

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

**Sir Francis Neville RICHARDS (born 18 November 1945)**

KCMG 2002 (CMG 1994); CVO 1991; DL

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**RECOLLECTIONS OF SIR FRANCIS RICHARDS KCMG, CVO, DL**

**RECORDED AND TRANSCRIBED BY KATE LODGE, APRIL 2016**

KL: Good morning. This is Kate Lodge and I am talking to Sir Francis Richards on the morning of 4 April 2016. I just wonder if you could tell me why you joined the Foreign Office.

FR: Well, by accident almost. I was in the Army. I'd injured myself and had spent my disability leave before I was discharged trying to think what to do next and my father persuaded me (my father was a diplomat) to do the foreign service exam which when I started it I had no intention of taking a place up. But by the time I had got to the end of the road, and the publisher who was interviewing me at the same time was still dithering over whether to offer me a job or not, I took the Foreign Office job. By then I was working in Information Research Department that did propaganda during the Cold War, on a temporary basis just so I had an income.

KL: What year was that?

FR: That was in 1970, no 1969.

KL: And you then joined?

FR: Yes – and I think there is nothing of interest to record on my first year. I started as The Philippines desk officer then took over the Cambodia desk a fortnight before the Americans moved into Cambodia so that was a busy first year but I don't think I made history. I then went off and learnt Russian which I did in very much the traditional Foreign Office way. The Foreign Office asked me where I would like to serve and did I want to learn a hard language. I said well I didn't particularly want to learn a hard language; I'd just come out of the Army where I'd done nothing but go on courses and I wanted to be posted to somewhere where I could travel. So they rang me up a fortnight later and said that I would be simply delighted they were sending me back to the Army to learn Russian, following which I would go to Moscow where travel was of course absolutely impossible.

### **1971-3 Moscow**

I went to Moscow. I was due to go to Moscow at exactly the time that 105 Russian diplomats were being expelled from London for spying which was a major crisis in Anglo-Soviet relations and they stopped granting visas for British diplomats to go so I was stuck in London for three or four months which I spent in Research Department and learning bits of Pushkin by heart with the wonderful Countess Shuvalova.

At the end of that period, the Russians granted 3 or 4 visas just to see whether we would relent and allow some of the 105 back again which we didn't, so when I arrived in Moscow there was a longish period after that when nobody else was arriving, though people continued to leave and I found myself working as a desk officer during the day and then knocking off, going back, collecting supper in a basket and coming back to do duty as a security officer overnight. Fortunately that didn't happen very often as one got absolutely no sleep at all.

Otherwise there is very little in the way of substance to record from those years. The experience of being in Moscow at the time was a curious and interesting one but professionally pretty arid. One was doing very little that could not have been just as well done in London. One was mainly reading the Russian newspapers and trying to extract some kind of sense from them and then comparing notes with other diplomats. There was nothing to be had on the whole out of talking to official Russians. But it was a very curious environment. At the time, the foreign contingent in Moscow was tiny. It was just diplomats and journalists really, hardly anybody else, no businessmen worth talking of. And it was almost like life on a cruise liner. We spent the whole time going to parties with each other, social interaction with Russians was very limited. A few designated officials would come to one's house and have completely meaningless conversations about where one could park in central London. Very occasionally people from usually artistic or literary circles would come to one's house or invite one to their own parties; one knew perfectly well that they purchased the right to do that by peddling anything one said to them to the KGB which made it a rather curious kind of contact.

I think mainly what one picked up there was a sort of street cred when one got back to London – membership of the Moscow Mafia. It marked people who went there to the point where if you ever met another ex-Muscovite you two would go to a corner of the room and start comparing notes in a way that one wasn't weren't prepared to do with anyone else, because anyone who hadn't been there really wouldn't have understood. It was an itch at

which one had to scratch constantly. I don't know that there's much more I can sensibly tell you about that period in Moscow unless there are questions you want to ask.

KL: Who were the ambassadors?

FR: It was entirely John Killick who was a very good ambassador for that sort of situation. He used to play one songs that he'd composed himself on his guitar of a more or less humorous kind and was very good at jollying everybody along. We much enjoyed travelling with him in Central Asia.

KL: Where did you go to in Central Asia?

FR: It was Uzbekistan. I think it was just Uzbekistan as far as I can remember. One didn't go to Tajikistan or Kazakhstan as far as I can remember but it was all over Uzbekistan. We went not just to Tashkent but to Samarkand, Bukhara and down to Khiva right far down in the south which was an extraordinary experience for people used to Russian cities. There was, as one would find in any Russian town, a Lenin Prospekt but a donkey walking down the middle of it with a bundle of hay on its back brushed the mud walls on either side of Lenin Prospekt.

KL: So that must have been such a contrast to life in Moscow?

FR: It was indeed. There was a slight feeling that life was very very different in Central Asia from Moscow and that the grip of the KGB, while the KGB was certainly present, and one was followed everywhere one went, it was rather differently operated. Our guide in Khiva had a very long finger nail on his little finger which I gather is a Buddhist practice which certainly wouldn't have been allowed to an Intourist Guide in Moscow.

I don't think there is anything else honestly worth recording from those days in that place. One made very good friends in Moscow because we lived in each other's pockets and I'm still in regular contact with just about everybody I served with who is still alive from those days.

### **1973- 6 MBFR (Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction)**

But I only served just under two years there because I was taken out to be the Russian interpreter/translator at the MBFR talks in Vienna which were a curious kind of diplomatic minuet which were designed, initially on the Western side at least, specifically to achieve no

result at all. Their origin was in the Mansfield Amendment under which Senator Mansfield inserted a clause in some bill which said that the United States should withdraw a large number, I think it was about 50 000 troops from Europe. Somebody had the bright idea that if we negotiated with the Russians the United States could say they would take the troops away, but not until the Russians had agreed to take away a similar proportion of their own forces in Europe. So that was the stated objective of the Talks.

Well, the Russians never really had any intention really of even telling us how many forces they had in Europe let alone agreeing to withdraw any particular number of them unless we made a suicidally large commitment to withdraw American forces at the same time. So we met once a week in the Hofburg except during recess times which happened to coincide conveniently with school holidays. At that once a week each side made one speech which had been carefully vetted for total lack of content. But as it had to go on for about ten pages; you can imagine speaking for that long without saying anything which could be interpreted as having a meaning was quite challenging and writing those speeches took most of the rest of the week. And that was about the only substance of the Talks.

There was a bit of informal contact in between, a good deal of socialising. The Americans were trying to get détente to mean something and they organised jolly walks in the Vienna Woods and even a curious sing-song where we all sang each other's national songs. I, being married to someone from South Africa, took particular pleasure in the fact that the Americans thought they'd found a Dutch national anthem, their national song, which actually was an Afrikaner marching song from the Boer War time, called *Sarie Marais* which was almost an Afrikaner national anthem, and the sight of the Russians with puzzled expressions, given their attitude to South Africa, singing this song gave me a good deal of secret pleasure.

Anyway it was three years of long walks in the Vienna Woods. We were having our first baby and a fairly idle life suited us pretty well. And life in Vienna at the time, this was really the Vienna of *The Third Man*. It was no longer partitioned but it was definitely a spying capital of Europe and there was a thriving community of émigré Hungarians and others indulging in various forms of intelligence activity and it was all rather fun.

### **1976-7 Berlin Desk, FCO**

That lasted about three years and then I was posted back to London to work for David Goodall, who had been my boss in Vienna, on the Berlin desk which was really a transition

from one arcane piece of the Cold War to another. There was this very very curious situation in Berlin divided between the four allies with a constant sort of arm wrestling with the Russians over quadripartite rights and responsibilities which gave rise to a really memorable spat between Reg Hibbert who was then the responsible Under Secretary in the Foreign Office and Percy Cradock who was our Ambassador in East Berlin. Reg Hibbert was accused by Percy Cradock, I think with some reason, of eroding quadripartite rights and responsibilities and a really venomous correspondence ensued. Normally the experience of desk officers at that stage in their career is that they write outrageous drafts which are then watered down by the people who have to sign them. With Reg it was quite the opposite. One wrote what one thought was an outrageous draft and by the time Reg had finished with it it was even more outrageous. Things reached such a pass in the end that the two protagonists had to be summoned to appear before the PUS who was then Michael Palliser and slug it out, and I do remember that things were resolved superficially, I think, in Reg Hibbert's favour but Michael Palliser was overheard giving Reg in the corridor a talking-to such as only Reg could have... he was about the only person on whom it could have made no real impression.

KL: How did that make you feel as the desk officer?

FR: Fascinated, in a not very grown up way to see how some of my elders seemed to behave. I did that again for less than two years because I was then posted to Planning Staff.

### **1977-80 Defence Department**

I was posted to Planning Staff because I was thought to have a defence background which I was beginning to acquire by then. I was posted there because David Owen had become Foreign Secretary and was trying still to run the Ministry of Defence from the Foreign Office, in particular to dictate its equipment programme, which is not a very usual thing for foreign secretaries to do. And the idea of putting me into Planning Staff was as an anti-Owen weapon to try and counter the relationship he had developed with Paul Lever who was in Defence Department and who was writing papers for him suggesting that the Navy needed completely different ships, that the Army didn't need any new tanks and a whole lot of other little quarrels, as I say which one would have thought were not of much direct relevance to the Foreign Secretary.

At the very last moment my Planning Staff posting was cancelled because the Foreign Secretary had intervened and put Paul Lever into my job, and I was then put into Paul

Lever's. So I continued to conduct that little battle from Defence Department rather than from Planning Staff, trying to find a way of resolving the various conflicts between the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Defence over just about every new equipment programme. David Owen believed that we shouldn't be producing any new weapons on our own, that we should instead be developing them all on a European basis. Sometimes he was absolutely right. The Ministry of Defence wanted a brand new tank and David Owen said, "You can't afford it and you are going to have to buy the tank which you are busy developing for the Shah of Iran". Of course the Shah fell and the tanks had no buyer and meanwhile I think the Ministry of Defence had realised the new tank they wanted had been so gold-plated that no bridge in Germany would carry it, and anyway, they couldn't afford to make it so he won that one.

### **1981-2 Private Office**

That went on until I found myself moved into Private Office as Lord Carrington's number two Private Secretary. He was the most wonderful boss. One learnt an enormous amount from him, perhaps even more in terms of style than of substance. He was just wonderful to work for. He was funny, he was clever, he was fast, and he was absolutely charming in dealing with foreigners especially the absolutely impossible ones. And that went on until the Falklands.

