The Role of HM Embassy in Moscow

edited by
Gillian Staerck

ICBH Witness Seminar Programme

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Published by
Institute of Contemporary British History
Institute of Historical Research
School of Advanced Study
University of London
Malet St
London WC1E 7HU

ISBN: 0 9523210 9 2

The Role of H. M. Embassy in Moscow

Held 8 March 1999
Foreign & Commonwealth Office, London

Chaired by Lord Wright of Richmond
Paper by Dr Michael Hopkins
Seminar edited by Gillian Staerck

Institute of Contemporary British History

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> **Sir Brian Fall, in 'The Role of H. M. Embassy in Moscow', held 8 March 1999 (Institute of Contemporary British History, 2002, http://www.icbh.ac.uk/icbh/moscow.html), p.14.**

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The Role of H. M. Embassy in Moscow

Edited by Gillian Staerck

This witness seminar, organised by Dr Michael F. Hopkins of Liverpool Hope University College, Dr M. D. Kandiah, ICBH, London, and Gillian Staerck, ICBH, London, was held in the Map Room at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London, on 8 March 1999. It was chaired by Lord Wright of Richmond. The participants included Sir Michael Alexander, Sir Brian Barder, Sir Rodric Braithwaite, Lord Bridges, Sir Brian Fall, Sir Sydney Giffard, Sir Reginald Hibbert, Sir John Killick, Sir Michael Palliser, Sir David Ratford, Janet Gunn, Oleg Gordievsky, Professor D. C. Watt and Sir Norman Wooding. See Contributors, p. vii for details.

WRIGHT

Perestroika, reconstruction.

I am going to devote the first part of this seminar primarily to the earlier period, pre-*perestroika*.* I am aware that most of you who served in the Embassy actually cover a wide variety of periods, but could we try to concentrate on that? I don't want to inhibit you from drawing contrasts between the pre-*perestroika* time and the post-*perestroika* time. So would anybody like to start off and have a shot at dealing with some of those questions?

BRAITHWAITE

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

For example of closeness of Anglo-American relationship, see 'The Work and Role of HM Embassy, Washington', *Contemporary British History*, Vol.12, No.3 (Autumn 1998), pp.115-38; and Michael David Kandiah and Gillian Staerck, 'Reliable Allies: Anglo-American Relations', in Wolfram Kaiser and Gillian Staerck (eds), *British Foreign Policy 1955-64: Contracting Options* (London: Macmillan, 2000).

The difference is that after *perestroika* the Embassy in Moscow began to work like a normal Embassy, and before it did not. But the first point to make about the pre- and for that matter the post-*perestroika* period is that Anglo-Soviet and Anglo-Russian bilateral relations are not very important. They are not very important to us and I don't think they can be very important to the Russians either. Most of our bilateral relations were quarrelling about spies and negotiating extremely boring agreements on trade and culture. Our input into policy was through the Alliance* and through the Americans.* The number of staff at the Embassy up until the 1970s was very small and that reflected the fact that it did not have much access and there was not much that it could do.

I was there in the mid-1960s. I do think it made a considerable amount of difference to one's ability to understand the country just merely living there. The number of Soviet experts who did not even speak Russian at that time was really quite remarkable. A basic point, which was quite clear if you lived in the country, was that the

Soviet Union was a military giant but an economic and political pygmy. When we were there in the 1960s it was already clear that the thing was in economic crisis. There was a great economic debate going on, and that debate never stopped, though it went underground, and it never resolved the problems until the Soviet Union finally collapsed. In our dealings with the Soviet Union we suffered from our own blinkers, as well as from the various physical constraints we were under. It was not true that we could not travel, we travelled a great deal; 90 per cent of the Soviet Union was probably closed to foreigners, but 10 per cent is about twice the size of Western Europe, so there was plenty of travelling one could do. One could meet ordinary people on one's trips. Talking to them enabled one to pick up all sorts of nuances about what was going on.

So the main thing which characterised my period in Moscow was that there was not very much that we could usefully do. We did get people in and out of the Embassy all the time; we had great parties with visiting dignitaries of various kinds. Probably you would meet more of the top Soviet artistic establishment in the Embassy in Moscow than you would meet of the top, say, French literary establishment in the Embassy in Paris, because people like Shostakovich* could only meet people like us in the Embassy on formal occasions. Duncan Wilson,* who has been mentioned, actually did meet a very large number of people at the end of the 1960s and in the early 1970s. Lots of people here will no doubt disagree, but I think that Duncan actually did understand that we were making policy and dealing with a real country and not a place in outer space inhabited by little green men. Some of his judgements about what was going on there may have been rather naïve, at least he was trying to relate policy to a real country which actually was suffering from huge weaknesses and which was going to collapse eventually.

Dmitri Shostakovich, Russian composer.

Sir Duncan Wilson was British Ambassador in Moscow October 1968 to September 1971, mentioned in Michael F. Hopkins '"Worlds Apart": The British Embassy in Moscow and the Search for East-West Understanding', in *Contemporary British History*, Volume 14, No. 3, Autumn 2000, pp.131-148, which is a transcript of the introductory paper Dr. Hopkins gave at the witness seminar.

FALL

I agree with practically everything that Rodric has said, though I may do so in a less organised sort of way. A lot of the questions that have been asked have answers that differ over time. It is a great pity to start something like this off without dealing with the wartime relationship, which is crucial, and you can't look at the later 1940s and the 1950s sensibly without that: so if one were publishing one really ought to start with the wartime Embassy. There were periods when access seemed to be good, because there was a sense that we were trying to work out with the Soviet Union, on the same side, what we were trying to do. It was never perfect, but these were Ambassadors who were used to having access. It then froze, and came up again because of Khrushchev's personality,* producing another round of Ambassadors who got used to having to turn up to parties sober and well briefed because they might end up with twenty minutes with Khrushchev in a rather unpredictable way. It then went down in the Brezhnev* slump, when nothing happened,

Nikita Khrushchev, Soviet premier 1958-1964, but leader in all but name since 1955.

Leonid Brezhnev, succeeded Khrushchev as First Secretary of Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in October 1964, assuming Soviet Presidency in 1977, held until his death in 1982.

until gradually post-Helsinki* when contact broadened out again. And then there was a complete sea change after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when you were dealing as you would in a normal country. You had the problem of too much information coming in, with twenty different Russians telling you different things. Exactly like Washington at the time of transition where everybody you met was the new President's best buddy, and you knew it could not be true of all of them but it might just be true of the one that you were about to be rude to! Previously if a Russian actually told you something direct you sent it back by telegram, because this was a good week.

Helsinki Accords 1975, aimed at reducing international tensions.

Could you meet artists and intellectuals? Well, Rodric has half answered that. There was of course throughout the period a sense that the artists and intellectuals you met had licenses which allowed them to meet you. Also, some diplomats, some academic visitors, some journalists, were insufficiently prepared to acknowledge that. They were also insufficiently prepared to ask themselves why it was that their visas and their red carpet at the Arbatov Institute were so much to be counted on, increasingly useful as they became for people who wanted to ply the journalistic and academic trade. The time when you could do it as did Edward Crankshaw,* rather priding yourself on the fact that you would never be given a visa, I don't particularly lament, however reactionary I may occasionally sound. But the move in the other direction did produce abilities for the KGB* to exercise influence. They were opportunities that were used and it seems to me that there is absolutely no doubt about that.

Edward Crankshaw was with the British Military Mission, Moscow 1941-43, and correspondent on Soviet affairs for *The Observer* 1947-68.

KGB – *Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopapnosti*, Committee of State Security.

The Kennan measure?* We could perhaps come back to; it is very difficult to answer without knowing what the measure was, but if we could be told in a little more detail perhaps we could scratch our heads and see if we could come up with a British equivalent. Policy changes? It appears through the introduction of Dr Hopkins that what we are trying to analyse are changes in British policy, whereas the crucial change of course was the change in Soviet and Russian policy. This eventually changed in rather the direction that we were trying to get it to change over thirty years or so. However, the policy changes were not quite so inconsistent as they sometimes appeared.

George Kennan, US *Chargé d'Affaires* in Moscow 1946 and US Ambassador to the USSR 1952-53. The Kennan measure is mentioned in Hopkins, 'Worlds Apart'.

What the Embassy was doing? In the most obvious sense, sound policy must be based on sound knowledge. Knowledge of the Soviet Union was always immensely difficult to get; knowledge of Russia is actually quite difficult to get, but for rather different reasons at the moment. There was no single source, particularly in dealing with the Soviet Union, that you could rely on. The Embassy was one of many sources that British policy was resting on, some would say two or three of the sources that British policy was recommending, but none the worse for the Embassy I think to the extent that that was true. That was the contribution to policy: first of all reporting knowledge, and knowledge based on people who lived there and had a little bit of a feel for it; and by the people who

had served in Moscow being rather sensibly sent back to take over the key desks in the department in London and key jobs in UNDel,* NATO,* Washington* and what have you. In this way you have a mafia of Russian-speaking, *Pravda*-reading* people, who knew what to expect to see in the shops in Gorky Street, who were contributing to policy, perhaps more directly on the desk than they had in the Embassy, but bringing their two sorts of knowledge together.

The influence that Britain had on Russia was not really the British Embassy doing something dramatic to change the mind of the Soviet government, though influence is what Embassies are about as well as knowledge. But if the Embassy was first of all backed up by policy from London, so that what the Embassy said one day could be seen to be British policy the next – and if, even more important, what London said one day was backed up by Bonn, Paris and Washington, so that the Russians got to know that they were talking to a serious interlocutor who was predicting, influencing, part of important Western policy-making – then it had an important role to play and that was the fascination of the job. The key job of aligning policy towards the Soviet Union among allies on both sides of the Atlantic was a permanent thing that had to be done week in and week out, and it was done better by having people with direct Moscow experience able to contribute to the debate. British foreign policy would have been much less influential without, I think, a series of rather effective Moscow Embassies. Just to give you one small example of what goes wrong if you have not got that: I can remember in Helsinki, halfway through the preparatory talks, an American First Secretary coming up from Moscow and telling a NATO caucus meeting that the American Embassy in Moscow had just analysed the results of the latest Politburo meeting, through *Pravda* and *Izvestia* rather than by direct participation I suspect. They had come to the unanimous conclusion that the Soviet Union had been pushed as far as it was going to be pushed and there was nothing else to be got out of these negotiations, so the sooner we stopped yapping at them in an ignorant way the better. Every major Western gain in those negotiations post-dated the Moscow visitor's appearance. Bad Embassies can do a lot of harm. And it is much easier to say that someone is talking nonsense if you have been there yourself and are able not to be over-impressed by whatever is said to be the latest view from on-the-spot.

