it for so long, as it was originally only a temporary move.

MLG: Yes. But he's a very good manager, good at delegating work and a good operator. But even he recognises that it's not a long-term solution.

SR: Is there anything else you wanted to mention?

MLG: Yes. Relations with the Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC), the oversight mechanism for the intelligence agencies, was always a big challenge. It still is - it's hit the news recently about the delay in releasing the Russia report. That's part of the tension between the legislature and the executive: it's a relatively new area and the ISC is quite an unusual beast in that it does have access to Top Secret intelligence material which other committees don't have. Their reports always deal with more sensitive issues and are therefore more sensitive with a lot of redactions, a lot of argument about the scope, the witnesses that give evidence ... So there's always a lot of tension, but my dealings with Dominic Grieve as the Chair were quite an important part of my role as National Security Adviser.

But also, in the longer term, the oversight of the 2015 Security and Defence Review I think is very important because that sets the tone – more than the tone, the overall policy - of the British government for the next five years. Every new government holds a new Security and Defence Review. Coordinating that across Whitehall, getting outside consultation validation and endorsement on three separate occasions through the National Security Council was quite a big part of my time. As was securing, after the failure that I mentioned earlier in August 2013 on the Syria vote, the vote in November 2015. That was very important because then Parliament did vote overwhelmingly to authorise military airstrikes against ISIS targets in Syria. That enabled us to rejoin some of our coalition partners already carrying out those anti-terrorist airstrikes. I had to do quite a lot of briefing for the Leader of the Opposition and others in Parliament in order to explain the background to why the government was asking for that authorisation.

SR: To finish off, can I ask what your reflections are after a forty year career as a diplomat? If you'd gone on to the Bar you'd have had a very different career!

MLG: Yes! But I've never regretted joining the Foreign Office. I think the importance of the work that you do, the interesting people that you meet, the opportunity to live and work overseas and the sheer variety of work that you do, changing jobs every three or four years, does make it a highly stimulating and enjoyable career, less financially rewarding than some, but nonetheless highly rewarding intellectually and emotionally. I have really enjoyed all the jobs I have done. I've been very lucky and worked with some fantastic people. And, as part of my post-government work lecturing and so on, I still encourage people to think about a career in the Foreign Office, because it is still fascinating.

SR: But would you agree that the offer in terms of the pay, the accommodation and so on has got worse?

MLG: Yes. The terms and conditions have got worse, there is absolutely no question about that. That actually was very difficult for me in New York because, for various technical reasons, the staff were particularly hard done by with some changes in terms of pay and conditions. So I've seen that. I've been part of that decision-making process on the Board: it is very difficult. I'm pleased that during the last couple of years there has been some increase in resources given to the Diplomatic Service to at least expand the diplomatic network, even if overall pay and conditions have not improved. Pay levels have actually fallen and benefits reduced. But, despite that, I would still recommend it. If you feel strongly about representing your country, you're patriotic and want to promote your country's interests internationally, there is no better career.

SR: That's a positive note on which to finish. Thank you, Mark, very much indeed.