I spent a very curious night the night the Argentinians invaded. I was sitting in the nearest that the Foreign Office had to an operations room which was just a spare room somewhere that had been fixed up with a telex machine and I and two other people retired there with a bottle of whisky and stayed up all night while the telex machine spewed out this, at the time, totally incredible stream of reports from Port Stanley about the arrival of Argentinian forces, and by morning the Falklands had been seized and the bottle of whisky was empty. And, the next few months as you can imagine were pretty flat-out. The Falklands wasn't actually part of my own portfolio. I think Rod Lyne, who was the number three Private Secretary was technically doing the Falklands but it inevitably involved all of us.

KL: How many private secretaries were there?

FR: There were three, three and a diary secretary as I suspect there still are.

KL: And the other private secretaries?

FR: At that stage I think it was Brian Fall. It had been George Walden, but by the time of the Falkands it was Brian Fall whom I still see with great pleasure today. And there was a great deal of flying to and fro – Concorde to New York – but others will record that more thoroughly than I do.

My most embarrassing moment there was actually during the run-up to the Falklands when I was approached in order to order the despatch of a nuclear submarine to the South Atlantic and the Foreign Secretary wasn't around so I had to sign it on his behalf, this order, and then forgot about it, and of course the submarine went and failed to arrive in time to sink the invading Argentinian fleet. But when they came to do the lessons learned exercise it became very important to know exactly when this piece of paper had been signed but unfortunately it had all been done in such a hurry that no date had been put on it.

Anyway ... at the outset of all of that Lord Carrington resigned. He wasn't sure at the beginning of the weekend what he was going to do. I do remember one particular moment on the Saturday after the Argentinians had invaded on the Friday, Saturday morning the Foreign Secretary cancelled a visit to Brussels and David Hannay and Michael Butler came into the Private Office. They'd both been skiing and were a wonderful bronze colour while the rest of us were all slightly green having not slept for a very long time. And they said, "What is all this nonsense about the Foreign Secretary not going to Luxembourg this afternoon?" and we explained that there was a little spot of bother in the South Atlantic and he really couldn't go, and Michael Butler said, "This is ridiculous - making all this fuss about a pile of guano strewn rocks in the South Atlantic while there are millions and millions of pounds at stake." This was the discussion over the UK rebate which was going to go on in Luxembourg. In the light of what subsequently happened I found that quite an amusing exchange.

Of course Lord Carrington then went away for the weekend, not I think having decided whether to resign. He went and talked to some of the elders of the Conservative Party. I think he talked to Alec Douglas-Home and to Willie Whitelaw and they both tried very very hard to persuade him not to resign but when he came in on Monday morning he had read the *Times'* leading article which was by whichever Douglas-Home was then the editor of the *Times*, which said, "this isn't Lord Carrington's fault but he is a "gent" and a "gent" in these circumstances would resign." And he said, "That's right", and sent me straight off to write his resignation letter. An emotional moment; he really didn't deserve to resign but he did the

right thing. It did at least manage to still the debate within the Conservative Party about who lost the Falklands.

KL: Did he talk to you much about his feelings?

FR: No there wasn't the leisure to talk about anything. He cleared out of his office that same evening. There was an impromptu drinks party at which he said a few very elegant words and then he disappeared and that was the end of it. No, he went as gallantly as he'd served before.

I then remained in the Private Office until that autumn. I think Francis Pym didn't like the look of either me or the diary secretary and the two of us were given our marching orders that autumn and I swapped jobs with one of the Assistants in one of the European Community departments, the external one, where I spent the next couple of years, basically as an editor...

#### **1982-5 EUD(E) - European Union Department (External)**

Trying to turn the constant ... It was a brief factory, basically that department for ministerial meetings in Brussels. And we had a lot of very able desk officers, very few of whom could write English, or write anything of a reasonable length so I was kept extremely busy re-writing all of that. After an abortive attempt ...

KL: ... it says here ...

FR: Oh yes, Spanish accession and Gibraltar, yes, that's true and in the light of my subsequent career it is perhaps worth mentioning here that I did get involved in the whole question of how to use Spain's desire to join the European Union to get the Spanish to open the frontier with Gibraltar to accept that they would have to do that when they joined. And I made a couple of trips to Madrid with David Hannay with that in mind, in one of which I had a very curious experience. We'd just eaten the most delicious lunch consisting of baby eels which might have made many people rather sick, and we were shown into a rather splendid room in the palace where our talks were going on and on one of the walls was hanging a picture of I suppose it may have been a picture of Mary Magdalen, it was some underdressed repentant virgin with a rather green expression on her face and I remarked facetiously to the person next door to me that she looked as though she might have eaten too many eels, and to my horror this picture for no apparent reason tilted on the wall and slid to the floor tearing a

great sheet of green silk damask with it. Everyone turned round and looked at me with horror as if I had the evil eye. Anyway, one of those stupid moments ...

That all ended when I was posted to what I think was then one of the best jobs in the Service which was that of Economic and Commercial Counsellor in Delhi.

### **1985-8 India Economic and Commercial Counsellor**

It was a good job because one had the job not only of promoting trade with India but also one had oversight of the whole aid programme which was by far our most substantial aid programme and bits of which we were using to pursue major projects all over India, building power stations, zinc smelters, providing longwall (mining) machinery, so really it gave one an excuse to do.... apart from the fact that living in Delhi is a most wonderful experience, charming people, a wonderful lifestyle ...but I had a chance to involve myself in just about everything just about everywhere in India. One found oneself in tiny villages looking at fertiliser education projects, the next week one would be putting on a hard hat and going down an extremely old fashioned coal mine somewhere in Bengal and perhaps the next month after that one would be crawling around the scaffolding on a half-built power station in the middle of Madhya Pradesh visiting a tiny little community of British engineers who were busy putting this thing up in the middle of the jungle miles and miles from anywhere. And one spent a good deal of one's time intriguing on the gossip circuit to try and make new projects happen and find out what other countries were up to which was the kind of soft intelligence work that I most enjoyed.

It became obvious while I was there that there was a real problem in our relations with India. Mrs Gandhi had been murdered quite shortly before I went out. [The Indians felt we were giving a safe haven to Sikh terrorists and their backers in London.] Rajiv Gandhi had around him a circle of young businessmen who were busy trying to modernise India and the consequence was that my contacts had very very good access to that circle and on the whole I could get much better intelligence about things political than the Chancery could, or most of the Chancery. And every time of course a British minister came to Delhi they would say, "Is there something wrong in our relationship? We are doing our best about Sikh militants in London," and Indian ministers would say, "no problem at all", while my contacts were telling me that actually an order had gone out, "Buy British Last", only if there was absolutely no alternative would the British get any major contracts. Eventually I persuaded the High Commissioner to kick the note takers out of the room and have a private conversation with

the then Permanent Secretary in the Economic Affairs Ministry, which he did and got the confirmation that I expected that indeed there was a problem and we needed to do something about it.

### **1988-90 Head South Asia Department**

And quite soon after that I found myself posted back to London to take over South Asia Department in the Foreign Office and was able to do something about this. We set up a joint counter-terrorism working group with the Indians, we got some ministers to make speeches, and we so far mended the relationship that Rajiv Gandhi came on an official visit to London very shortly afterwards.

But most of my time in that job in South Asia Department was really occupied by Pakistan and Afghanistan. I called in at Pakistan on my way home from Delhi. Nicholas Barrington was then the High Commissioner and he took me round, took me to Lahore and sent me off up to Peshawar and right up the Khyber Pass and I was able to meet many of the people then involved in pursuing the war inside Afghanistan supporting the Mujahedeen. That visit during which I met the US Ambassador came only a couple of weeks before President Zia and the US Ambassador who were in the same aircraft were killed in a terrorist attack and there was something of a crisis as you can imagine resulting from that.

And managing the consequences of all of that, the rise of fundamentalism in Pakistan, the rise of what later became the Taliban, and the situation created by the trust that the Americans placed in ISID, Pakistan Military Intelligence, to pursue the war inside Afghanistan against the Russians, and essentially it's hardly too unfair to say they gave the money to ISID and said, "as long as you find people who will kill Russians, you're spending the money well", and that taken together with the substantial sums that the Saudis were then giving mostly to Pakistan Military Intelligence, but some finding its way into Afghanistan by other routes, went a very long way to fund many of the people who have caused most of the trouble in Afghanistan ever since. I spent a good deal of time and effort plotting with one or two sympathetic American counterparts to try and get people to accept that we needed to get people to think beyond the Russian withdrawal from Afghanistan and to recognise the danger that was being posed by fundamentalist, anti-Western jihadists. I met some particularly unsavoury specimens indeed, particularly Gulbuddin Hekmatyar who I was sent by the Foreign Office to wag my finger at and tell him not to be so naughty and not to kill Western

journalists, as you can imagine a pretty fruitless exercise. He's probably the nastiest man I've ever met.

We totally failed I am afraid. I [also] spent a considerable amount of effort trying to get the Middle East mafia in the Foreign Office to confront the Saudis and tell them that what they were up to in Afghanistan was extremely dangerous. Unfortunately they were so keen on our relationship with Saudi Arabia that this was done in a way which was very easy for the Saudis to shrug off which indeed they did.

### **1990-2 High Commissioner, Namibia**

I did that for only about 18 months because towards the end of that time Namibia was about to become independent and the job of the first High Commissioner in Namibia was the sort of thing that only comes along once in a lifetime and I said, "Yes please, I really, really want this job". I then heard nothing for about three months until an acquaintance met me in the corridor and said, "I hear you're going to Namibia." The Foreign Office as tends to happen forgot to tell me but indeed I went as soon as Namibia became independent and had the huge privilege of establishing a mission. It's always great fun to build the mission, recruit the staff but the great fun was to do it in a brand new country where they didn't really know what being a country was all about and so one was able to walk into ministers' offices and say, "What is your problem today, can we help you with it?" We were trying at the time to train the army which consisted of two forces which until the month before had been fighting each other. They had to be turned into a single coherent force which was done with an absolutely admirable BMATT originally consisting of about 80 officers and NCOs and we had some excellent policemen as well - mostly senior officers from Yorkshire police forces [doing a similar job for the police.]

And I had an absolutely fascinating two years culminating, I suppose, in the Queen's state visit to Namibia in I think it was October 1991 which was an absolute triumph. She came because she was going on to a heads of government meeting in I think Zambia. And they hadn't entertained a queen before, and we had quite an interesting time. They went rather over the top in their preparations but in a very very touching way. They ordered scarlet coats for the army, they wanted at one stage to ring the whole capital with anti-aircraft batteries but I tried to persuade them that it wasn't really what the Queen would want and they were proposing that her cavalcade in from the airport, her motorcade should be conducted in the way that African leaders conduct their motorcades which is at 100 miles an hour preceded by

police cars zig zagging down the middle of the road to force anybody travelling down the road in the opposite direction off the road and into the ditch. In order actually to stop that happening, there was a little racing circuit outside town, and the President of Namibia and I went out there and we schooled the cavalcade to go round slowly enough for the Queen to see the faces and wave at them as something more than a blur. The visit was indeed a triumph. The Queen as always was faultlessly professional about the whole thing and handled everything miraculously. She would meet people dressed up as farmers at the agricultural show and again in the afternoon in a shirt and tie and in the evening and she would carry on the conversation from exactly where she had left off as she presented them with their prize. It taught me a great deal, watching how she conducted that.