UNDel is the UK Delegation to the United Nations

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

HM Embassy, Washington

Moskoya Pravda, leading Soviet newspaper

WATT I have worked over the records of the British Embassy in Moscow from about the 1930s onwards. Going back to the time when our people actually did meet Soviet citizens and where in some ways, looking at the records, individual Soviet citizens were as it were a sort of substitute for letters to *The Times*, 'Disgusted of Eastbourne' came and spoke to Julian Bullard's father in the Consulate in Leningrad, rather than writing to *Pravda*, which I suspect was dangerous

even then. What struck me in the papers and what we have heard so far is that there isn't any answer yet to the question as to why we did not spot the disintegration of the Soviet Union earlier, why it came as a surprise.

I, like a great many academics who were regarded as Cold Warriors but taken by the Russians as people who could be converted, found myself the recipient of quite a lot of Russian academic attention during the 1960s and 1970s and so on. One of the things which struck me before *perestroika* was the increasing role of the Moscow Centre for International Affairs and the people they were sending out. They were capable of conducting an argument on a level which did not concede anything ideologically on their side, but it made a good knockabout argument possible with them, rather than just simply shouting slogans on both sides. Very different from their East German contemporaries. Really the question that must arise out of this is what the interaction was between the Embassy experts and the people sitting in the Cabinet Office and elsewhere, who were analysing Soviet behaviour, and that sort of thing, on the basis of their reports and all the other information that came their way. Because insofar as we had any reputation abroad, it was less for the accuracy of our information than the skill with which our people analysed this. The relationship between the distinguished gentlemen around this table and the people in the Cabinet Office and the Foreign Office, who were producing the papers for the Cabinet and other records and that sort of thing, is something which I have not seen explored properly and I would greatly welcome information on this.

RATFORD

Apart from agreeing with Rodric and Brian, I wanted to contribute something which arises from my particular time of being in Moscow, coloured as it were by being there during the Prague spring. I actually left on the very evening of the Russians' counter-expulsions after the 105* on my first tour, and on my second tour the last months was dominated by Oleg Gordievsky's coming to the West.* It sometimes seemed in the Embassy that we were pawns in a game that was going on between the KGB and MI5,* and an awful lot of what went on and affected the Embassy in Moscow was dominated by what MI5 were up to and the KGB were up to in London.

Expulsion of 105 Soviet Embassy personnel accused of espionage activity.

Oleg Gordievsky, former KGB officer.

MI5, British counter-espionage organisation.

That was one thing. Another was that all of us I think in the British Embassy were handicapped to some extent by the fact that we had to deal with the [Soviet] Second European Department, which I believe to have been rather harder and more difficult than most of the other geographical departments in the MID [Soviet Foreign Ministry]. We talked to colleagues in other Embassies. The Americans frequently had a special relationship, superpower to superpower, and some of the other Europeans had a special relationship: the French because they were naughty in NATO, the Germans because they were economically and industrially impor-

tant. We tended to be a bit of a whipping boy, because it was nice to hit at someone who was taking a fairly firm policy in the West, but when other reasons for easing off did not apply. So much of what we did had to be fought for from the Second European Department – for example, all our applications for travel. It was a handicap we had at particular times that I was there. I think, just to round off on that point, it is notable that a number of the people who were in the Second European Department were the people who came up publicly on 21 August 1991 after the countercoup. Suslov* I think had gone by then, but Gventsadze, Uspensky, Zamyatin* were the ones who got it wrong on 21 August 1991, and they had had years of practice of being on the wrong side.

Mikhail Suslov, senior Politburo member under Brezhnev and Koysgin.

Leonid Zamyatin, Soviet Ambassador in London, 1986-91.

Yes we did manage nonetheless to get about. Rodric and I were fortunate enough in the early days to be in the Commercial Department, which gave us opportunities for travel and meeting other sorts of people, who had another interest rather than simply Anglo-Soviet relations or the Cold War. I found that times of particular stress were times when you could perhaps get most from them. I remember travelling in Siberia a few days after the invasion of Prague and talking to [Communist] Party people. They were the ones who were interesting to talk to, because they were the ones who knew most of what lay behind the decisions, what was at stake and so on. So, Second European Department or not, we did get around a great deal.

There was constant interchange between the Embassy, the Cabinet Office, Northern Department and its subsequent guises. My own last job in the Foreign Office was in the late 1980s just up to the collapse of the Wall and so on. So it all came into play time and again, whether one was at that end of the telescope or this end of the telescope. That also goes, as others have been saying, for not only NATO and so on, but increasingly at the end of my time in Political Co-operation. One could make a far better input into discussions among the twelve, as we then were, against a background of having served in Moscow recently, when we were all trying to analyse what was going on under Gorbachev* and *perestroika*.

Mikhail Gorbachev, Chairman of Supreme Soviet 1989-90 and Executive President of the Soviet Union 1990-1.

WATT

Looking back on it, I personally ought to have been conscious, and I am sure everybody else would have been, when you got away from the people who had a Party line, how more and more from the early 1970s onwards one ran into complete detachment from this on the parts of people one met. There was no reason why they should be toeing the Party line; it very often wasn't the Party line. The first time it struck me was when I had a Russian scholar to look after on an interchange. He obviously had been passed by all the right people, and he stayed at the YMCA for six months. I could not quite reconcile that with these pictures. We talked, he was a Soviet expert on the Middle East, and I still exchange cards with him every Christmas. But then, going on that, when I became involved in the international history world, it became more and

more obvious that, apart from top people who led say the delegations, the rest had no particular status. I remember being shown round the Hoover Library collection on Germans who had been handed back by the KGB to the Gestapo, and one coming up to me and asking me, in much the same way as I have been asked about dirty postcards, had I actually seen the origin of the originals, were they accurate – this kind of thing. It is interesting that the carapace of the unshakeability of the Soviet Union, the sort of thing Kissinger* was talking about recently on the television, seemed unshakeable.

Henry Kissinger, US Secretary of State 1973-7.

BRAITHWAITE

I think there are a whole lot of explanations as to why the collapse was not foreseen. Everybody knew and talked about how weak the place was. But there were all sorts of vested interests and it was simpler to think that this thing was solid, because it made it easier to make policy.

KILLICK

I believe that the expulsion of the 105 had no fundamental effect on Anglo-Soviet relations. We picked up trade very quickly, and without going through all the usual motions of talking to the Foreign Ministry. If I may have one point of criticism of the paper, it is just that it pins too much of our relations to the Cold War. My conviction very soon became that Soviet foreign policy, established from 1917, essentially was a position of turning Clausewitz* on its head. Foreign policy was a continuation of war by other means, and that meant that in no way could normal diplomacy be practised. One was at times on the offensive; at times chipping away patiently but without much prospect of success, trying to get one's own point of view across.

Clausewitz had suggested that war was the pursuit of foreign politics by different means.

There was a mismatch in objectives. The West genuinely wanted a search for East-West understanding, and I believe that the Soviet side, in their typical calculation of the 'correlation of forces', wanted either at least to avoid any disadvantage or to change the balance to their advantage. I am prepared to document that, not in detail now, but through *Westpolitik*, the introduction of the SS20,* and even the various Pan-European schemes that they were floating, in a desire I think to water down the impact of the European Community. The fact that they failed does not mean that they were not trying to do that.

Soviet guided missile system, with a nuclear warhead.

There was also an organisational mismatch. My belief is that the Soviet Foreign Ministry was no more than an executive agency, run by an extremely effective civil servant called Gromyko.* Anybody who had any idea that you could get anywhere without stonewalling by talking to him across the table was fundamentally mistaken. Foreign policy in the Soviet Union was made in the Secretariat of the Central Committee,* and was supervised by Suslov. That was brought home to us during a visit by James Callaghan,* because it became clear to us that Suslov was at least as key an influence as Gromyko, if not more so. So there was Central Committee input

Andrei Gromyko, Soviet Foreign Minister, 1957-85.

Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU).

James Callaghan, British Prime Minister April 1976-May 1979, now Baron Callaghan of Cardiff.

into the making of foreign policy, and one had no contact whatever with these members of the Central Committee Secretariat and staff. In a sense we were wasting our breath talking to the Foreign Ministry. I have put all this very crudely, but I do think the points need making.

Of course, there are areas of common interest between us and the Soviet Union, and the new Russia. They cover various things, like for example terrorism, aircraft hijacking, drugs, and even nuclear safety. So I was struck by what Marcus Warren wrote from Murmansk apropos Robin Cook's visit,* in which he said 'Russia has displayed a typical mix of injured pride, resentment, suspicion, despair and even greed at the prospect of inviting Europe to clear up the mess'. So my fundamental question really is after my time, post-Gorbachev, do these rather ancient Russian characteristics still apply? With Primakov* at the helm, I can't say I am very optimistic about it.

Robin Cook, British Foreign Secretary since May 1997.

Yevgeny Primakov, Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs since 1992.

HIBBERT

I speak as an outsider, having never been in post in the Embassy in Moscow. I have three points I would like to make. First a purely historical one. I first went to Moscow in 1947, as the most junior of the secretaries of Mr Bevin's* delegation to the Council of Foreign Ministers meeting there, and of course at that time Moscow was completely open to us and we were allowed to go all over the place. You have to remember that, in the Council of Ministers in Paris, New York and Moscow, Mr Bevin sat in front of Mr Molotov* and Mr Vyshinsky* day after day, afternoon after afternoon, continuously between October 1946 and April 1947 – and one can only say it was a maturing experience! Our delegation swamped the Embassy in Moscow. The Embassy was able to arrange picnics and visits here and there and Frank Roberts* was popping in and out with bits of paper in the usual way. Neverthelesss, Russia was remarkably open. We sat there and listened to them day after day and of course the negative attitude grew stronger and stronger as time went on.

Ernest Bevin, British Foreign Secretary 1945-1951.

Vyacheslav Molotov, Soviet Foreign Minister 1939-49 and 1953-56.

Andrei Vyshinsky, Soviet Foreign Minister 1949-53.

Frank Roberts, British minister in Moscow 1945-47 and Ambassador to USSR 1960-62.

My second point is that I experienced Moscow again when I was posted to Mongolia to open a mission there in 1964, and I would like to make a comment here on this question of security arrangements. Our connection from Ulan Bator, was in one direction to Peking and in the other direction to Moscow, and I was always very struck by the different morale in the two posts. The reason was this: in Peking nobody had the feeling that they were being spied on, listened to, tripped up, day by day. The whole diplomatic corps was more or less in barracks, and there were soldiers at the gate. Once you were in the barracks you were all in a sort of club together. You could not go anywhere you wanted to go if there was a soldier in the way, and if you went out to the Great Wall of China there would be a soldier standing at the entrance to every road which you were not supposed to go down. So in Peking they lived a sort of ghetto existence, but you can be quite happy in a ghetto if

you are not being too repressed within it. In Moscow on the other hand, everybody was feeling that they were being watched, they were feeling that their telephone calls were tapped – this is the impression I got from brief visits – and I think this accounted for a very remarkable difference in morale between the two posts.