What else need I preserve from that period? I think not much. It was a wonderful wonderful opportunity to explore a completely empty African country. The travel was amazing ...it has since become a favourite tourist destination but of course there were no tourists then at all and one was free to wander what were essentially wildernesses which had been the scene of a civil war only a few months before.

KL: It must have been a great contrast to your earlier jobs, overseas?

FR: Yes, complete, but equally it took me back to many things that I had enjoyed about life in the Army. It was a fabulous posting in an incredibly beautiful country. But I only remained in Namibia for two years.

KL: Was that long enough?

FR: Well, I think it was. The reason why Namibia mattered to Britain at that stage was because it was essentially a sort of test tube experiment for majority rule in South Africa and it was absolutely vital that the transition went smoothly, that the integration of the armed forces and the police proceeded professionally. So what we were doing was very very important but it wasn't going to remain important for long. And once the eye was off it, whereas it was a good career move to do that, it wasn't necessarily a good career move to stay there, small posts in Africa being a place where one was quite quickly lost to sight ... so I was very lucky to be plucked out of there to go to Moscow, after two years, as Minister.

The coup that dislodged Gorbachev had just taken place; it was an interesting time. I heard about the coup when I was on a firing range with the President of Namibia visiting an SAS team who had come out to train his bodyguard and the President and I took our turns with

submachine guns when the news came through that there had been a coup in Moscow. We found ourselves summoned by the Russian Ambassador and the entire diplomatic corps assembled under a tree in his garden while he told us that the illegal Gorbachev team had been dislodged, Russia had been saved and was safe for democracy. Of course a very few days later the coup collapsed and the very same ambassador summoned us to explain that the coup had collapsed and that Yeltsin had taken over and that Russia was once more safe for democracy. Amazingly his career survived that *volte face* and I came across him later in Moscow. He'd been saved by his old mates in the Foreign Ministry and sent to a perfectly honourable but very distant place where this little escapade would be forgotten.

### **1992-5 Minister, Moscow**

I arrived in Moscow after a very quick transition. It was a couple of weeks from one to the other so I had virtually no briefing and I hadn't used my Russian for 16 years as I intended never to go back. Everyone said, "Well, you've missed all the fun, the coup was last year, it's all going to be pretty dull now; this is a democracy settling in nicely and it'll all be alright." Of course that turned out to be the absolute reverse of the truth. All of the excitement, most of the excitement was still ahead.

The government remained wildly unstable. Russia was on the edge of hyperinflation, one drew one's money for the month in dollars and then every week one would go down to the bank and buy just enough roubles to see you through the week paying your local staff because what you drew out would have lost half its value in the course of the week. The money came in ... they hadn't got round to printing large notes so it came in two inch thick wads of notes stapled together which ... one never bothered to remove the staple. You used the whole pile.

The instability built up until in October 1993 there was of course an attempted coup. It was an absolutely extraordinary weekend. It may be worth describing a little of it. On the Saturday morning ... the Minister's house in Moscow was just off the Arbat, the oldest street in Moscow, and it was busy celebrating its 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a street and there was a street festival going on with helium balloons, face painting, and all sorts of nice things happening up and down. But if you walked to the end of the street a makeshift barricade had been made outside the brand newly opened McDonald's out of chairs from McDonald's, and on the other side of that was 1917 basically. Just outside the Foreign Ministry skyscraper – the huge central Moscow ring road goes past there – and the riot police drawn up on one side and on

the other side a row of rioters with a sea of broken glass between them. There was a wrecked truck which had had its tyres shot out on the roof of which a young man in a leather jacket was waving a red flag. It was a very very dramatic situation, but these two things, the festival and the revolution were going on within 50 yards of each other. People were transitioning between the two with no outward sign of panic.

Anyway, the situation looked as if it was pretty stable and stationary. There was nothing very dramatic happening, so my wife and I retired to a *dacha* that we'd rented with some journalist and banker friends on the outskirts of Moscow. And it was only really on our way back into town the next day that we noticed something was wrong and there was a great deal of helicopter activity and when I got back I found the Defence Attaché sitting on the stairs outside my flat – we shared the building – I had upstairs, he had downstairs – saying, “there's been a coup and you need to come straight into the Embassy...” And indeed there had.

KL: You hadn't been summoned in

FR: No one had managed to get through. There were no mobile phones in those days. I am not sure we had a working telephone at the *dacha* anyway. So into the Embassy and through that night we tried to work out what on earth was happening. We knew that there was an armoured division on its way in from outside Moscow but we had no idea who it was coming to help. There was fighting going on around the television tower, machine gunning in the streets, quite a lot of casualties, and Yeltsin was nowhere to be seen. The television studios had been seized by the rebels, very bravely the Prime Minister Gaidar had set up a makeshift television studio somewhere else from which he broadcast to the nation. Yeltsin, I gather at the time was being marched up and down by his aides, who were pouring black coffee into him and trying to get him sober enough to take charge of the situation.

The next morning there was an absolutely extraordinary [*calm*] atmosphere. I walked down - it was a beautiful sunny morning - to the river and there outside the Russian Parliament there was a lone field gun on the other side of the river lobbing shells into the Parliament.

Otherwise everything was apparently entirely peaceful, but clearly there was a bit of a confrontation on there. The bridge there was closed; that was the bridge which over half the Embassy staff used to get in. So having gone into work as usual I then came back by a back route to demonstrate to all the Embassy staff stranded in their flats in the compound in Kutuzovsky Prospekt that there was actually a route by which they could get to their offices and after I had spent an interesting quarter of an hour on the roof of the flats with the

television cameras watching Russian tanks slam shells into the by then burning Russian Parliament we went back in a little crocodile. And there was again a rather curious experience of sitting watching the whole thing on television inside Chancery, watching the shelling, and you heard the shells burst on the television and then 10 seconds later the sound of the actual explosions roll in through the windows from several miles away. So that was dramatic.

KL: Did you feel that you knew what was going on?

FR: Well yes, one knew pretty well what was going on. It wasn't at all clear to start with how it was going to turn out. I'd always longed to hear the clank of tank tracks in the streets on a diplomatic posting and I did at least get that experience. The whole thing had a sense of unreality. I went home to lunch partly because I didn't like leaving my wife all on her own a few hundred yards from this gun battle which was going on and indeed there were snipers operating from the roof and our *dvornik*, the sort of groundsman who looked after various aspects of the house, had come in that morning but had found a dead body in the street just outside our house and had come over all faint and gone home leaving my wife to herself. It was a curious curious atmosphere.

KL: How did your colleagues feel?

FR: Fascinated. I think by mid-afternoon it was pretty clear that Yeltsin was going to come out on top because the tank division had arrived and the tank division remained loyal. We never discovered what the casualties inside the White House had been. They must have been pretty considerable.

Life got a little bit more normal after that. It was no longer likely that Yeltsin would fall, and by a year later the situation in Moscow was safe enough for the Queen to come on another state visit which was a most extraordinary experience. It was like watching 1917 in reverse. One watched Communist *apparatchiks* rushing out to buy dinner jackets which hadn't been worn in Moscow since 1917, the Kremlin guards were dressed up in fantastic Tsarist era uniforms, and when the Queen arrived there were a whole series of wonderful wonderful moments. When she finished her visit to the Kremlin, we walked down the great Kremlin steps, not normally used, with the sound of the great bell of the Kremlin tolling. There was a great line consisting of the Queen, Yeltsin, bishops, people like me attendant, sort of spear-carriers in Shakespearean terms, and we swept across Red Square at which point Luzhkov,

the Mayor of Moscow, hijacked the programme. The Queen had been supposed to go and listen to some wonderful singing in St Basil's but he marched her very firmly, taking her by the arm, to the other end of the Square to admire another ancient Russian building which had been pulled down at the Revolution and which he had just had reconstructed, and the programme while wonderful and entirely successful proceeded in this slightly anarchic way.

KL: How did the Queen handle that?

FR: She took it entirely in her stride. I don't think she would really have noticed that anything had gone wrong ... she knew she'd been meant to go to St Basil's ... she certainly knew that she was going *off-piste* but it didn't seem to matter. And then there was a frightfully grand banquet of course.

And then the whole circus moved down to St Petersburg. I'd had great fun in Petersburg because I was left with the job of arranging the programme there and that meant that I could go everywhere in Petersburg. I had first of all a meeting with the Mayor of Petersburg Sobchak and his entire array of deputy mayors, one of whom incidentally was Putin, who was the Deputy Mayor in charge of security. I am afraid I shook his hand - we did have a discussion of security - but I cannot remember anything about him - which perhaps shows he was a fine professional intelligence officer.

But we did have anyway a magical programme because one was able to walk round The Hermitage with the director saying, "How can we show her in 25 minutes as much as possible of the very very best things in The Hermitage?". We moved a few things around and devised an itinerary that took her through as many wonderful things as you could possibly see in that space of time.

Britannia was moored on the English Embankment outside the English Church. [The English Embankment was the pre-revolutionary name, and that name had just been reinstated.] When the Queen boarded [Britannia] that evening it was the most fabulous sunset and Britannia had these three enormous flags flying from her masts, spectacular against the sunset and a Russian frigate lying off, fired a twenty one gun salute from exactly where the Cruiser Aurora had fired the first shots of the October Revolution. It really did feel that history had come full circle. That was a remarkable banquet with the Marines beating retreat on the quayside outside, Yeltsin and all of his team on board, not to be forgotten.

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-----**Moscow – 1990s - Postscript 1 – 15 April**

FR: It was in some ways a great advantage to arrive in Moscow at that time after the fall of Gorbachev. I found the entire diplomatic and to some extent also the journalist community, they had all made very good contacts under Gorbachev and were inclined to go on using those same contacts when Gorbachev had gone, but of course those people no longer had any real influence at all. It was a completely new political scene and I was able to start from scratch talking to people who simply hadn't been there before at all.

Life on the streets in Moscow was curiously initially superficially exactly what it had been 20 years earlier. If there was an old watch repair shop on a corner that apparently never did any business 20 years before, it would still have been there in 1992 but that began to change very quickly. First of all little kiosks would appear on the streets selling mostly Cuban cigars, pirated video tapes and other luxuries which were not available in the old official shops. Then gradually the old official shops started to disappear and the kiosks moved into them. And then by the time I left and soon after, real shops started to appear – luxury labels from the West – though that perhaps took a few more years still.

The power of the dollar in the first year or so that we were there was enormous. Russians had very little buying power and if you had dollars you could do just about anything which was why we were able with friends to rent a *dacha* on the outskirts of town which I don't think probably foreign diplomats could afford to do any more these days. Foreign students in Moscow used to have caviar for breakfast. You could buy the little tins which in Fortnum and Masons would cost you probably £40-50 for one pound at the time - the equivalent of – and we used to buy for dinner parties half a kilo of caviar at a time which I think cost us \$50.

*Dacha* life was very important to us. We used to spend every weekend in the country. We shared with, and developed very close relations with and most of them have remained friends to this day, a variety of journalists including Bridget Kendall and her husband (she was then the BBC's Moscow correspondent), James Mates who still works for ITV and did then, and others from the Financial Times and from various banks who I found not only very good company but extraordinarily good in terms of the different perspective they gave us on Russian life from their own contacts.

KL: Were they all Russian speakers?

FR: They all spoke fluent Russian ... absolutely. Social life was quite different from the way it had been. There was absolutely no restriction on social contact with Russians. That is from the Russian side. There had never been one from ours and we had an enormous advantage socially in the sense that the new political class, new journalists, new politicians had no common social space, nowhere they could meet. The old clubs were either not functioning or they weren't members and so you would find that if you introduced politicians to Russian political journalists at a party they'd almost certainly not met before which would be extraordinary in any other country. So you were able to give large purely Russian speaking parties and then sit back and enjoy the spectacle as people did deals and had absolutely fascinating and important conversations in one's drawing room which really made the whole thing a very exciting time for all of us given that there was so much happening so fast politically.

There was only a handful of diplomats in Moscow at the time who seemed to me to be taking the huge opportunities that were offered. Many of them didn't speak good enough Russian. In the whole of the Western diplomatic community I only came across probably a few more than a dozen but not very many more outside the British Embassy who seemed to me to be really grasping all these opportunities to the full extent. The Americans were enormously professional but their mission was so huge that except for the top two or three people in the mission, people tended to have a very small canvas to work on. They would be expert on a particular party, a particular branch of the economy, and if you wanted an oversight, there were very few people who you could talk to. It wasn't only the very senior diplomats who were effective. Some of the most effective diplomats in town were quite junior but they just spoke very good Russian and got around. I remember there was a young Canadian who had a Russian girlfriend who was extraordinarily successful and who I always found worth talking to. And in many ways the small missions had an advantage because if you were in a small mission you had to do everything and cover everywhere and you didn't have the problem of gigantism that tended to afflict the American Embassy.

As regards law and order, there was a sense of anarchy initially when one got there. Very strange for those who remember the way it had been. Order was as if at a strict boarding school on the streets of Moscow in the 1970s. The centre of Moscow was roamed for example by little bands of gypsy children. They were below the age of legal responsibility and the police in this new atmosphere felt powerless to touch them so that in broad daylight in the busiest shopping streets in Moscow, smartly dressed foreign women would be grabbed

from behind by a group of these children while their pockets were searched, handbags snatched and policemen would stand by watching and do absolutely nothing. Meanwhile criminals were very much in evidence and because there were no laws governing business there was really no boundary line between crime and legitimate business. And even those who were trying to conduct legitimate business had to have many assets at their disposal which only criminals would have had in any other society. I knew an extremely amiable oligarch – a former theatre director – who was running an excellent liberal newspaper and a very brave television channel who had to maintain a private force of several hundred ex-KGB and ex-Special Forces operators simply to protect his operation. Every few days in Moscow one would hear bangs and another banker would have been blown up. It was a pretty Wild West atmosphere at the time.

KL: Did you feel vulnerable?

FR: Not often. There were occasions, when I think a Chechen who had been denied a visa threatened to kill someone in the British Embassy and we all had to be a bit careful and take different routes to and from home for a few weeks before we forgot about it.

The KGB remained in two senses an important presence, first as a sort of underground network with the collapse of the Communist Party and its formal structures. All the informal structures which had functioned under Communism became even more important than they had been before. The KGB was one of those; networks of serving and former officers of the intelligence services tended to fan out into business, into politics and look after each other and maintain very good contacts that way. There was also the Komsomol network, the youth organisation which wasn't very youthful as anyone who knew the old Communist world; I think most of its officials tended to be well into their fifties. That was another very important network. But coming back to the KGB, they didn't flex their muscles publicly very much but they were still there, surveillance was still going on in the old way though not as much following around and the sort of thing that they had done very frequently in the 1970s did continue. And although my house had a police guard on it, one day when we were away we had a break in and a lot of papers, passports, cheque books and other personal papers and a few valuables were stolen and I started to get menacing telephone calls saying that unless I paid up ten thousand dollars, I couldn't get these things back. Well of course I could quite easily replace the papers, and the rest certainly wasn't worth \$10,000 so I told them what they could do with themselves ... and they then started to threaten my children which was less

pleasant. We were pretty sure that this was just the KGB trying to frighten us – the ex-KGB – they had a different name by then ... but John Scarlett, who was then the SIS station chief in Moscow, and I cooked up the plan of going to the KGB and asking them to put a tap on my telephone so that they could record these menacing telephone calls and find out where they came from. And not really to our surprise they claimed to be extremely shocked and said that they couldn't possibly do that because it would be illegal. Of course we knew perfectly well they were doing it all the time and they were almost certainly responsible for the calls.

KL: And did they stop?

FR: Yes, after a while, they did.

**(end of insert)**

### **Insert from 15 April – Postscript 2**

FR: The (Queen's) visit to Petersburg did indeed go wonderfully well in absolutely beautiful weather. It was a spectacular occasion. There was one incident which brought home to me the extraordinary loyalty and devotion of the members of the Queen's entourage.

We moved around in an enormous motorcade and whenever the motorcade stopped at one of the places we were going to visit, those at the back of the motorcade had to run in order to catch up the Queen and the Ambassador at the front of the procession. At one stop we pulled to a halt on cobbles, it had been very cold overnight and was quite early in the morning and the cobbles were icy and one of the Queen's ladies-in-waiting fell very heavily on the cobbles and she wasn't young and she broke her hip. Her only concern was not for her own welfare, it was that her accident should not impinge in any way on the visit, or the Queen's awareness indeed. She very stoically was evacuated to Britannia where she hid for the rest of the day. But it was a marvellous display of the best traditions of British sang-froid.

KL: I hope she was ok?

FR: Oh yes, she recovered. Yes indeed. But I thought that was probably worth recording as I am not sure it would have been recorded anywhere else.

**(end of insert)**

FR: Anyway after that I think Moscow was a bit of an anti-climax. I realised it was perhaps time to go when people started instead of talking about the "political crisis" when we met

them at cocktail parties, they started to talk about where they were going on holiday. Nobody had had a holiday really for 3 years, let alone talked about it.

**1995-7 Assistant Under Secretary (AUS) Eastern Europe, then AUS (later Director) Europe**

So it was a good moment to go back to London where I took over a job initially as the Under-Secretary responsible for Russia and Eastern Europe but that job was then merged with the job of Under-Secretary for Western Europe so I found myself with an empire which stretched from the Atlantic to the Pacific and this included the whole of the former Soviet Union and in many ways an impossibly unwieldy job but it was great fun.

One picked a number of topics which one tried to make one's own and one had to do a great deal of travelling, not least because Eastern Europe was just getting free of the Russian period and all the Eastern Europeans were trying to join both the EU and NATO, and were desperate to talk to western governments but the Foreign Secretary was too busy to go on the whole so I had to fill in for him, and tried to make myself sound as grand as I could, a process which was hampered by the fact that I found my title of "Assistant Under Secretary" translated into most East European languages as "Assistant Deputy Typist". So after that I called myself "Deputy Foreign Minister" which is what my opposite numbers called themselves in those countries and we did rather better after that, indeed overdid it in some places. When I came in with the Ambassador into the Opera in Hungary, the entire audience had been briefed to stand up, to my acute embarrassment.

**[order changed here]**

The big issue at the time was the wish of former Warsaw Pact countries to join NATO and the EU as quickly as possible. I felt we weren't handling all this very cleverly. I felt that too much emphasis was being placed on the expansion of NATO which bothered the Russians a lot. They saw this as an entirely hostile move particularly as we never held out any prospect to them that if they became totally democratic and applied all human rights perfectly, they might be allowed to join NATO too. So it looked to them inevitably as an anti-Russian move and for some reason they didn't object to the expansion of the EU though I think if I had been a Russian, I'd have found that far more worrying. They hadn't reconciled themselves to the fact that a whole lot of ... Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia were now independent countries as indeed were Ukraine and Belarus. And the idea that the Baltic countries might

join the EU, once they joined the EU, quite clearly money was going to pour into them and they were going to become very very different from their Russian selves very quickly and I thought that it was much more important to get them into the EU and make them grow away from Russia than it was to get them into NATO and make a whole series of security guarantees that we had no way of making good if there was a crisis but I didn't win that argument.

I think I did my best to reinforce the early admission of the Baltics to the EU but did nothing to slow down their accession to NATO. However I got deeply enmeshed in the whole business of the expansion of NATO inevitably and that was probably part of the reason why I found myself propelled into the job of Deputy Under-Secretary for Defence and Intelligence when that became vacant when my predecessor was posted to GCHQ as its new director – the third new director in a year.

But anyway one had the fascinating job of trying, without inflaming expectations of immediate admission to NATO and the EU, to encourage people to continue to move in that direction but to be patient. We were at the same time opening embassies in a whole lot of countries that hadn't existed before and we were trying also to bed in the new command system in the Foreign Office where under-secretaries who soon became called "directors" had control of budgets so if you wanted to open an embassy somewhere you had to find some economies somewhere else to do it with.

KL: So is that something you were involved with?

FR: Yes I was very much involved with trying to make the new system work which was a great help to me because later I did run rather larger things than that and trying to run budgets was quite a useful piece of practice.

### **\* 1997 – London Conference on Nazi Gold**

In 1997 when Labour came in to office Robin Cook took over as Foreign Secretary and he had pledged when in opposition to hold a conference on Nazi Gold, an international conference on Nazi Gold, and find out where it had all gone to and if possible to get it transferred so that it would benefit survivors of the concentration camps. This was a fairly hot potato as you can imagine. There were a number of European governments not at all enthusiastic about having the spotlight shone on them and I assumed that this was going to go

to the Foreign Office's Economic Deputy Under-Secretary and there was no sign that anyone thought it was my job but he neatly side-stepped and told me that it was indeed mine.

I then had the very interesting job of racing round Europe and to Washington to try to make common cause with the Americans, disarm the suspicions of the Germans and the Portuguese and the Swiss in particular and persuade them all to come to a London Conference committed to its success. There was some splendid work done by Western European Department then led by Anthony Layden, by the Foreign Office Historian, Gill Bennett, who produced a wonderful narrative of what had happened to a great deal of this gold – and we found ourselves attending co-ordination meetings in Brussels and various other places and eventually it did all come together with a good deal of rushing around and trying to reassure people behind the scenes it all went very smoothly and a good result was achieved. John Kerr gave me I think probably rather more of the credit for that than I felt I deserved and it undoubtedly played its part in his being ready to propel me the next year into the job at GCHQ.