The third point returns to what Professor Cameron Watt said. I took over as Deputy Under-Secretary in the Foreign Office in London just after the Helsinki Agreement had been completed and in the run-up to the preparations and conduct of the first review meeting at Belgrade. I think it is true to say that before my time everybody had been discovering *détente*. By a hard process of negotiation leading up to the Helsinki Agreement *détente* had so to speak been created pragmatically by experience. By the time I took over *détente* was a diplomatic process that was in being, which nevertheless was not fully understood – people had all sorts of varied views about it. I think one of the first things one had to do then was to codify the idea of *détente*: what it was as a diplomatic process, what the various elements were in it, which were dangerous, which were helpful, and so on. That is what went on at that time and I am bound to say that I had absolutely no consciousness of any difficulty with the Embassy in Moscow over that. I should have thought it was entirely harmonious. Insofar as there was difficulty it was with Germany, and with our people in Germany. Because of course at that time the Carter* regime came in the United States, and the Carter regime started having a sort of explosion on human rights, not simply in relation to the Soviet Union but world-wide. This seriously affected their relationship with the Soviet Union and shook German nerves quite a bit, because *détente* was an essential component of *Ostpolitik* and it was a sort of protecting cover for *Ostpolitik*. So I would say I was never conscious of difficulties with the Embassy in Moscow over the definition or conduct of *détente*, but there were difficulties within the nine, particularly holding on to the Germans, and with our people in Germany.

Jimmy Carter, US President 1977-81.

Finally on this question of why did people not see the weakness of the Soviet Union earlier, and why did Tom Brimelow* disagree with Wilson in Moscow? I would say that it was because in London, in the Joint Intelligence Committee [JIC]* process and in other processes, one had to be very conscious the whole time of the weapon count and the spy count. These were the two things that people had to take account of in London that people in Moscow did not have to deal with firsthand: they were analysing the Soviet Union, they were not having to analyse the military balance. I think a lot of any difference that occurred was due to differences in estimation caused by different points of view. This depended on what you were doing, whether you were running the army or the airforce or the navy, or whether you were MI5 or MI6,* and there is of course quite a difference in attitudes. My own view would be that sometimes the assessments at the London end were over-influenced by secret information. People tend to believe that that which is secret is true, which is of course very often not

Thomas Brimelow, Consular Section, British Embassy, Moscow 1942-45, Head of Northern Department, Foreign Office 1956, British Minister in Moscow 1963-66 and Permanent Under-Secretary and Head of the Diplomatic Service 1973-75.

The JIC is the Cabinet Joint Intelligence Committee which analyses intelligence and advises on formulation of policy.

MI6, formerly SIS, British espionage organisation.

the case. In fact there is no better example of what happens to you if you have a foreign policy based entirely on secrets than the Soviet Union itself. Over-reliance on the KGB ensured that the Soviet Union's foreign policy was largely unsuccessful. So I would say that, and this has only the value of a testimonial from an outsider, the Embassy in Moscow and the Foreign Office in London had a good dialogue based on a broadly common understanding. However, the Foreign Office sometimes had to apply correctives for domestic or alliance reasons, and sometimes had to accommodate specialist appreciations made by other agencies in London.

BRIDGES

I would like to come back to the point which was raised by David Ratford about the Second European Department and the whole security atmosphere which covered our operations in the Embassy. It always surprised me very much in Moscow how we were classified almost equal with the Americans as enemy number one. Sitting where we did, our power having greatly declined since 1945, it actually was rather extraordinary to be treated in this way. And I sometimes wondered whether this was because we were felt to be addicted to our customary independence and unreliability of character. Were we thought incapable of being shifted? Or, going back to more fundamental things (and I think this may be closer to the truth), was it that we were the archetypal capitalist system (as described by Engels), and that we had struck a grievous blow against the young Soviet state in the 'intervention' after the Bolshevik Revolution?* Extraordinarily, for some reason I don't quite understand, the KGB appeared to entertain an extremely healthy respect for our intelligence services.

A Franco-British expeditionary force was sent to Murmansk June 1918 to assist the White Russians who were fighting the Bolsheviks. They left in October 1919.

But comparing the situation with our European friends and colleagues, whom we all knew very well in Moscow, I was struck by the very different lives they led, both as regards the Russian walls and our own. They were much less restricted than we were. We had very strict rules, sometimes I felt they were stricter than necessary. Indeed this affected me, because at the end of two years as Counsellor and Head of Chancery I felt that I had not made sufficient progress with my knowledge of Russian so that it would be with me for the rest of my life, and I wanted to stay a third year. So I asked the Ambassador if he would mind me putting the idea forward and he said 'A very good idea, I would like you to stay on', and it was refused by the Security Department in London. Not a good idea. They thought that, after two years in Moscow, the Counsellor would go round the bend and must return to London. So I had to come back and I have always regretted that. Of course it has had the effect that the Russian I acquired rather painfully at evening classes, that was part-time after working with Reg [Sir Reginald Hibbert] in the Northern Department [of the Foreign Office] in London in the 1960s, left me.

WRIGHT

But you didn't go round the bend!

BRIDGES

Not so far as I know, but I had rather serious problems! But I think that is part of the psychology of this whole thing. Certainly I was interested to observe how the other Embassies ran their affairs. They kept their folks on for longer, they worked them very hard and they, I think, were often significant in terms of people. At the French Embassy they were always fighting each other like cats and the Germans committed suicide from time to time, but the level of knowledge which they had and the contacts they had were rather greater than those which we had. And I think that was something that affected our input.

This is such an enormous subject, but there is one other thing I do want to say. The role of the Embassy really was to maximise the political contacts, as I saw it, and we did do this through the various methods open to us. We had a British Council* representative, who was actually a member of the diplomatic service, and we had a programme of student exchanges. British students coming out to Russia were mostly students of the Russian language and that had the effect that the standards of Russian teaching in our university departments was perhaps rather higher than it would otherwise have been. But the other way round, I remember there was a regular exchange programme of the next generation of teachers of English in Russian schools. A small selection of them would be allowed to come to London under a programme arranged by the British Council. We had a social event for these people, generally held in the Minister's flat, before they went and another when they came back, and you had absolutely no doubt that this was an extremely good investment and they absorbed many ideas which they would not otherwise have had. This was the kind of level of contact the Embassy *was* able to promote.

The British Council is an agency of cultural diplomacy, especially in education, promoting the arts, technical training and language and libraries.

The same thing was done on the scientific side. We had a scientific *attaché* whose main role was in exchanging information between the Atomic Energy Authority in this country and the Russian equivalent over the experiments in nuclear fusion. He was a scientist himself and this was a high-level scientific exchange. There were other scientific exchanges which were run, and I thought they were all very useful. Similarly in the commercial department, which David will remember more than I do, there were one or two interesting things happening. We financed a big tyre factory in Mogilov, which I think is probably now in Belarus, and a consortium company, which was formed in this country called Rustyfa, a Russian tyre factory. Big pieces of machinery were manufactured in this country and people went out from Russia, I suppose from the Ministry of Medium Machine Building, people who did not normally travel abroad, and came to English provincial industrial towns, stayed in the local hotels, and they got an impression of the West. Despite all the talk about the Cold War, there was a gradual thickening up of contacts and this was one of the most important things which the Embassy did in our time. It wasn't at all dramatic, but it was part of the drip, drip, drip eroding the Russian citizen's belief in his own society. It manifestly was not working in economic

terms. On my first day in Russia I came into our rather nice little flat in Skatertny to find it was absolutely alive with mice, so the first thing the Counsellor had to do was to go out and buy a mousetrap, a word which I think I still remember – *mishelovka*, is that right? And to go into *univermag* (ironmonger) number 75 in the Arbat and try to buy a *mishelovka* was a depressingly accurate introduction to the Soviet economic system.

BARDER: I just wanted to add a short worm's-eye-view postscript to what John Killick said; John speaking of course with a view from the top. I was just a very humble and brand new First Secretary in the Embassy at the time of the expulsions. I had been there I think just a few months longer than John in the final days, rather gloomy, days.

KILLICK You had two functions, you were Acting Head of Chancery.

BARDER: I was Acting Head of Chancery, and therefore able to accompany the Ambassador on the evening visit to the Foreign Ministry every evening during the fortnight of the notice that we had given to the 105 – London had given them a fortnight's notice to leave the country. Every evening of that fortnight John Killick would be summoned to the Deputy Foreign Minister, to be told in ever more terrifying terms of the fate that would await us if we went through with this and failed to withdraw the expulsion orders. It was a joy to see John Killick 's response every evening of that fortnight.

I think the expulsions had quite an effect on the working of the Embassy, if not on Anglo-Soviet relations. This was not just because of the counter-expulsions – I think there were only four expulsions actually in the Embassy – but mainly because of the visa war that followed the expulsions. The Russians refused, or simply refrained from responding to, applications for visas for incoming Embassy staff. We took the view, I think rightly, that we could not keep people on longer than their due time, even if they wanted to stay on to learn better Russian or for other reasons. So people left when they were due to leave, but they were not replaced because the replacements could not get visas. So the Embassy staff ran down to quite a significant extent. One of the first things that happened was that we lost all our security guards, so members of the Chancery and commercial section and other sections in the Mission had to do night security duty. This made for a rather exhausted Chancery in the morning, as you can imagine. And of course it inhibited travelling, because there were simply not enough people in the Embassy in Moscow to enable us to release people on any scale for travel in the way that we had done before the expulsions. That went on for quite a long time, about a year or more, before the visas started coming in again, and it had a really inhibiting effect on the work of the Embassy.

The other main effect on the Embassy was the completion of the

Soviet project of expelling the whole of the Russian Secretariat in the Embassy – the group of Soviet specialists, and particularly Russian specialists, who staffed the internal section of the Chancery – the so-called Russian Secretariat. Greatly suspect to the KGB obviously, because they spoke good Russian, they came to Moscow on several postings, and they had a special knowledge of and insight into the workings of Russia and the Soviet Union. They were of particular value to the Embassy and in particular to those of us in the Embassy who were not specialists, and it was a crashing mistake on the KGB's part. Because although these people obviously had no sympathy with the Soviet system (and still less for communism), they did have a certain sympathy for Russian history and Russian culture. They had an understanding of what made Russians tick, which was beneficial both to the Embassy and to the Embassy's understanding of what Soviet policy aims were all about. So it was a great mistake on the Russian's part, even from their own point of view, systematically to get rid of the Russian Secretariat.

Contacts: one of the interesting aspects of the Embassy's ability – or lack of it – to make contacts was the question of contacts with dissidents. There was a considerable argument throughout my time about how important dissidents were in the Soviet Union. Most of our knowledge of what was happening in the tiny dissident community came from Western journalists in Moscow, the foreign correspondents, who hunted them laboriously and usually with some success. There were two outstanding American journalists in my time (the British press corps was not on the whole very impressive but the Americans were pretty good). One could pick up quite a lot of information from them about what the dissidents were doing and what kind of pressures they were under. We took the view that on the whole attempting to make direct contact with dissidents was probably wrong. It exposed them to additional risks, which was not really fair to them: and there was not much in it for the dissidents either. They had various ways of making their views, their difficulties and their problems, known to us and we exploited those reasonably well. But there were other ways also in which the Western correspondents, who travelled widely, were useful sources of secondary information: I think, of my posts, it was probably truest in Moscow that the Embassy had a good deal to say to the foreign correspondents that was useful to them and they had even more to say to us. And it was an extremely useful exchange. I was nominally press *attaché* as well as being a Chancery officer, and I always worked, without any complaints from my Ambassador that I can remember, on the basis that it was better to trust foreign correspondents by telling a little bit too much than too little, and hoping for the best: and I never had cause to regret that.