KL: Could you perhaps give a little more detail about the positive outcome of the Conference?

FR: I can't honestly remember the details. A great deal of Nazi Gold was identified. The Swiss were able to identify deposits which were then frozen in Switzerland. I think the Portuguese also had things to tell us and money was indeed transferred. The main thing was not what the outcome was so much that it was achieved without blood all over the carpet. It could have produced very easily a major crisis in relations with Germany in particular. They were afraid they were going to be pilloried and their face was going to be rubbed in the Nazi past and war guilt and so on. We did manage to avoid that and I think they were pretty happy with the outcome.\*

### **1998 – Deputy Under-Secretary (DUS) (Defence and Intelligence)**

My time in the DUS Defence and Intelligence job was quite brief. I was there for less than a year in the end. It was mostly occupied with intelligence matters really. There was a great deal to do on the intelligence side, much less to do on the defence side though there was certainly activity going on with a defence review in progress which was unfortunately going to make major economies that the Foreign Office did not like but one's protests were unavailing. The major event/drama of that was the Sandline Affair, the involvement of

British mercenaries in coup activity in West Africa in Sierra Leone and the scandal that came from that. This produced a very unfortunate clash between John Kerr who was then Permanent Under-Secretary in the Foreign Office and Robin Cook who was then the Foreign Secretary. John Kerr put the whole Africa Command really into quarantine while this Affair went on, I think on the principle that some members of the Command might be contaminated by it. This had the effect that they were not able to speak for themselves, and I found myself speaking for them with an intelligence brief in front of the Foreign Affairs Committee which was always a disagreeable experience though I think they treated for some reason anyone who spoke for the intelligence community with rather more respect than someone who merely appeared from the Foreign Office.

The worst event of that came when the Intelligence Services Commissioner or rather the IOCA Commissioner – the Interception of Communications Commissioner - published his annual report and absurdly this contained a criticism because a single telephone number had been got wrong in a submission authorising a telephone tap and for 24 hours some innocent person had theoretically had his telephone tapped - actually I don't think anything had been done, though - the processes were criticised by the Commissioner.

This unfortunately appeared the very day of some new twist in the Sandline saga. Robin Cook got it into his head that this was a conspiracy between Number 10 – Tony Blair - and the Foreign Office to discredit him – Cook – and he wrote and sent in ahead of him a hand written manuscript minute two pages long full of absolute vitriol about how he was being betrayed by his officials and he wanted heads to roll. He then simultaneously arrived himself at the airport and in the time it took him to drive from Northolt into Central London I was given the task of devising the Foreign Office's response to this which I did. We managed to make not very many heads roll very far but it did involve very considerable upheaval in the way that the Foreign Office did its intelligence, and in liaison work with all sorts of new checks in place.

### **1998 – 2003 Director GCHQ**

That existence came to a rather premature end because in August my predecessor as DUS Defence and Intelligence Kevin Tebbit was plucked from GCHQ where he'd gone only 8 months before to be Permanent Under-Secretary in the Ministry of Defence and I was on holiday in Scotland at the time. My daughter was taking her degree and I was lunching with friends somewhere in Perthshire and the telephone went and it turned out that the Chief Clerk

in the Foreign Office had somehow managed to track me down to say would I like to run GCHQ, and he gave me 24 hours to think about it. The whole thing was done in a bit of a panic. I was never interviewed. All the psychometric tests and competitive examinations that were supposed to take place when filling these vacancies never happened and I found myself several weeks later moving down to Cheltenham to take over, which I did in the week of the East African embassy bombings, and of the Omagh bombing.

So I arrived at a time when the spotlight was very much on the intelligence community.

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I arrived at GCHQ to find an organisation in shock really. It had just lost its third director inside three years. I was the fourth, David Omand and Kevin Tebbit having been snatched away at quite short notice to do different jobs. David Omand had launched an extremely ambitious and necessary modernisation programme. GCHQ was an organisation which was configured for the Cold War. It had been doing exactly the same thing against exactly the same targets for about fifty years and the consequence was it was extremely expert at doing that but that was no longer the only thing that needed doing. It was very inflexible. It hadn't really required leadership. It had managers but it had no leaders; it was organised in pretty rigid silos which didn't talk much to each other. Information was not therefore shared horizontally and it was extremely inflexible and it responded badly to new intelligence requirements.

The idea of David Omand's reform was to shake it up completely – a new structure, a new culture, and a new building. But David's plan really existed almost only at the level of a quite short power point presentation. It had to be fleshed out. Somebody had to work out how to implement it and Kevin Tebbit had not been there long enough to make very much progress with that.

KL: Could I ask why you were invited to take on the job?

FR: Well, it's a very good question. I think partly I was appointed because I was at the time in John Kerr's good books and because I got on well with the heads of the three agencies, having had a good deal to do with them as DUS (Defence and Intelligence); I saw them on a very regular basis and had excellent relations with them. What I think that the people taking the decision as to who should run GCHQ didn't really take on board was the fact that this was a really huge job and not a traditional Whitehall policy job. It had nothing to do with policy

at all. One was running an enormous budget and an organisation employing between 4 and 5,000 people spread over several continents and over several sites in the United Kingdom. It required skills that they had at the time very little reason to believe that I might have and as I say, I was given the job without interview, without anyone really seeking to establish whether I might stand any reasonable chance of acquiring those skills. I think that's why I was sent. I wouldn't have sent me in that position. Actually it turned out to work quite well but we'll come to that in a minute.

The structure of GCHQ, as I say, was in the process of changing. Much more important the culture was changing and we went in for a really ambitious cultural change programme which started out with the board going away and working out what it was for, and we got all excited with, we had people helping us from change experts and so on ... and got all excited then embraced the next layer of management below, by which time we were all speaking as if we'd got a new religion, in a language that was not really recognisable to the rest of the Organisation so we put it out to everybody else in a slightly dilute form. I didn't start this process but I did have to see it through. Of course it developed a good deal as we went on. [Though my colleagues at all levels did most of the work and deserve most of the credit,] it was only ever going to work if I took personal charge of it and led it from the front. We did succeed, really to a remarkable extent over the next five years.

It was a tough tough change because there was a good deal of suspicion within GCHQ of anyone arriving from outside, carpet baggers from London arriving to tell them how to do their business and a good deal of suspicion that I would make my name like my two predecessors and then move on rapidly to some other job leaving the bits and pieces unassembled all over the garage floor.

For that reason I decided to move down to Gloucestershire so they wouldn't suspect that I was about to disappear somewhere else, and I did. I bought a house in Gloucestershire and that made some impact, but nonetheless people didn't really believe that we were serious about this thing, and I think that this was something common to the whole of public service at the time. What people tended to do was launch a change programme of huge ambition, announce it would take place over three years, move on themselves after eighteen months at which point someone else would come in and he would launch a change programme; the first one would be forgotten having been half-implemented. And on the whole the rational thing for everybody in those circumstances was simply to ignore as far as possible, comply to the

minimum extent with commands from the centre, but basically lie in the bottom of your trench and hope that you would be forgotten and left to do your job and that whatever the current fever was would pass. Well we had somehow to persuade people that wasn't the case [this time].

I started annual staff surveys to see how we were doing and judged on the evidence of that it took three years before people really began to believe. We had to be saying the same things to them, following things through. Slogans and values were no good just pronounced from the top; they actually had to affect the way things worked; they had to be translated into process so that people really felt them and after three years people began to believe that we were serious about this thing and one started to get some active enthusiasm from, particularly the younger generation in management. There was a layer of managers [many of whom] were never going to become leaders. Some embraced the opportunity, others very generously recognised what was necessary was being done but they concluded that they didn't think they were the right people to do it, and moved on, including some at very senior levels. But it was not accomplished entirely painlessly but pretty much so and by the end of three or four years it was perfectly clear that we had a critical mass of support for organisational change.

By this time the new GCHQ building, The Doughnut, was rising from the ground outside Cheltenham and this was a building that was designed from the bottom up to reinforce the new culture whereas the old GCHQ was scattered over sixty buildings on two sites. This was a single building and most of those sixty buildings were full of cellular offices where managers tended to hide and communicate with people only by email. When we moved people into open plan, people were amazed to discover the volume of traffic in their email in-tray dropped by more than fifty percent overnight because people would walk up to them.

KL: You could have a conversation.

FR: Exactly, if you wanted to talk to someone you weren't confronted by a closed door so you didn't have to think, "Am I interrupting a meeting, do I dare go in?" Life changed, the culture changed, the way things were done changed and it no longer, because people were so scattered, took a week to organise a meeting, you could usually put together a meeting within 24 hours because people usually broke off whatever they were doing, met in one of the breakout areas we'd designed for them. This however didn't happen until after I'd left. The building, the cultural change did, but it was perfectly clear that we couldn't move people into a new building without changing the culture or they would quite simply recreate the old

culture within the new building. One has been into places where open-plan offices were built and people would just build themselves cellular offices out of steel cabinets in order to be able to hide behind them. We had to make sure that didn't happen. So, the head of enthusiasm and the habits of teamwork all had to be created before the new building was finished.

The new building was structurally complete by the time I left but not yet occupied, but when it was occupied that went absolutely smoothly and I'm proud to say that GCHQ has never really looked back since and a much younger generation took over the leadership quite soon after that. The structure that I'd put in place didn't survive, was never intended to survive, it has been continually evolving ever since but it is recognisably the organisation that I and my contemporaries tried to leave behind. That's probably all I need to say about cultural change at GCHQ.

We did have an interesting process to go through in terms of our targets. When I arrived, we were still very firmly focussed on Russia. We were focussed on Russia mainly because there was still a huge analyst community and the Defence Intelligence staff in particular demanding to be fed intelligence about Russia. That was what they did until people started to take them away and give them other jobs. They needed to be fed. What we produced was demand related and while we realised that terrorism was a serious problem and that we didn't know very much about it, as nobody was asking for intelligence on terrorism, we couldn't very well devote large resources to pursuing it. Obviously the exception to that was Irish Republican terrorism but as we were supposed to be a foreign intelligence agency, not a domestic one, our involvement in that was particularly covert and in some ways limited; it was very successful and very important but it didn't really stretch out into the culture of the rest of the organisation.

There was a great deal we had to do, not only post 9/11 which I'll come to in a minute, to get more involved in counter-terrorism, we had also to take account of new threats in new parts of the world, particularly things like the Pakistan Nuclear Programme, which was emerging as a quite major issue at that stage. Crucial to everything that GCHQ did and does was the relationship with the United States which was organic and close. We had Americans working with us. They had British people embedded in their organisation at all sorts of levels and different points and that relationship came under a bit of strain around the year 2000.

Tony Blair had announced his European Defence Initiative to try and develop a European defence identity and European defence resources and there was a good deal of alarm in Washington that this would mean a European intelligence identity and greater sharing between European countries, an issue which actually has come back to the fore now and they were convinced that Britain had taken a sort of strategic decision to alter course away from America, away from the Atlantic Partnership and towards Europe. And they therefore in terms of their future calculations started to think that they must rely less on co-operation with Britain, and we started to see in all sorts of contacts with the Americans doors beginning to close, access being denied to our embedded personnel in America; they would find themselves not being shown stuff labelled “NO FORN” which means “no foreign dissemination” where they had traditionally been included in a great deal of that kind of work and had been treated much more as if they were Americans. It was not easy to get to the bottom of this because there was no new policy enunciated from the top, it was a sense down somewhere in the middle of the organisation - the NSA was essentially a very military organisation - roughly at colonel level. Again, as I’d found in Delhi, it was very difficult to get anyone to admit that there was a problem. If ministers and officials went to Washington as they regularly did they would say, “How are our relations?” and they would be told, “Our relations are absolutely wonderful, and of course there are absolutely no problems.” You know what those calls on the Pentagon in particular were like. There was a tendency for one to feel that the name United Kingdom had been drafted in, it had been Latvia yesterday, Japan tomorrow. You got exactly the same spiel telling you how wonderful the relationship really was and how the Americans really appreciated it.

It was only when that I was getting so much evidence that there was a problem that I went to Washington and I actually started to say, “Look, we know there’s a problem. You can see there’s a problem. Please tell us what it is.” And then it started to come out and I was starting in the Joint Intelligence Committee to get something doing about this when along came 9/11 and of course totally transformed everything, and I think all doubts in America about our commitment to the Transatlantic intelligence relationship were stilled at that point. Everyone remembers where they were on the day of 9/11. I was in the dentist’s chair ...and I came out of the dentist’s nursing a sore jaw to be told by my driver that he had been listening to the radio and that an aircraft had flown into one of the Twin Towers, and I dashed back and was within about ten minutes in my own operations room watching the footage of the second aircraft slamming into the second of the Twin Towers. And I sat there watching it all

happen and my chief engineer standing beside me watching the tower collapse on itself said, “yes, that is exactly what it was designed to do.” - a fascinating sidelight on how these things are built and he was absolutely right; if it had toppled over sideways it would have caused [even more] appalling damage.

Of course I was summoned to London at once. In those early hours it was very very difficult to work out what was happening. We didn't know how many more aircraft were going to be flown into how many more different targets. There was the one that crashed on the Pentagon, there was the one that was brought down by its passengers overpowering some of the attackers, other aircraft airborne which nobody knew whether they were proceeding to their original destination or about to crash on somewhere else. It was a state of great confusion. Tony Blair assembled a War Cabinet meeting in Downing Street. I went to London. I found myself though without so much as a toothbrush being told that I must fly to Washington the next morning with Richard Dearlove and Eliza Manningham-Buller.

We found ourselves driven off having bought the bare minimum of necessaries to Brize Norton while we waited on the ground while a route into American airspace was negotiated with Strategic Air Command as we obviously didn't want to be shot down as yet another visiting terrorist aircraft. We had an extraordinary flight in this empty tanker aircraft with just a few seats in the back and the rest just a sort of sheet of steel normally covered with tanks in front of us.

We flew out and flew past the still burning Twin Towers by this time with an F-15 on each wingtip to keep us out of trouble before we landed at Andrews Airforce Base. We went straight out to Langley where we met the US defence and intelligence community who'd all just come obviously from meetings in what was left of the Pentagon. It was an extremely emotional meeting which was primarily an expression of solidarity and an offer on our part to spare nothing in supporting our American counterparts in this entirely new situation. We all knew that the world had changed radically and permanently but didn't yet really know how.

And then the next morning we flew back having picked up all sorts of stray British people who found themselves stranded in Washington. John Major was there, there was David Manning who had been doing business in New York the day before when the Twin Towers were actually hit and had found that there was such pressure on hotel places that he couldn't get himself into any hotel and ended up in a place that was extremely surprised to be letting him a room for the whole night. David is the most virtuous of men and this must have been

something of a shock to his system. Anyway they were all stranded because all of the commercial flights had been terminated.

We got back to find, yes, a totally different world and we spent a very good deal of our time trying to reorganise ourselves to deal with it. Whereas resources had been a problem up till that moment – we had been told to prepare ourselves for five percent cuts for the indefinite future in our budget, we now were told basically, “How much do you need?” and we had money thrown at us almost faster than we could spend it, a 25% increase in real terms in our budget in the space of three years which bearing in mind the time it takes to recruit staff and to build up capacity, it was quite a strain simply using that money well.

It was a very different world, as I said, from then on. All the pressures that had forced us to continue to concentrate on the Russian target and to look for new civilian ways to make ourselves useful to new customers - that vanished all overnight. We found ourselves supporting a new military campaign in Afghanistan. We found ourselves trying to learn as much as one possibly could about Al Qaida and its affiliates from a standing start and it was a standing start because we hadn't been regarding the Arabic speaking world as a major priority for some considerable time past and therefore we had very few Arabic speakers; we had to train them up from scratch. We had very few Farsi and Pashtun speakers too having discarded all of those very unwisely at the end of the Russian withdrawal from Afghanistan when the very substantial investment that the intelligence community had made in Afghanistan was really terminated almost overnight and resources switched to new targets.

This reorientation towards the counter-terrorist requirement involved not just a great deal of internal reorganisation, it involved a completely new relationship between the intelligence agencies. We had been under great pressure to find ways to co-operate; we were sent efficiency advisors who asked, “Could we recruit jointly, could we do vetting jointly, could we procure jointly?” Well the answer to most of those things was that we were doing things that were sufficiently different and against sufficiently different targets for it to be quite difficult to find things we could do together but this now changed overnight and we found ourselves with a target which could only be successfully tackled by working not just in close cooperation but with a great deal of integration. We found ourselves having to set up joint cells to do things jointly and really all of the work we'd been doing to try and create a culture based on teamwork proved its worth at that point and spread out from what we were doing internally to what we were doing in working with all the other agencies.

The extra resources given to the intelligence agencies after 9/11 should in logic have also been going to the Foreign Office which had a major part to play obviously in response to 9/11, but that wasn't what happened. Others would be perhaps better able than I am to explain quite why the Foreign Office did as badly as it did at that point. I think there were several reasons for this. Part of it was the fact that Robin Cook, while undoubtedly one of the ablest Foreign Secretaries the Foreign Office had ever had, was also a combative one who managed to be at loggerheads permanently with both Tony Blair and Gordon Brown and the consequence was that from the moment he took over at the Foreign Office really resources started to be channelled away from the Foreign Office to other areas of government, and that did not change after 9/11.

I don't think it was helped by the fact that the Foreign Office itself decided that in embracing the new global agenda it should become expert on everybody else's subject; it should become expert in counter-terrorism, it should have its own experts on international finance, on the environment, climate-change and if necessary that this should be done at the expense of language training, expertise in foreign countries. And looked at through the wrong end of a telescope when I left the Foreign Office, it rapidly started after 1998 when I moved to GCHQ, it started to look like a very diminished organisation and one rather focussed on process and on multilateralism rather than on the achievement of specific results.

I remember one particular meeting: there was an annual meeting between SIS and the Foreign Office, and we were discussing ... I was invited as was the head of MI5, really as a courtesy we came along and there was a strong team from the Foreign Office and the top brass of SIS and we were all talking about how to tackle North Korea's nuclear programme. Needless to say the intelligence community was full of bright and mostly rather impractical ideas for making things happen or not happen. The Foreign Office was focussed entirely on what could be done in the Committee on Disarmament in Geneva where quite patently, whatever agreements were reached, whatever speeches were made absolutely no brake was going to be put on North Korea. It was as if the Foreign Office had given up the hope of actually influencing anything in the real world and was simply concerned to service the international machinery. That particular meeting came to me with a force of revelation and I wasn't at all sure that this was any longer an organisation that I wanted to return to.

I'd gone there with, and John Kerr had assured me that, a return ticket after three years. There wasn't a suitable job at the end of three years and there didn't actually turn out to be a

suitable job after that either because while John Kerr earmarked me for a couple of posts, the incumbents didn't move on from those at the time that he had hoped they might, because they failed to get, either didn't want to do what they were offered or were happy where they were and/or in one case didn't get the job that they had hoped for. So I found myself with few options except to stay at GCHQ but that turned out to be, I think, the right thing to do and I in the end had to decide how long I was going to stay there. The Cabinet Secretary told me that I was welcome to stay until I was sixty but that was two and a half years away. I didn't believe that anybody ought to stay in a job like that for as long – that would have made it nearly eight years and indeed because I wanted to move on some of the older fashioned members of my own board, I had made a rule that nobody would stay on the board for more than five years in the same job. If they could get translated to another job that was fine but if they did five years in a job and didn't get another, out they went – early retirement. And so having done that to everybody else, I didn't really feel that I could do anything other than swallow my own medicine which left me a choice between leaving after four and a half years and leaving after five and a half. And the reason why the choice presented itself like that was that I either had to leave before we started the move into the new building which was going to be a major upheaval or leave when it was pretty far advanced. I couldn't really leave in the middle of that move. I was still dithering between the two when I was on holiday in Italy and the telephone rang in my hotel and this was Permanent Under-Secretary saying was I interested in being the Governor of Gibraltar, and that's a separate story which I'll come to in a moment.

### **2003-6 Governor and Commander in Chief, Gibraltar**

KL: So you were then invited to take up the role of Governor of Gibraltar?

FR: Yes, I'd just completed a very long walk in Italy up to Urbino in pouring rain and was standing dripping onto the marble floor of my hotel bedroom when the PUS rang. It was the last stop of my holiday; I was about to come home. I said, "Why on earth should I want this job?" The Foreign Office have just conducted this ludicrous joint sovereignty negotiation with the Spanish over the heads of the Gibraltarians; they've just conducted a referendum which has rejected the concept of joint sovereignty by a margin of about 99%. Why should I want the job? And he said, well it became plain that a senior politician had turned it down and he was in a pretty desperate strait. "Please think of it and come and see me on Monday." So I went and saw him on Monday, and by then I had thought it through and I didn't have

anything else immediately in mind to do so I said, “Yes I would do it.” And I agreed to do it on a contract basis for three years.