Another feature of being press *attaché* was the ability to have regular contacts with the correspondent of the *Evening News* in Moscow, who was Viktor Louis, and that was always interesting. Looking back, although he was always ready with urgent messages to pass on, and one always knew of course that they were approved mes-

sages, I can't actually recall that he ever told us anything of any real value.

WRIGHT Did he ever tell you lies?

BARDER: No, not to my knowledge. I think the only useful thing I ever got out of Viktor Louis was whether I was going to be expelled as part of the counter-expulsions, after we had expelled the 105. I asked him the day after the expulsions whether I should start packing: he said he didn't know, but he would find out and let me know. He telephoned me the following day and said 'no, you will be staying'.

GIFFARD I only wanted to say that a period which has been characterised as one of disagreement between the Foreign Office and the Embassy was, I think, a period of very necessary and important dialogue between them. I don't see it as a period of disagreement. If you look at the paper which was drawn up here [in the Foreign Office], after consideration all over Whitehall of course, about our policy subsequent to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia,* which was sent out about May of the following year, in 1969, Moscow Embassy comments on that were generally speaking in agreement. I think it was a very useful dialogue and even perhaps an important dialogue. If you imagine it recorded on an old 78 record which occasionally started to run down, it was to the Embassy's credit that it was they who wound it up again. I think it was a good dialogue, actually.

On 20 August 1969 Soviet tanks entered Prague to crush the liberalization initiatives of Alexander Dubcek, Czechoslovakian leader at the time of the so-called Prague spring. Thereafter UK policy-makers differed about how to deal with the Soviet Union.

WOODING Obviously it will bring us down to earth to talk a little bit about trade and the way in which those of us who conducted trade viewed the Embassy and its effectiveness. You said at the outset, Chairman, that I am president of the Russo-British Chamber of Commerce, and that is true, but my knowledge of doing business in Russia really rests upon the period from the early 1960s to the late 1980s, when I was directly and personally involved on behalf of my company [Courtaulds] and on behalf of other businesses in Britain. Of course one has to remember that the foreign trade that was done, particularly the things that were sold to the Soviet Union in those days, was of two kinds, but both of them based upon the Plan. The two kinds were commodities of one sort or another: goods, very often semi-manufactured goods, raw material for other parts of industry where there were holes in their own supply; and large chemical contracts, the purpose of which was twofold: to plug gaps in the industrialisation or the re-industrialisation in the capital industry, with which I was mainly concerned, and at the same time to get hold of state-of-the-art technology. Their thrust for state-of-the-art technology and the best technology available was I think the strongest single motive underlying business with the then Soviet Union. Certainly those who wanted to buy things from the Soviet Union could reckon that, if they were also able to provide modern

technology, they would get first look-in, even though it was commodities such as cotton for example, and I have a lot of personal experience of that.

But what I wanted to say was that conducting business against this background, one had to be very alert and aware of a number of parameters. The dominance of the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations under Patolichev was very, very awkward. Equally, the determination to maintain that dominance shone through all meetings, even at quite low levels. There were rivalries between that ministry and the industrial ministries, which were essentially nationalised industries of the country. There were rivalries between adjacent ministries – ministries making one thing and selling it or providing it to another – and the push-pull for resources. There was the safety-first factor in decision-making, the way in which whenever you were trying to negotiate a piece of business it went on forever and a day, not least because everybody concerned was trying to shove the decision-making upwards so that they would not have to carry the can if it went wrong, which was a big delaying factor. There was a desire not only to get hold of technology but to copy that technology, more or less covertly. This was something that one had to be aware of, because if one was trying to provide, as we did, seven complete factories, one was reliant upon a whole raft of subcontractors and many of those would only deal with you once if they had found, as they usually did, that their technology was being copied. Dismantling a machine in the middle of the night and drawing it was commonplace, but there were other rather more subtle ways of doing it.

Now the paradox that one met was that, in spite of such a highly structured hierarchical system, if you really wanted to get something done, either in terms of conducting business or in terms of getting the factory that you had sold them to work, the real trick was to find the individual who had the power and the influence, whatever his or her position was in the hierarchy. I got to know the man who was for a long time Minister of Chemical Industry and eventually became a Deputy Prime Minister,* and I had a close personal link with him. We used to tell each other assorted lies, but that was all part of the fun of meeting. He had enormous influence: if you could convince him that something should be done and it should be done in a certain way, then he got it done in spite of the democracy. Another example: in the early 1960s, I was responsible for putting right a very large factory which my company had built and which had gone wrong. It took about two years, and I fairly quickly found on my six-weekly visits to bolster the efforts of the team on the spot that the man who had the real power of decision was the Party Secretary. He was actually a foreman in the plumbing department, but he was enormously important. I could talk for a couple of days to the Director of the factory, but if I really wanted to get somewhere I used to get hold of this chap and say 'Look, we need to do the following for the following reasons'. 'Right', he said, 'let's get it done.'

L. A. Kostandov

WRIGHT Can you say a bit about the role of the Embassy?

WOODING I was going to come to that. This catalogue of parameters that one needed to be aware of is what made the support and guidance from the Embassy so valuable, so indispensable I would say. Because as a person coming in and out you could build up your own impression and you could have your own sources of information, but the advice that one got from the Embassy, who were able to read the situation, on a day-to-day basis, was enormously helpful. It was probably more helpful than the overt support, usually from the Ambassador himself, either in entertaining, or getting to meet or inviting to visit this country, of senior people. That was valuable too, but the reading of the way in which the wind was blowing was enormously valuable.

WRIGHT Were there ever cases where to somebody like yourself the overt involvement of the Embassy was actually counterproductive?

WOODING I don't remember one, no. I do, however, remember that in the early to mid-1960s the person who was even more useful on a number of occasions was the manager of British Airways, who was extremely well informed. I quite often used to stay with him at his flat and he was also enormously helpful. But not instead of the Embassy. He happened to be for a number of reasons very well informed; and of course he also had reasons to be pretty indebted to us, because we were flying out large numbers of people and enormous quantities of plant and machinery, for urgent replacement and repairs if something went wrong and had to be replaced quickly.

BRIDGES There was one commercial experience I had in Moscow, it was not strictly my business but I have often thought about it. It was when Val Duncan was running Rio Tinto Zinc [RTZ] and he was negotiating with the Soviet government about a major new copper deposit in Siberia, I think at Udokan.

RATFORD Yes, correct.

BRIDGES He came out for crucial negotiations with Patolichev and for some reason the Commercial Counsellor was not able to accompany him, so I was asked to go instead. It was an absolutely fascinating afternoon. What Duncan was trying to do was persuade Patolichev about the financial base of the operation. He explained it would cost so many billion dollars, the Soviet government was to supply all the rail links and that sort of thing, and RTZ would be able to go to the market, apart from putting in half a billion themselves, and they could raise two and a half billion dollars of medium-term loan at five plus 0.5 per cent. Patolichev said 'How much is that?', and

the answer was, shall we say, 5.5 per cent; '5.5 per cent! But we can borrow on the London market at 3 per cent: that extra 2.5 per cent is usury!'. And the whole negotiation broke down on this basis. I have often thought that we should have been in a position to warn Val Duncan. We didn't know what his line was going to be, but that was over the top as far as the Russians were concerned; it was an ideological issue really. It was a case where the Embassy, I felt, could have helped in preparing the company brief.

GUNN

My time in the Moscow Embassy was both pre- and post-*perestroika*. I was there up to the latter part of 1985, but actually, although Gorbachev was already General Secretary, in terms of the way we lived and our relations with Russians and so on nothing had changed yet. It took a lot longer for that to happen. In fact some of my experiences bear a closer resemblance to Sir Reginald's description of life in Peking than his description of life in Moscow. A quick comment on journalists. When I was there, there was a succession of General Secretaries, none of whom lasted very long, and they tended to die in the winter. We had very close relations with journalists, most of the time on very serious matters and very important matters, but also at a practical level. Since our Embassy had a very good view of the Kremlin with its flagpole, we would often be 'phoned in the morning or during the middle of the afternoon, but usually in the hours of daylight, by journalists saying 'Please, run outside and see if the flag is at half-mast', because the journalists were in a ghetto with no view and we had a very good view of this flag from the front door. And it was usually winter when they were dying and very cold outside.

We had contacts with dissidents. I was the First Secretary in what was no longer called the Russian Secretariat – it had the less glamorous name of 'Chancery Internal' by then – and we were instructed by the Foreign Office in London to try to attend trials of dissidents, because these were officially declared to be open trials. But of course in attempting to attend them, one invariably found that at the end of the scruffy street in which the downtown courthouse which would be chosen for the trial was located, there would be a man, not in uniform, very definitely not in uniform, with a walkie-talkie, telling us that the road was barred and we could go no further. So I never did attend any trials of dissidents. In having contacts with people who were, if you like, on the edge of officially tolerated activity and behaviour – in which I would include Hari Krishna adherents – one met them, but left it to them to say whether they wanted to have contact. One usually met them through other contacts, through friends, and we did not want to embarrass them or cause them difficulties, so we left it to them to indicate whether or not they wanted to remain in contact. One also always had it at the back of one's mind that they might be reporting, informing, on our contacts. We wanted to support them in most cases and help them. The contacts we had, not just dissidents,

at my level in the Embassy (which I would say was medium to low), artists, people in science and the arts, who were the only people we could really meet – people in the political field just did not want to have anything to do with us anyway – did not want to come to our homes as guests unless I took my car, picked them up and drove them to my flat. Then they did not have to run the gauntlet of the police guarding us and in a sense keeping us apart.

So this is why I say there are shades of Peking in this. It was not very easy. Travel likewise was difficult. We had to request permission to go beyond the bounds of Moscow and to go to other parts of the Soviet Union, but we were not given a reply unless they did not grant permission to go. In other words, you planned to travel on a Friday and on the Thursday evening you would be waiting to hear; if you heard nothing you could travel, if you couldn't you were told. And the message sometimes came through so garbled that you did not realise that you were not supposed to travel. I once was thrown out of Novosibirsk because I had not got the message clearly that I was not supposed to be there, and I was summarily deported from Novosibirsk to Irkutsk, which was a very nice place. So it was not easy at all.

Even the life of British students was not easy at the time. I assisted a Vice Consul in visiting a British student who had got into some trouble in a provincial city and was being interviewed by the KGB,. We went to give him some support and see what was going on. In the end he was allowed to leave the Soviet Union a month or so later on the eve of the visit by Sir Geoffrey Howe, the Foreign Secretary, to the accompaniment of a large article in *Literary Gazette*, known to be the KGB in-house newspaper, warning about the perils of having contacts with foreign students. They were (allegedly) all working for foreign intelligence services, as, supposedly, were British diplomats who went to visit them. A particularly bizarre piece in this article referred to two British diplomats who went to Voronezh 'dressed in disguise, not at all in a manner that would be customary at a Moscow diplomatic cocktail party'.