I went round and got briefed and I was being briefed by all the people who had conducted the joint sovereignty negotiations and they told me that I was to go out there basically to get back to negotiations with the Spanish as quickly as possible with a view to trying to find a permanent solution to the Gibraltar problem. They also told me that there was a delicate anniversary coming up, the anniversary of the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the British ownership of Gibraltar, or of the British arrival in Gibraltar, the actual Treaty of Utrecht followed seven years later. 2004 was to be the 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The Foreign Office wanted this very low key ... when I asked what they considered a suitable commemorative activity to be, they said, “Well, you might like to consider a children’s painting competition in the Convent.” Well I had rather different ideas about all of this which I didn’t immediately unveil.

It was perfectly plain to me that the very first thing that needed to be done was to recover the confidence of the Gibraltarians with the whole triangular relationship between Spain, Gibraltar and the Foreign Office – all of its legs were broken down. The Spanish were fed up with both the Gibraltarians and the Foreign Office. The Foreign Office was fed up with everybody. The Gibraltarians had never trusted anybody in the first place. So I thought that we ought to perhaps start by getting at least one leg of that relationship back into some reasonable order.

My actual arrival into Gibraltar ... I arrived in uniform. The Foreign Office didn’t like governors wearing uniforms. They thought this was a nasty un-progressive thing to do and very colonial. The Gibraltarians, on the other hand, loved governors to be in uniform so the Gibraltar government paid for my rather Victorian outfit and I arrived looking like a cross between a naval officer and an ice cream salesman in white cotton with a sword. I declined to wear the feathers because I thought they were ludicrously old fashioned and I wore a sort of naval style flat hat instead. I stepped off the aeroplane - fascinating experience of flying up ... one had to fly round Portugal because one couldn’t go across Spanish airspace as it was an RAF aeroplane and one therefore approached between the two pillars of Hercules. I was in the cockpit by then, extraordinary, extraordinary sight, landed and found that I was expected to walk to the Convent via the Assembly building where I would make my introductory speech and get introductory speeches from the Gibraltar parliament or Assembly as it was then called in return.

Walking up Gibraltar's main street I felt a bit like the first Nazi officer walking up the main street in Jersey must have felt in the War, a representative of an occupying power. People looked out of their windows with curiosity but there was absolutely nothing resembling a welcome. They clearly were all waiting to hear if I had arrived with news that they were to be given away against their will to the Spaniards in spite of the referendum. We had rather a barbed exchange of speeches after I'd finished reviewing the honour guard of boy scouts drawn up outside and the Gibraltar Regiment's band before I retired to the Convent to consider my future. It became quite clear that I think as a result of my predecessor's loyal efforts to defend ministerial statements on the joint sovereignty negotiation, he'd had an extremely rough time, he'd had rotten fruit thrown at him and had really ceased to venture very much beyond the walls of the Convent. He'd felt rather beleaguered.

KL: Who was your predecessor?

FR: He was called David Durie. His background was a Civil Service background rather than a Foreign Office or a military background. There had only ever been three civilian Governors of Gibraltar. All the rest had been military. The other civilian governor had been Richard Luce who had given me very good advice before I came out and had been, as he was in everything else he did in public life, much loved and had made many friends. My predecessor had had a rough time and I decided to do things very differently. I started ... I made a series of speeches at which I tried to make Gibraltarians laugh and at the same time reassure them that I was not totally in hock to the Spanish and that I wouldn't slavishly carry out the wishes of the Foreign Office ... when I found them to be profoundly mistaken. I would present Gibraltar's case honestly in London.

I think probably for me the turning point came at Gibraltar Day, which is a day early in September when Gibraltar celebrates its identity. They all, everybody dresses in the colours of Gibraltar which are red and white and the early years of this celebration had acquired a slightly anti-British tinge. I couldn't see any reason why it should acquire an anti-British tinge other than the joint sovereignty negotiations but the habit had been for the British Governor to retire behind the walls of the Convent and take no part in these celebrations. Egged on by my extremely good ADC, I decided that we wouldn't do that and we would wear red and white, dress up our dog in red and white – our dog had accompanied us out on the airplane - and take full part in the proceedings and that went down extremely well and

from then on we started to make some headway in persuading Gibraltarians that I hadn't simply come out to continue the Foreign Office's previous policy.

The next major test I think that I faced was the Three Hundred Year Anniversary Celebrations which were going to be again a great celebration of the Gibraltarian identity. There was going to be lots of red and white on display and it was clearly either going to have to be something that was being celebrated as a way of shaking a fist at London or it would have to be done with London's co-operation and we basically, I and my colleagues and the Gibraltar Government, to give them credit, decided that we really should make every effort to engage London fully, and engage the United Kingdom fully, and ... I think there had been a bit of a change of the guard in the Foreign Office and an extremely good new director had moved in who was prepared to support all of this.

KL: Who was that?

FR: Dominic Chilcott was the director, with whom I formed an extremely good working relationship; instead of having to fight every inch of the way, I found we were able to conspire together. And whenever he was in London, things were extremely smooth. Instead of sulking and having a minimum profile during these celebrations we decided that we would take some risks with the Spanish who were bound to be annoyed and we arranged ... we had the Red Arrows come out, we had the off-duty crews of two naval bomber submarines who came out to support, the Band of the Royal Marines who came out to receive the freedom of Gibraltar. We had a visit from the Princess Royal which gave great anguish to the Foreign Office initially. They ruled that we could have the Princess Royal because we were about due for a royal visit but in no circumstances was her visit to be presented as a tri-centenary event.

Of course if royalty comes in a tri-centenary year of course it's a tri-centenary event so we didn't have much difficulty finessing that one. The celebrations went extremely well despite some attempts by the Gibraltar Government, because I had an extremely difficult relationship – which I'll come to in a moment - with Peter Caruana, the very able Chief Minister of Gibraltar. He basically thought the less profile Governors had the better and the relationship between Chief Ministers and Governors should be competitive rather than cooperative and he really tried to hijack the tercentenary celebrations going behind one's back as far as he possibly could. Fortunately he didn't own any of the assets that were necessary to delivering a good tercentenary celebration, and if you wanted warships, aircraft and men, they had to

come from London. We were able to establish pretty firm control of many of the most spectacular aspects of that celebration and I think that its successful conclusion in the face of considerable nervousness on the Spanish side particularly when the Red Arrows spread red white and blue all over the sky over La Linea, it was all managed alright.

Before I come to Peter Caruana which we'll talk about in a minute I might go on to say a word or two about the change of Spanish government which happened early in 2004, because that had a profound impact on my time there. The Partido Popular which had been the Francoist Party and had been in power in Spain and is indeed in power in Spain now had to conduct a general election. On the eve of that general election, there was a terrorist outrage in the main railway station in Madrid, suicide bombers, huge casualties, a major catastrophe and the Spanish Government very foolishly without waiting - this to me, given that it was extremely well co-ordinated, had all the hallmarks of an Al-Qaida attack - the Spanish didn't even wait for evidence. They blamed the Basques, and that went down extremely badly with the public particularly as it started to become evident that that wasn't necessarily the case. The result was that the government were absolutely trounced. They had looked like winning the election but they lost it and the new Socialist government that came in decided to try a rather different tack in their relations with Gibraltar. They would try wooing Gibraltar a bit, and the consequence was that it became really much easier to manage that relationship than it had been. It became much much less confrontational. But it started off in an extremely rocky way, that new relationship, while the new government was still feeling its way.

HMS Tireless was due to visit Gibraltar. Now HMS Tireless was an oldish nuclear submarine which had broken down a couple of years earlier in Gibraltar and had spent the best part of a year there while the Spanish press got more and more hysterical announcing that nuclear leaks were going to happen and were going to endanger the entire population of Southern Spain. There were no nuclear leaks and in due course HMS Tireless was repaired and moved on. It was quite complicated to repair but after 10 months or so it happened. Anyway, she came back and the new government became hysterical and the Foreign Office got extremely nervous but we were determined that we were not going to appear to kowtow to the Spanish over this one and we welcomed HMS Tireless. She was greeted by this huge flotilla of Spanish press boats so what I did was to go out into the Bay, board her out there and ride in on the top of her sail while a carefully arranged armada of police and naval RHIBs played a sort of sheep dog role in keeping the Spanish press at a distance. That again I think

helped establish in the minds of Gibraltarians that the British Government was prepared to be robust in defending its right to use its own naval resources in Gibraltar.

The rest of my time there really went pretty smoothly I think. The relationship with Caruana remained an uneasy one. We got on in a sort of way rather well. We met every week for lunch and tried to deal with whatever problems the week had thrown up, which were usually problems in relation to Gibraltar and the European Union where the Gibraltarians would be nervous that the Foreign Office was busy giving away Gibraltarian interests in whatever was the latest negotiation in Brussels. Nearly always our lunches would start with a glass of tomato juice in the course of which we would have a blazing row and then we had three courses for lunch. In the course of the first course we usually managed to row back until by the time we had got to the main course we were having a friendly and civilised discussion and managed to do some quite good business. I think in the end we managed to establish a very good working relationship but it remained fraught. I remember the Chief Minister shrieking at me on several occasions that I was the worst governor he'd ever had dealings with, outrageous colonialist behaviour, but we got past that and indeed one had feelings of quite warm friendship towards him well before the end. We got to know various members of his and his wife's large and charming families.

There remained however the competitive aspects of the relationship which weren't terribly grown up. The Chief Minister would try to make sure that although protocol demanded that he got to receptions before me and left after me, because I was the representative of royalty, he tried to make sure that his car didn't leave 6 Convent Place until my car had left the Convent, so he could arrive after me, establishing that he was *numero uno* in Gibraltar. And so there was a sort of competition whereby his private secretary and mine - my ADC, twitching the curtains - would play a game of chicken which I think we usually won.

The other main event I think of my time in Gibraltar was the negotiation of a new constitution for Gibraltar. There had always been great difficulty in the relationship between the Foreign Office and successive governors of Gibraltar because the Foreign Office was always convinced that governors were constantly giving away the rights and responsibilities of the British Government in Gibraltar. This was despite the fact that actually governors were usually rather more robust in defending the interests of Gibraltar than the Foreign Office. Although it was always keen on compromise with Spain, and therefore giving away things that potentially the Gibraltarians minded about, it minded a good deal about its own powers

in Gibraltar, because obviously without those powers it was in a poor position to do anything in terms of negotiating with Spain or anybody else. It always tended to believe that governors went native, and gave away those powers to the local government. It became quite obvious to me quite quickly that that wasn't really the case because the theoretical powers of a government were very different from those which the Governor could actually exercise. His power was in theory almost unlimited but in practice the way that things had developed over the years, the Governor could only influence those things he could control. And as he didn't pay for anything, what the Gibraltar Government paid for, it had very little difficulty in controlling. Governors didn't on the whole do themselves any favours by trying to fight that. But there was usually rather a hazy idea in London of what powers could be effectively exercised and I came to the conclusion, and there had been pressure for a new constitution for Gibraltar, and while one didn't want to give away any of the powers that were still intact and could be used, giving away some of the ones that weren't there and couldn't be used was a good thing to do because it would ideally eliminate this gap between what the Foreign Office thought it could achieve on the ground and what it could actually achieve. Expectations of governors would come into line with what governors could actually deliver and over my last couple of years I had an extremely capable deputy Philip Barton who really took charge of that negotiation on the Convent side and we worked out a constitution which came into force very soon after my departure. The timing was partly designed so that a new Governor could start off with the powers that that Constitution gave him rather than a perception that my wings were being clipped while I was still in office, which made good enough sense.