WRIGHT Oleg Godievsky can you, among other things, tell us your perception: were there real perils for Russians having contact with the British Embassy? In other words, not of the sort that Janet Gunn was referring to, or at least that Janet is quoting the Soviet government as having referred to, but did people actually run a risk by having contact with the Embassy? And how efficient was the Soviet machine in keeping a tally of who had the entrée at the Embassy?

GORDIEVSKY Until my dramatic escape from the Soviet Union in the summer of 1985 I knew relatively little about the Embassy itself. But then, meeting people from the Embassy and from the Foreign Office in the following weeks, I learnt quite a lot about their work and their attitude. On the plus side, I found the people in the Foreign Office

and in the Embassy were very well informed. Maybe they sometimes missed some sharp point or some odd point, but generally their level of understanding of the Soviet Union was quite high, I am sure better than that of many other Embassies like the French, the German and so on. For example, one thing which impressed me was that very early, as early as in the autumn of 1985, British diplomats realised that Gorbachev was an important new phenomenon and was going to introduce changes. Around the time of Gorbachev's meeting with Reagan in Geneva, British diplomats were already able to tell that something was happening: quite early before the real changes started, if you remember, after January 1987, after the Plenum of the Central Committee where Gorbachev made his decisive speech.

On the less positive side, I found that the people could not foresee the collapse of the Soviet Union and its dissolution. Meanwhile, people, like those of the KGB and other Soviet departments, knew well that since the beginning of the 1970s the Soviet Union's technology, science and many other aspects started to decline, and the gap, scientific and technological, between the Soviet Union, the East and the West started to grow. In the 1960s it was not noticed yet, but in the 1970s clearly it started to grow and kept growing,. Thus it was clear that the Soviet Union as a communist system was going to become hopelessly backwards in some years' time. When I was asked directly by the British and American analysts I said that the USSR would probably last for twenty to twenty-five years, because natural resources are huge, gas and oil would keep the system afloat. Meanwhile actually there was a slump [of oil prices] in the early years of Gorbachev which accelerated the decline. Eventually, as a result of all Gorbachev's reforms, the system collapsed in six years. The British diplomats to whom I spoke did not agree with my view that the country was declining in the 1970s. They believed it was still doing fairly well, and when I said 'Well look at the facades in Moscow; they were painted fresh for the Moscow Olympics, this is what is deceiving you', they would not believe me.

Another point was cultural. Some people, because they were meeting only representatives of the official Soviet culture, did not realise that the Soviet Russian intelligentsia was looking very much to the past and to the emigration, because there was a huge important *émigré* literature and art. For example, the famous Arts Theatre just spent practically the first ten years after the revolution abroad. So I mentioned that the time would come, of which many Russian intellectuals were dreaming, when the literature and art in Russia would get reunited with everything which was left outside. One of the British cultural *attachés* asked me 'Which other art?'. He knew only the official Soviet art and didn't realise there was a huge amount of *émigré* literature which the Russian intellectual wanted to know and to embrace. And that is exactly what happened after 1991.

Another point was that some people in the FCO are irritated by the involvement of the spy wars, visa wars, and my exfiltration from

the USSR, and so on. But looking back I think it was inevitable. Spying, and it was massive spying, was part of the Soviet mentality. They were aggressively spying against the British Embassy in Moscow and there was a huge number of operators in London. With such huge espionage centres, it was inevitable that the British Embassy was facing numerous dilemmas. There were three attacks on the British Embassy: one was human, another technical (eavesdropping, observation, etc.) and the third – SIGINT – attack, the less successful one. The Soviet SIGINT organisation (now FAPSI)* is very strong, maybe on the level of the British GCHQ at Cheltenham.* They were able to intercept traffic of France and also probably Italy at times, important NATO members. But I have never heard about any British communications intercepted by the KGB, or the GRU,* who had their independent SIGINT service.

FAPSI, current name of Russian signals intelligence.

GCHQ, Government Communications Headquarters,Cheltenham.

GRU, *Galvnoye Razvedyvatelnoye Upravlenie*, Soviet Military Intelligence.

But in the first two areas the attack was really massive. Firstly, all Soviet citizens working in the British Embassy in Moscow were either directly agents – not officers, agents which meant secret informants. The Master was the KGB's Second Chief Directorate. Target number one of the KGB was the American Embassy. The second was the British Embassy.

In the KGB there was an old tradition of hostility and aggression against Britain, even one of hatred. It poisoned the attitude to Britain of the Second European Department. There was also a tradition of hostility to Britain in the Central Committee. Britain was regarded as an important enemy – a particularly skilful, flexible, clever adversary – that is the reason for the constant activity of the KGB against Britain and its Embassy in Moscow.

On each member of the Embassy, regardless of seniority, in the KGB there it was a small file. They called it a 'folder'. On those who had been serving in Moscow for a longer time there was a true, large file. Even on the most insignificant members of the Embassy, clerks and secretaries, there were at least sixty pages in the folder. And what was there was fascinating to read. I was working for the Foreign Intelligence Directorate, but I happened to see those files in some connection. There were reports by of two or three Soviet employees of the British Embassy; then there were intercepts of the telephone conversations and transcripts of what was picked up by microphones in the walls, then intercepts from somewhere else, then a report from the outside surveillance, the watchers. Practically all members of the Embassy were under surveillance and those who spoke Russian and were flexible, quick and curious were under very heavy surveillance. The surveillance of the Embassy was there all the time, day and night, for years and years, year in year out. Just on the listening, in the KGB there were important services, like Department No. 12 and Directorate OTU (optical and audio devices). In the 1970s, for example, members of the English-speaking section of Department.12 were decorated lavishly for some important achievement, whatever it was: most likely listening to Kissinger and Nixon* speaking while visiting the USSR.

Richard Nixon, US President 1968-74.

WRIGHT Can I just ask you, you have painted a picture of an absolutely massive bureaucratic effort – I mean, if you are devoting a folder of forty pages to a junior clerk in the British Embassy, how did the KGB and the other intelligence directorates avoid complete constipation? I can remember the paper that emerged in this building in the Gulf War, where it was extremely difficult to sort out from the mass of paper what was really important. Was it efficiently dealt with?

GORDIEVSKY Yes, it was done more or less efficiently. They were watching everybody, and each operational officer in the British department was responsible for eight, ten, twelve targets at the British Embassy, thoroughly reading the files and studying them and making suggestions to the leadership about what to do. Meanwhile, what was the objective? Apart from the objective just to know everything about everybody – it is a necessity for a typical totalitarian secret police, and of the political system to know all about his or her enemy. If you ask a normal KGB officer 'What is it all for?' he would say there is a defensive purpose and an offensive purpose. Defensive: some of those important officials, diplomats, might be intelligence officers, so they are spies. We need to watch what they are up to. Do they visit other agents? Are there dead letter box operations? Even until recently, because of their paranoia and their traditional attitudes, they spoke about twelve, sixteen, or more officers in the Embassy. But I think plenty of us know that there is a couple of intelligence officers only, which is nothing to speak about. Meanwhile they said 'Gordievsky is claiming on the radio that there are only two officers and one secretary in the British Embassy – he is telling obvious lies; according to our information there are at least twelve officers and probably more'. This is what the KGB are saying absolutely seriously.

The offensive purpose was to find out through prolonged and thorough observation who is the candidate to be recruited to be a secret informant for the KGB Second Chief Directorate, in order to have a human source of information in the Embassy. And if it turns out that it is a productive and reliable agent, he would be passed on to the First Chief Directorate to be run in London or whatever the country in which that British official would happen to work.

Just one point about the spies in London. After the war, in the well-wishing, favourable atmosphere for the Soviet Union because of its huge contribution to victory in the Second World War, the British authorities just ignored the growth of the KGB intelligence services in London, until it became absolutely intolerable. In 1971 the number of the officers, KGB and GRU, was 120 at least. If each of them had, say, ten contacts in London, in the Departments or wherever, it would be already 1200 Russian contacts, and then the East European countries were helping as well. That is why there were expulsions. After the mass expulsions in 1971, a framework of

the size of the Soviet Embassy was established, and a visa war broke out. The reason was that Britain since then [1971] had the concept not to let anybody in who was an identified intelligence officer. Meanwhile the Soviet, the KGB's, attitude was: 'Let's use as many spies as you wish'; nobody is in the position to dictate to another side how many people you have and what type of people personally'. So they regarded the British attitude as an interference in their freedom of appointing whoever and how many they wanted. It was the roof of all the problems. I am very sorry that people were expelled unnecessarily, because dozens and dozens of British diplomats were expelled for nothing, just because of those tit-for-tat measures. In the 1980s Soviet intelligence presence in Britain was the lowest and the most harmless in history, as a result of the FCO's policy, and it is obviously a positive result.

WRIGHT

Thank you very much indeed. Next I would like to turn to two Ambassadors who were in Moscow during and after *perestroika*. Could you give us your images of how far the Embassy changed, how far the role of the Embassy changed, and how you coped with it?

BRAITHWAITE

I would just like to pick up the question of technology. In the 1960s, when I was doing the commercial job, there were two reactions from British visitors. British scientists and academic people would go and meet their Russian opposite numbers and say 'These people are absolutely amazing, they have the most advanced technology in the world'; British businessmen would come, go round a Soviet factory and come back and say 'I simply don't understand how these people ever put a man into space'. And that was not merely academic, there was a complete difference in those two areas of activity. We used to try to persuade people who were selling high technology, and I don't think it was persuading them wrongly, that they could afford to sell quite up-to-date technology, because by the time the Russians had managed to make any use of it, they [the British technologists] would be a whole generation further on. By the 1960s the Russians were something like twenty years behind in whole areas of very important technology.

Margaret Thatcher, British Prime Minister May 1979-November 1989 (Baroness Thatcher of Grantham).

Sir Geoffrey Howe, Foreign Secretary June 1983-July 1989, now Lord Howe

When Gorbachev came here, at the end of 1984, those of us who read the records of his exchanges with Mrs Thatcher* and with Geoffrey Howe,* realised that this was something quite exceptionally and qualitatively different. Gorbachev was thinking on his feet, arguing very effectively. He was well informed and full of bounce. You can't say that of any of his predecessors except in a rather bizarre way of Khrushchev. The fact that Gorbachev was elected by the Politburo in 1985 was a sign that even the crustiest members of that body had realised that, to use a phrase that came into fashion a couple of years later among Soviet intellectuals, the experiment had failed. In 1987 I was attending a meeting in the Cabinet Room to discuss the question of the collapse of the

London International Metal Exchange. There were only four people in the room who could understand it: one was Geoffrey Howe, one was Leon Brittan,* one was Nigel Lawson,* and the other of course was Mrs Thatcher. We were sitting there, she came into the room, looked around the room and she said, 'Have you read the speech that Gorbachev made yesterday to the Central Committee Plenum?' We all looked at her. She had, and we hadn't. As Oleg was saying, it was a very important change.

Leon Brittan, now Sir Leon Brittan, until recently an EU Commissioner in Brussels.

Nigel Lawson, Chancellor of the Exchequer June 1983-October 1989, now Lord Lawson.

By the time I got to Moscow, which was September 1988, it was already a totally different situation of working in the Embassy. Every day something would happen which I don't think anybody who had not been in the place before would notice necessarily, but which was a revelation of how far the changes had gone. Really from then onwards we began to operate normally, as people began to lose their fear of the KGB. Government offices were wide open to us, and officials chattered away like ninepins at us, often telling us lots of lies. The atmosphere actually was very like my previous post in Washington, where one had the same feeling. You came to an office wondering whether you had mastered your brief and you found it didn't matter, because these people were going to talk so much you couldn't get a word in edgeways. It was possible to get close, really, to almost everybody in the system. You could get to see and deal with, and I did, Gorbachev and Yeltsin,* and indeed Primakov.

Boris Yeltsin, President of the Russian Federation 1991-2000.

Until we negotiated a sort of reasonable standoff at the end of 1990, we did go on having trouble over spies and things. We had a grand expulsion in May 1989 with tit-for-tat, and the Russians again got frightfully indignant because we had started the expulsion. And I found my experience dealing with trade problems in Washington was very good practice. Having dealt with one furious superpower, dealing with another furious superpower was rather less of a problem. The relationship between Gorbachev and the KGB was a complicated one. He was in hock to the KGB, he believed quite a lot of what they told him, but he also had a more sensible attitude to a lot of the stuff than quite a lot of other people. His comments on the expulsions, and particularly on what happened to the British journalists, were very sensible.

Mrs Thatcher, the 'Thatcher glow', the sort of aura that surrounded her which is very considerable and still persists in Russia, was of course a huge assistance to me, because everybody said, 'Ah, you are Mrs Thatcher's Ambassador'. This was when they weren't mistaking me for the American Ambassador, who regularly appeared talking Russian on television: they could not, most of them, conceive that there would be two Anglo-Saxon Ambassadors who both spoke Russian, so I did get confused with him rather often. But the Thatcher effect, which began when she came to power in a negative sense, in a positive sense lasted really only from about 1984 to 1989. Thereafter, the Russians did not have to talk through us; they talked direct to the people who really mattered – who were the Americans and the Germans. Of course our opposition to

German reunification was extremely damaging, not so much to my functioning or the Embassy's functioning in Moscow, but just generally damaging, because everybody started taking no notice of the British for about a year, up until the time Mrs Thatcher fell.

During the period I was there we had several subjects of substantial negotiation. One was the reduction in conventional arms and another was chemical and biological warfare. Those were subjects which I found very interesting, because they took one into the Ministry of Defence to meet the Soviet generals. It was probably unprecedented to have such access to the military. I found that fascinating. They were of course telling me lies in spades most of the time. But I had a lot of sympathy with them because of what was happening to them professionally throughout that period: the humiliating collapse of the Soviet military. But of course conventional weapons were still basically a function of our membership of the Alliance, they weren't a function of our bilateral relationship with the Russians. We just happened to have, for a variety of accidental reasons, a useful role.

On the question of the coup,* throughout the time I was there, that is to say from September 1988 onwards, we were always expecting there to be a coup. The first thing I did when I got to Moscow was dig out the *Pravda* from October 1964, which announced that Mr Khrushchev had been taken ill and left his job and somebody else had taken over, because I expected at any moment to hear on the radio or to read in the papers that Gorbachev had been taken ill and somebody else had taken over his job. We were continually getting inquiries from London about what turned out every time to be spurious bits of intelligence saying, 'We believe there may be a coup at any moment, what's the evidence?' We would telegraph back and say, 'There is no coup that we can see; we would expect a number of things to precede a coup, and they have not happened'. But there were incidents throughout the time I was there that were coup-like: you would see columns of tanks going through the streets of Moscow and you would think 'Well, this is the coup' – there was a coup pattern to it.

In August 1991 a group of 8 Soviet government officials, opposed to Gorbachev's reform programme, staged a coup. This was opposed by Boris Yeltsin, who emerged as leader in place of Gorbachev. On 21 December 1991 the Soviet Union ceased to exist.

The coup that did take place of course nobody foresaw. Percy Cradock in his book about the workings of the JIC says that it came like snow out of a blue sky. One of the things about the KGB, which was in many ways very incompetent, was that they were able to keep secret the fact that they were plotting a coup. The CIA came nearest to predicting the coup on the basis of intelligent analysis, not – as far as I know – secret intelligence. However, when the coup did take place people in the Embassy, some of the people working with me, were in and out of the White House throughout that time. Unfortunately they did not have mobile phones, unlike the Swedish Ambassador who did, so they had to go out to telephone boxes to telephone into the Embassy and say what was going on. And so indeed did General Lebed, whose tanks and parachutists were sent up from Tula to Moscow to defend the White House. Nobody had told him what he was meant to defend it

against. When he arrived in Moscow he tried to telephone the Defence Ministry on his command vehicle radio and found that his radio was not compatible with the Defence Ministry's radio. So he got out of his vehicle and went over to a telephone box, and found he hadn't got the money. Anyway, my people were in and out of the building and I visited the place. My wife, with some Russian friends, was actually on the barricades when the shooting took place. And then John Major* came out and on 1 September, the day he was there, we had in the Embassy every senior Russian politician who wasn't in gaol. Instead of sitting down where my wife had placed them, they spent all their time gathered in corners plotting what they were going to do next.

John Major, British Prime Minister November 1989-May 1997.

Then of course the Soviet Union came to an end and Yeltsin and particularly Gaidar* came in. Under John Major from the G7* meeting in the summer of 1991 through until the spring of the next year, we really did have a role. It was in a way a more substantial role than Mrs Thatcher had. It was all to do with economics and Russia's economic condition. My connection with Gaidar started on about 4 January 1992, when I started getting a series of telephone calls from various people, including British Ministers, about a consignment of food aid. This happened to consist of British beef and Russian vets would not let it in on the grounds that it was infected with mad cow disease. So that caused quite a lot of trouble and I got very close to Gaidar in that context. Then he appealed, and Yeltsin did, for a slug of money, six or eight billion dollars, for a stabilisation fund to back the reforms they had just announced. I telegraphed to say I thought that we should support them. Because by then the relationship had changed totally in tone, I also showed my telegram to Gaidar in order to check that I had got his arguments right, and to let him know what I had advised. The British government supported the idea. Norman Lamont* went to the G7 meeting saying we must back these guys. But the Americans and Japanese wouldn't. Gaidar argues, with perhaps some justification, that if we had given that money then it would have been a hell of a lot more use than the more money we gave later, and Russia might not be where it is now.

Yegor Gaidar, pro-market economist and reformist Finance Minister who was First Deputy Russian Prime Minister.

G7, the Group of Seven Industrialised Nations: United States, Britain, Japan, Frence, Germany, Canada and Italy.

Norman Lamont, Chancellor of the Exchequer November 1990-May 1993, now Baron Lamont of Lerwick.

We then went on in that spring helping the Russians. The Russians asked us to sponsor their entry into the Washington financial institutions, the World Bank and the IMF, and we were working very closely with them. I was seeing Gaidar and his people in the rooms which had been occupied by the Politburo leaders, Mr Suslov and so on, in order to plot a tactical approach which would outflank the Americans and get Russia into the international financial institutions, which is certainly a turnaround. Then I left, much to my distress, and handed over to Brian, who will pick up the story.

WRIGHT

Just before we hand over to Brian a footnote, which is not directly relevant to the British Embassy, but I am fascinated by what you said about Mrs Thatcher's credibility and her attitude to German

reunification. Because, seeing it from London, one of the points that I think convinced Mrs Thatcher that Gorbachev was a man to do business with was that she thought she had a sympathetic ear when discussing German reunification. I am not suggesting that contradicts what you are saying, more of an annotation.

BRAITHWAITE

When I came back for a Heads of Mission meeting in October 1989, which was just before the Wall fell, the FCO was under a ban: it was told not to think about German reunification. It did actually, despite what people said, but it was not meant to. Mrs Thatcher made a huge mistake, including about what her friend Mitterrand was up to. The Russians were telling me in January 1990, 'If you think we are going to pull your chestnuts out of the fire you'd better think again'.

FALL

One very brief postscript, because David Owen is not here. He came out, old regime, 1979, and we wanted a treaty for him to sign. We talked to the Second European Department and said we wanted a treaty which would allow British commercial personnel in the sort of sites that Norman Wooding has been talking about to get home quickly if there was a humanitarian need, somebody fell ill or what have you. It seemed a good idea in principle, it would have made a real difference in practise to the people we were trying to help. And the Second European Department told us, I think two days before the visit, that it could not be done. Why couldn't it be done? Oh, they said, because it involves 'certain other departments'. You bet it did, and they had known that all along. So what can you do in a day and a half? How can you produce, obviously quickly, a treaty-type thing on a no doubt much less important and much less complicated subject? That is why we had an Anglo-Soviet agreement on the prevention of accidental nuclear war!

This time around, I followed Rodric. It was a treat, because of the challenge it was a treat. Particularly, as he said, because one had been there before. You could put down on the left-hand side of your bookkeeping system the sort of things that would have happened before – some Soviet bureaucrat had been acting stupid on some simple point, and you hadn't got what you wanted. On the right-hand side, you put down all the things that you never thought you would live to see done, let alone do yourself. And the right-hand side in those days, because it was still an optimistic time, got bigger and bigger.

Rodric is right that, when the West really could have helped – while Yeltsin still had his one-year powers to fix the economy without going back to the Duma – we were too slow. We made the mistake of giving the job to the IMF, who did well in their terms but who were not designed for the particular purpose. So we ended up being far too slow. The relationship with Gaidar, Chubais, Shokhin and all that economic team remained very close. When there was to be a G7 summit with the Russians in attendance, you could go in – they

were very keen that you did – and talk to the Russians who were preparing the brief. You could even help them a bit with the brief, having served in Moscow, having served in Washington and Ottawa, and having seen these summits a little bit at first hand. That was almost like being in Canada, because there was a willingness to open up the doors and really sit down and talk.

WRIGHT

Can I just ask you – was there a consensus between the British Embassy and the American Embassy about the slowness of the systems? You were both singing the same tune?

FALL

Robert Strauss, US Ambassador to the Soviet Union and then Russian Federation, August 1991- December 1992.

Thomas Pickering, US Ambassador to Russia 1993-96.

Yes, Strauss* would have said that and Pickering* would have agreed with Strauss: but Pickering did not express himself quite as vigorously and powerfully as Strauss would, if there were a question of disagreeing with his government. We had a close relationship with the Russian team and you felt that we were influential, not least because we could talk informally and be a sounding board. The Russians wanted to make a success of their relationship with the G7 and we had something to offer as members who were prepared to go and talk.