We also had to modernise. In theory when I arrived, the Governor personally appointed all the judges for example. Well obviously he didn't do that without consulting anybody. He also was responsible for the police but again extremely difficult for him to control the police effectively when he didn't pay for them. I was very conscious that the Police Commissioner, immediately after his weekly meeting with me would head round to Convent Place to get his marching orders from the Chief Minister. I wanted to overhaul all of those things to bring them more into line with practice in the UK and we therefore set up a Judicial Appointments Commission and set it up in such a way that while I couldn't personally dominate it, nor could the Chief Minister. As long as the Convent worked together with the senior legal members of the Commission we would usually get our way. And we set up in the same way an Office of the Police Commissioner so that there would be an independent body responsible for basically day-to-day administration of the Police which had existed under the joint aegis

of government as regarded the budget and the Governor as regarded things operational, the Governor would have the role of the Home Secretary rather than the rather more hands-on role that he had previously had. Those are I think the institutions which still operate in Gibraltar today.

I hope that during my time there I achieved a more modern status for Gibraltar. I don't want to portray it as entirely my achievement. It was very far from being that but it was the outcome that I'd hoped for and I think which was satisfactory to both the Gibraltar Government and in the end to London. We had the full co-operation from the Foreign Office over that and the only other thing perhaps I would recall from my three happy years in Gibraltar is the manner of my departure which was slightly eccentric.

The First Sea Lord, Lord West, was a personal friend and I'd had a lot to do with him when he was Chief of Defence Intelligence. He'd said, "Oh you are leaving Gibraltar, well you must leave in HMS Illustrious with proper fanfare." And indeed when the due date came, HMS Illustrious arrived, tied up alongside, they gave a terrific party on Illustrious with the Band of the Royal Marines lowered on the aircraft lift into the aircraft hangar below which is where the party was being held. They do those parties terribly well in the Navy. And then we had a return party when we beat retreat on the Convent lawn which I don't think had been done before for many years. And then everybody scattered for the weekend. Illustrious's crew met up with a lot of families who were also going to make the passage back. They had been flown out by the Navy. After a long deployment this is sometimes done. My shotguns, my Land Rover and my horse trailer were all loaded on board Illustrious and then on Saturday afternoon I took a call from my ADC who was sounding, though normally imperturbable, slightly panicked. There had been a crisis in Beirut and the British community had to be evacuated and Illustrious had to be turned round and sent back to Beirut.

We had to work out Plan B before the end of the weekend because first thing on Monday morning I was due to leave and as far as I could see everything was so far set up that if necessary I'd just have to jump off the edge of the pier into the sea and vanish beneath the waves if we couldn't work out some way of getting me home. Fortunately we were lucky. There was a frigate passing. She was hailed and made to come in quickly. There was a Hercules passing. By letting down the tyres on the trailer we managed to get both the Land Rover and its trailer into the Hercules, and my shotguns. So by Monday morning we had

Plan B in place and I think ordinary members of the Gibraltar public would not have noticed that there was anything out of place. There was a Tornado flypast, the usual gun salute, I boarded the frigate and we sailed out into the sunset. And I was dumped in Lisbon to catch an aeroplane with the interesting experience of trying to wrap up my sword which I'd had to carry on board in such a way that I could persuade British Airways to carry it which took an awful lot of bin liners and a lot of the ingenuity of people on the frigate who had made us extremely welcome. I think that's about it...

KL: Well it's a wonderful picture....

FR: It's a silly story...

KL: Thank you very much.

### **Impact of Army career on FCO career – Postscript 3 – 15 April**

KL: Thank you for that. I think last time we touched on the question of the extent to which your military background impacted on your approach to life and work in the FCO.

FR: One of the questions that I was asked at my Foreign Office interviews was, "Did I think that the Army had anything to teach the Foreign Office?" And quite clearly the answer that was expected was "no". I think they were afraid that I was going to be a sort of rather barking military kind of person and maybe I was, but anyway I duly said what I was expected to say.

When I got into the Foreign Office, I found it in many ways an organisation which in terms of leadership probably had a good deal to learn from the Army, in London. It was a rather intimidating organisation. Senior officers never really left their own offices. They let the rest of the world come to them. They didn't really, I think, know what was going on many layers below them in the Foreign Office at all. I think they would have been very hard pressed to answer questions about whether morale in particular parts of the Office was bad or good. Certainly one wasn't really aware of being given any kind of leadership at all. That was quite different when one was abroad. And it may not be irrelevant here that at the time I joined the Foreign Office, most of those in large embassies abroad, and certainly my first two ambassadors had served in the Army during the War and they were very good at looking after their people which they did with generous hospitality, a good deal of humour and an ability to

spot personal problems and address them at once and in the most generous way. I remember when I was in Vienna and my wife was ill having our first child, Clive Rose who was then Head of our Delegation there took us both into his household until she was better, with our baby. He couldn't have treated us better if we had been his own children.

There was a good deal of that abroad but it seemed to stop as soon as one got back to London. And I think the Foreign Office remained certainly for the next 20 years a pretty chilly place in London. Heads of Department were very often very good in looking after their staff but nobody outside the department really seemed to care much about their welfare and if you had happened to have a bad head of department I don't think anyone was really looking out for you.

I think all this has changed a great deal and clearly with the abandonment of the old rigid departmental structure the whole thing became a lot looser. The Foreign Office has undoubtedly become a much less stiff and more informal place. Some would say it had lost something in terms of perhaps the stature of senior figures who are no longer quite the grand commanding figures perhaps that they used to be which may be good internally within the Foreign Office. I am not sure it is quite so good when it comes to them standing up to ministers and being independent figures prepared to talk the truth to their bosses when that is necessary.

As regards my own military experience, I certainly found it frustrating having joined the Foreign Office to be given virtually no responsibility for the first ... ten years of my time there. The jobs one did were on the whole footling, the things that one wrote were largely re-written by one's superiors in a way that I think nobody has any time to do now. I had really no responsibility for anybody else. It was not until I went to Delhi, almost 20 and certainly 15 years after I joined the Foreign Office that I had as much responsibility in terms of people to whom I was supposed to give some kind of a lead as I had had at 21 in the Army. I think the Army was useful to me in that in one's time in an unaccompanied posting in Cyprus one grew up very fast and one had a better idea I think of the difficulties that young people in strange places abroad experience and perhaps found it easier to think of ways in which one could engage with them. I've known ambassadors abroad who found it very difficult to talk to their staff and were frightened they would be confronted with problems they couldn't really address. They tended in consequence while being very nice to their staff and having them to lunch occasionally not to poke too deeply into whether there were difficulties that

needed addressing; they tended to leave that to other members of their staff ... I think the Army certainly discouraged me from doing that and when the new command system came in I think it made it easy for me to exploit the opportunities that that gave one of trying a really rather different approach to the management of those departments working to me. And certainly by the time I got to GCHQ the fact that I had spent some time earlier on in my career thinking about what leadership constituted and what good leadership and bad leadership I had experienced over the previous twenty years or so was a big help. Otherwise I don't think the Foreign Office had an enormous amount to learn from the Army, except that perhaps the Army did train one to be specific in terms of the point of any activity in which one was engaged. And I found the Foreign Office was occasionally a little bit woolly about that, certainly in my early years. I had some sympathy with some of the frustration that Margaret Thatcher occasionally showed with the Foreign Office's tendency to think of good relations with Country X as being worth having in their own right rather than in order to deliver some specific good to the national interest.

KL: Thank you very much.

#### **Role and appreciation of wife – Postscript 4 – 15 April**

FR: I don't think the account would be complete without my saying how much I've owed to my wife in the course of my career. I know these days it is not considered proper for people in the Foreign Service to expect any degree of support abroad from their wives but what my wife did was enormously important, and not only she is probably brighter than I am, and as an experienced journalist was able to keep me on my toes intellectually all the time we were aboard. But she also had an enormous amount of work to do. Entertainment was very important most of the way through our career and she was instrumental in maintaining the kind of atmosphere in our house that was welcoming to people and made them willing to open up, talk and form contacts that worked inside and outside work...and certainly made it possible for me to do far more than I could conceivably have done on my own.

One should remember of course that there were probably far more formal dinners than there are now. And at formal dinners inevitably it was always my wife who was sitting next to the interesting people while I sat next to their often quite dull and indeed professionally inactive wives ... so I would have pretty meaningless conversations while my wife talked serious substance with people of real weight and reported all that back to me afterwards. She was also able when we were first in Moscow, as I may have mentioned earlier ... she was the

designated language teacher from the Embassy which went to the Chinese Embassy. Did I talk about that?

KL: No.

FR: The Chinese were just starting to open up to the West when we were first in Moscow and they approached our Embassy – partly I think they wanted to annoy the Russians. They approached our Embassy and asked if we could provide an English language teacher because they would like to polish up their English. My wife had just come down from Oxford and was chosen by the Embassy as the designated language teacher and was picked up in a very smart black Chinese Embassy Mercedes once a week and driven off to the Chinese Embassy to the great excitement of the KGB guards on the diplomatic compound. And she formed very good relations with a number of senior people in the Chinese Embassy one of whom later became the deputy Prime Minister, and Foreign Minister ... an absolutely charming man with a very sophisticated background from Shanghai. That was the sort of opportunity which couldn't have been taken if one didn't have a wife prepared to roll up her sleeves and muck in. I should also say that she also took great trouble to learn the language whenever she could when we went abroad. Her Russian was perhaps sometimes rough and ready – she had never been through the official course - but she was always extremely brave in using it and never had the least difficulty making herself understood. That meant that we were able to hold parties where only Russian was spoken where, as you can imagine, a great deal more information surfaced than if we tried the usual rather stilted multilingual diplomatic occasion.

KL: Please go ahead.

FR: And of course when I came to have missions of my own, first in Namibia and then in Gibraltar, my wife's contribution was absolutely crucial. In Namibia, her own South African background, (the fact she knew a great deal of anti-apartheid activists from her time as a student in Oxford), was a huge help at a time when we were trying to give the impression to the Namibian government that we were the allies of change in Africa rather than the friends of apartheid. And when we got to Gibraltar we were basically a team. There was at least as much a job there for my wife as there was for me and I think she did hers as well as it could possibly be done, made an enormous amount of friends and used all of the opportunities that were open to her so I owe her a great deal for that.

**End**