Contacts. At the end of the 1970s I remember that if you made a pest of yourself you could go and see a Foreign Ministry department other than the Second European Department. If you went when they were doing something interesting they would say they were too busy, but at least you could go in two weeks after the crisis had ended. If you did it in Russian you got more real time for your money. This time round, you could go and talk to the Speakers at both the Houses of Parliament. You would get in and out of the Kremlin even though you were not paying an introductory or a farewell call, very much like going down to the National Security Council in Washington. In that sense I did as Ambassador in Moscow what I did as Minister in Washington. The job was immensely stimulating, not least because of this newness.

Spies continued to be heavy on the agenda, but in a rather different way, because we had decided that, because terrorism and drugs and organised crime were common enemies, the intelligence services ought to have an area where they worked together and that meant that they had to have a relationship with each other. That in turn meant that the British Ambassador got into Dzerzhinsky's* office and sat down in front of the Head of the Russian MI5 equivalent. He then said, 'Let me introduce my team: he's this, he's that, and oh by the way, that's the chap who listens in to you or who directs the people who do'. We had a real snarl-up over visas, which was a London fault rather than a Russian fault on this occasion, but instead of just being told by the Foreign Ministry what they had been told to say to the British Embassy, Primakov would send a rather sinister black car to pick me up and I would be driven off to a *dacha* somewhere out in the far suburbs, and be given half an hour's worth of straight-from-the-horse's-mouth about how

Felix Dzerzhinsky set up the secret police, the Cheka, The All-Russian Extraordinary Commission, established 20 December 1917.

bloody-minded we were being and wasn't it time in both our interests that we woke up. It was even possible, though I only managed it once, to get in and have a serious argument with the GRU, who at one stage were being more difficult than the other two agencies over something which needed doing.

Another very strange new aspect was that, because I was Ambassador to nine other countries at the same time, I was able to go and talk to the President of Turkmenistan. He still had the red telephone and still used it, maintaining the old Politburo relationship with all the people who had the red telephones to discuss with them what was happening with Moscow. He was interested because I had just come from Moscow and I was interested because I didn't have a red telephone. This was a whole new way of doing business, an utterly fascinating sidelight on what was happening in Moscow.

The best of all these things was that you could fill the Embassy with Russians who, instead of all arriving at the same time as their boss and leaving at the same time as their boss having said nothing, would spend the whole time arguing with each other and with anybody else around, trying to persuade anybody who would listen of their view of the right way out of the hole. We became a normal Embassy. Or, to come back to something I said before, if you regard it as normal being in Washington during the first few weeks of a transition, then the British Embassy in Moscow was a normal posting.

WRIGHT The normality never reached the lengths in Moscow, I think, which it reached in one other part of the former Soviet empire, and that was that the British Embassy was actually told by the local intelligence authorities, in 1992 perhaps, exactly where all the bugs were in the Embassy building. Did that happen in Moscow?

BRAITHWAITE That didn't happen to us but it happened to the Americans. Bakatin, who was put in after the coup to reform the KGB, handed the plans over to Bob Strauss, and he [Bakatin] of course is now regarded by the KGB as a traitor.

WRIGHT Why did he not give them to us?

BRAITHWAITE I don't know the answer to that.

GORDIEVSKY Bakatin indeed informed the Americans about the system of bugs in the new building of the US Embassy in Moscow. Because of the presence of those microphones, the Americans wouldn't move into the new building and did not let the Russians move into their new building in Washington. But Bakatin, consulting Yeltsin and Gorbachev, felt he was permitted and authorised to pass the information to the Americans. As a result he was a hate figure to

the KGB, particularly because of that action.

ALEXANDER

To give some contrast to my post-*perestroika* visit, let me say a bit about my time in Moscow in 1963-65 and just take up the various headings I have heard addressed. Could one have informal contacts with Russian officials? Well yes, occasionally. My wife and I formed a friendship with a Russian official in the Second European Department and his wife, and we did visit his home. That blew up when he came to London. We had him to our home, and went to the Russian *dacha*, and then made the fatal mistake of inviting him to a larger party which included Rodric. That was the last we ever saw of him because the Embassy clearly sensed (wrongly) that he was being ganged up on. (He subsequently had a successful career in the Soviet Diplomatic Service). Were such contacts dangerous for either them or for us? Certainly they were for us. The KGB cultivated our first nanny when we were in Moscow, overplayed their hand, rendered her pregnant and she was sent home. Their investment was lost, but the incident showed that they took the development of contacts very seriously and that it was dangerous.

Did we see the artists and the intellectual community in 1963-65? Yes we did. I still have on the walls of our home four portraits of the family, of differing quality, painted by Sverev, who, although dead, is now I believe a well-known figure. I say differing quality because we smuggled him into the Embassy, and this was the Residence, under a blanket in the back seat of the car. He painted our portraits, but in the process of doing so got extremely drunk, which rendered getting him out of the premises rather more of an adventure than getting him in. And as I say, the four portraits are of differing quality, but perhaps of growing interest. Other kind of contact? Well, from time to time one did of course have them. Brian Fall and I had a very interesting overnight train journey with Sukhodrev* in 1972, when I was a Private Secretary and he was on Gromyko's staff. He spoke with great freedom and great frankness about how the Soviet bureaucratic system worked. I think Brian recorded it and it gave us a real insight. But sadly those occasions were rather infrequent.

Sukhodrev was Kosygin's interpreter.

Which leads me to another point: how much did all these contacts matter at all? Well, they were infrequent, and because they were infrequent we thought about them harder. We extracted more from them than one would from similar contacts in Washington or Paris or wherever. And I think, subject to what Oleg has already said, that probably we did form a not inaccurate picture of how the Soviet Union worked. I hope that the earlier comments about the Russian Secretariat were not meant to imply that the Chancery and the commercial section were in some sense unsympathetic to the Russians or unable to speak Russian and so on. Mostly we were sympathetic and we could speak Russian. On the whole the picture that has already been conveyed was accurate.

Did what the Embassy did matter in detail in relation to specific

Sir Humphrey Trevelyan, HM Ambassador in Moscow 1962-5

Aleksei Kosygin, one of Soviet collective leadership that succeeded Khrushchev. He was Chairman of Council of Ministers while Brezhnev and Andropov were Party leaders.

decisions? Not in the slightest, in my view. Humphrey Trevelyan* had what for his time were admirable contacts with Kosygin* and such people. I don't think those relationships made any difference at all to detailed decisions. They did make a lot of difference, as has been said, to overall perceptions, and that seems to me to have been the real value of the Embassy in those periods. It meant that the attitudes of the Foreign Office, of this building, towards the Soviet Union were relatively soundly based and provided a realistic basis on which British policy towards the Soviet Union could be conducted.

I went back once or twice as Private Secretary and so on. But I went back to pay a different kind of working visit in the spring of 1991, when I was Ambassador at NATO, to address the Soviet General Staff College. A visit which had been delayed for a year, I may say, thanks to the attitude of the Permanent Under-Secretary of the day.

WRIGHT

Sorry about that!

ALEXANDER

Marshal Sergei Akhromeyev, Chief of General Staff of Soviet armed forces.

M A Moiseev, member of the Defence Council in October 1990.

It was nonetheless a fascinating visit and a complete revelation. Thanks to Rodric I had an hour and a half, two hours, with Akhromeyev,* more or less *tête-à-tête*. I had a long meeting with Moiseev.* Both were frank and very interesting. Of course I was there as the representative, if you like, of the devil incarnate, to wit NATO. They spoke with complete understanding, I thought, of what we were about. I confess that I misled them on the question of NATO enlargement, but it was an inadvertent misrepresentation of the situation. Of course Soviet attitudes had not changed altogether, as I discovered when I addressed the Soviet General Staff and the first or second question I was asked, by a man covered with medals and gold braid, who was as broad as he was tall, was simply and bluntly, 'I hope, Ambassador, that you haven't come here to teach us how to behave?' We went on from there. But the overall transformation was total. What, effectively, had happened was that those Russian characteristics which I had learnt to respect and admire from 1963 to 1965 (and which meant that Russia, the Soviet Union, is the only foreign posting I ever had about which I feel nostalgic for the people and the place) by 1991 were being freely expressed at the most senior levels in the country. Of course, as Rodric's story has already indicated, we made some grievous blunders ourselves, in the early Nineties. We are still dealing with the dark side of Russia as a result.

PALLISER

Sir Michael Palliser was then Foreign Office Private Secretary to Prime Minister Harold Wilson.

My recollections are mainly anecdotal, I suppose. I went several times to the Embassy, to Moscow, when I was the then Prime Minister's Foreign Office Private Secretary* – a number of us in the room have done that – and then again a couple of times when I was Permanent Under-Secretary, and subsequently twice as a banker, once before and once after the collapse of the Soviet Union. So it is

essentially anecdotal.

Harold Wilson, Prime Minister 1964-70 and 1974-76 (Baron Wilson of Rievaulx).

I remember an occasion when Mr Wilson* was the guest of the Soviet government and therefore staying in a *dacha* on the Lenin Hills with the rest of his party. I have two recollections of that. One was when the conference officer who, poor man, had been slogging from the Embassy out to the *dacha* endlessly all day trying to organise things, a good deal of snow on the ground and all that, arrived back at the *dacha* at about 2 o'clock in the morning, desperately hungry, not having eaten anything all day, and wandered around pathetically on the ground floor looking for a larder. He opened one door and there was an extremely startled Soviet official in uniform with headphones on, presumably, listening to us all snoring! That is one recollection. The other one is rather more personal, which is that I was the only person in that team who liked caviar for breakfast, and we had a huge breakfast in the *dacha* including two large bowls of really marvellous caviar, and I made rather a pig of myself because nobody else would eat the stuff. How misguided they were!

But being more serious, the contrast which has been described was one, obviously, which I saw as a banker and not as a Foreign Office official. I am bound to say that, in earlier days, I found talking *tête-à-tête* to Gromyko a perfectly rewarding and interesting experience. Of course, one knew what he was going to say, but he said it interestingly and engagingly. He had that wintry smile, which I always rather liked, and I never thought that talking to him was a waste of time. And I felt the same about some of the other senior contacts that, thanks to the Embassy, I was able to have. But of course it was set-piece stuff. One point of contrast is interesting: that as between a diplomat doing this and a banker talking to bankers, it was quite different. Pre-1989, I went I suppose in 1986, 1987, for the first time, meeting the chairman of the Central Bank, the chairman of the Vneshekonom Bank and others, with their staffs. One felt that it was bankers talking to bankers, irrespective of nationality, and it was much more revealing about the state of affairs in the Soviet Union I think than it would have been, with diplomats talking to diplomats. The only difference, quite frankly, after 1989 is something that Rodric has referred to, which was that they all talked all the time about how marvellous it was. It wasn't actually, it was a considerable mess, but there was a sort of euphoria in the air; the same men doing the same jobs, but quite different in their attitude and general approach; and I was very struck by that.

HIBBERT Mr Chairman I wish to say something that may be thought to be challenging.

WRIGHT You always do!

HIBBERT Not always! I think that in Britain there has been a tendency to regard the expulsion of the Soviet intelligence people as our finest

hour in Anglo-Soviet relations. I personally think that is not a good attitude. The expulsion of the diplomats was rather like winning a grand slam: it was a marvellous thing with everybody in good form. I quite understand that everybody in the Moscow Embassy was happy to see it and so was everybody in London. But I think that in the 1970s it rather had the effect of making opinion in Britain inclined to think that antagonism was the most important feature of relations with the Soviet Union. We were leaders in socking it to them. I think that became a certain difficulty for us when the western powers were negotiating with Moscow. Certainly at the Belgrade review meeting. Dr David Owen is not here, but I can quote one thing he said to me at that time. There was one day when he said to me, 'You know, the only subject on which I can get applause, on which the government can get applause, on both sides of the House of Commons, is human rights – we will support Goldberg'. You remember, he came from Washington and was sort of hyping up the human rights thing at Belgrade, and in fact caused quite a number of difficulties in getting a consensus together on the European side amongst the nine. My own personal judgement would be that in fact we could have got a slightly better result in Belgrade if we hadn't had quite so much of that, and on the British side, I think that had a root back in the expulsion of the intelligence agents. So all I am saying is that it was a marvellous victory, but it was really aside from the mainstream of international relations at that time and I think one ought to bear that in mind. I am merely saying that in the 1970s we had certain difficulties arising from the fact that this was regarded as really our finest hour in dealing with the Soviet Union, and I think this was wrong.

FALL The cheers were not from Moscow, they were from the people who had previously served there. The people still in Moscow were the ones who weren't cheering.

ALEXANDER We were in Western Organisations Department.

FALL But I think that the finest hour, and that is purple language, is the combination of the 105, and of the fact that the British delegation in Helsinki played a crucial part in negotiating the terms of reference for what became the Final Act. The Russians, having tried to exclude us, finally ended up dealing with us as one of the more significant delegations in Helsinki on a one-on-one basis. It was showing that we could do both of those things that was, I think, a very successful piece of West-West diplomacy as well. By the time Belgrade came along we got our West-West diplomacy in rather worse nick, because the Americans insisted on taking the lead instead of encouraging the Europeans to do so as they had at Helsinki.

RATFORD If I could just begin with thirty seconds on Reg Hibbert. I thought

at the time in 1971, and I still tend to think so today, that we underplayed the expulsions and that there was a case for looking at it from the other end of the telescope, saying 'How many diplomats do we need in Moscow? How many British businessmen wish to be resident there? How many British journalists wish to be there?' And you come up with X. And you say you, the Soviet Union, can have X in London, and ever after if they wanted another person here you say, 'Well, Barclays Bank wish to open something in Moscow tomorrow, *quid pro quo*'.

WRIGHT I think I remember that we actually did get very near that position at a later stage.

RATFORD But it would have been a lot better if we had done it in 1971. My main reason for asking for the floor again is to come back to what I think must be one of the central questions when one is looking at our performance over these years. And it comes back to the question asked here. It comes back to what Oleg was saying, about the timescale and why didn't we exactly foresee the collapse when it came? Oleg said interestingly there were resources for carrying on perhaps another twenty years. As one who was involved in policy-making at the London end at that time, I have thought much about it since then. I have come round to the conclusion that it was an impossible thing to foresee in this sense: one could never know when there was going to be a failure of will on the part of the men at the centre. If I can illustrate it from two other vantagepoints. I remember a conversation with a Hungarian Deputy Foreign Minister in somewhere around 1988 and he said, 'We all believe that the Brezhnev doctrine no longer applies, but none of us wishes to be the one first to put it to the test and provoke them'. Another is, at the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall, we had talks with the Germans who had been much involved in the negotiations that were going on at that time, and indeed one could see this played out on our television sets the night it happened. None of us really knew what was going to happen that night. The Germans who were negotiating the departure of all the people stacked up in the German Ambassador's garden and staircase etc. in Prague, they did not know from one minute to the next when it was going to happen. We don't know whether the Brezhnev doctrine ceased to apply way back at the time of the Polish events.* It had been argued that that was a Polish solution and that it [the Brezhnev doctrine] was already on the way out then. As I say, I am now convinced that it was the impossibility of knowing when you would have a General Secretary who would not, as it were, push the political button and roll the tanks, in the way that they did in August 1968.

The Polish Union Solidarnoz (Solidarity), led by Lech Walesa, had opposed General Jaruzelski regime.

BRAITHWAITE First of all you can't foresee the future. We saw the trend in Moscow, and probably in London too, but you could not tell the timing

because you cannot actually foretell – only Roman augurs can foretell – the future.

WATT They don't have too good a track record either!

BRAITHWAITE Secondly, going back to your point and Reg's point, I believe that we got ourselves into a mindset in the 1970s where we couldn't look at the whole differently. We got ourselves into a mindset where we saw only threats and not opportunities. One of these, which Brian and I were working on, when we happened to be in London several times, was the question of the opportunities which were offered by the proposal for Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction [MBFR] and the European Security Conference.* We thought the Russians would take us to the cleaners if we ever negotiated with them. In fact the Russians made a huge mistake both in promoting the European Security Conference and in the end in acquiescing in the force negotiations. Because actually we took *them* to the cleaners. Our mindset was partly based on the axiom 'never think about intentions, only think about capabilities', so you never worry about what is going on in the country, you just count tanks. In the end it did not matter because the thing fell apart anyway, whatever our mindset was, but I do feel we missed opportunities.
On the question of resources to be exploited, the fact is that the Russian economy has always run on the basis of using these resources to build a military machine, not a healthy economy They relied on their natural resources for so long, they haven't got anything else, and now it has all come unstuck.

These agreements formed part of the Helsinki Accords, 1975.

WATT I wanted to ask about generational attitudes in 1990-91. I was then at the World Historical Conference which was taking place in Madrid, and we had a session on Stalin's foreign policy, Hitler, Nazis, Molotov/Ribbentrop Pact and so on. And it turned out that the Russians we had there were three completely different groups. There were one or two of the old guard still arguing the old position about Stalin's foreign policy. Then there was the generation that had just taken over, fairly lucid intelligent historians who wanted to understand and to try to sort out the difference between what was sheer mania and what was understandable in the view of the image the Soviets had of foreign authorities; people who very much represented a similar state of mind to the West at that time. Then we had the younger generation. They called themselves 'young historians', but actually 'young' meant anybody under 45, which I thought was a bit of an insult. And their view was just like British historians after 1945. They didn't want to understand, they just wanted to condemn. They wanted to condemn everything root and branch, they wanted to rub their moral consciences up against whatever happened to be going round and feel better for it. And I wondered if this generational gap, if you had the opportunity to talk to the younger officials, came out in your experience too.

BRAITHWAITE In all countries there are generational gaps. My definition for Russia is that anybody who is young enough not to have been afraid – either of being shot or at least of losing his job – is a different generation. And that is people under 40, because people over 40 *did* risk losing their jobs, and of course their parents and grandparents risked being shot. That actually concentrates the mind. And I think the hope for the country is the generation that did not know fear. They have all sorts of other obsessions and injured pride and so on, and the condemnatory thing of course is over. They are not busy condemning the past anymore, and perhaps they should do it a bit more than they are doing.

GORDIEVSKY I admitted when speaking that in the time of the Cold War, until about 1988/89, indeed all visitors to the British Embassy and all contacts were controlled entirely by the KGB. Some of them were regular agents of the KGB, which means pseudonyms for files on them and doing it directly on the order of the KGB. Some others were just so-called confidential persons of the KGB, so they had a licence to meet and then reported in detail about everything that had been said in contact with the British diplomats and any British people. People who were met by the British diplomats and other British visitors by chance, on the train, in the street, in the department store, if it happened, because there was surveillance, quite often they were then followed home and identified by the KGB, and then interviewed and sometimes threatened. So it was very difficult. In a very few cases, when the first contact was not noticed by the KGB and the second would be noticed, then either the third contact would be monitored by the KGB or the person would get cold feet and report to the KGB, and then would carry on under KGB control.

WRIGHT Can anybody who served in the Embassy remember a specific case where something was said to a Russian contact in the knowledge that it would go back to the KGB?

BRAITHWAITE Yes, all the time.

WRIGHT But can you think of a particular time?

KILLICK I can. We had four Armenian students who burst in past the security guards under the illusion that I could somehow smuggle them out of the country. We kept them, despite all the attentions of the KGB and the Foreign Ministry, but we wanted to find some way of getting rid of them. So with Ken Scott and a few others we staged a conversation in front of the walls in my drawing room, in which we said, 'If only we could get in touch with their parents, we could persuade them to leave'. And one of us said, 'How on earth are we going to do that, we'd never manage to do it'. The parents were on

the doorstep the next morning!

FALL Just a small postscript on Rodric's point about being young and not having been afraid. That is hugely the most important part of the story. The other part of the story is of course the lack of control over information, which is technology-driven and also age-related. During my first time in Moscow Michael Jenkins, who was writing a historical biography, had access to the Lenin Library. But if he wanted to use the photocopier, there was an old lady to whom he had to show his diplomatic card, who would then grudgingly unpadlock the photocopier. When you compare now the amount of direct access which the younger generation has got, through travel, through mobile phones, through television …

RATFORD And e-mail now.

WATT Yes, but not to the archives.

FALL Not to the archives, but to what the outside world looks like.

ALEXANDER One postscript on that. It is not only people who were not afraid because they were so young, it is also people – these have been the most valuable business contacts I have had in my involvement in Russia in the last five years – who had the right parents. The son of a KGB general, the son of a senior official in the Azerbaijani party, have no hangups (and no nostalgia) about the past, and are incidentally among the more honest people I have had to deal with for precisely that reason.

WRIGHT Professor Watt, you say not the archives. By that you mean not the recent archives?

WATT Curiously enough, in some ways there has been more access to recent archives than the older ones, but it is still very much controlled.

WRIGHT But I am very interested by, I don't know how many of you have seen it, a fascinating book produced in the Foreign Office on the Zinoviev letter,* and that draws on a lot of Russian archives

Gill Bennett, *'A Most Extraordinary and Mysterious Business': the Zinoviev Letter of 1924*, (London, Foreign & Commonwealth Office, February 1999).

WATT Oh yes, there are individual records, but nothing has come out of the GRU archive whatsoever. Not that we are in a position to complain, because MI6 is still locked up. But where the KGB archives are concerned, everything that has been released, apart from what Gill Bennett got hold of, has come through translation. In things that had been taken out of the files by the Russians, this horrid little man Tsarev has usually appeared as co-author of the books con-

cerned. They have given more details about what was already known, but they haven't given anything else. Sometimes they have given things away because one of the great virtues of Mr Tsarev is that he does not read anything that is published in any language other than Russian. So that one of the last books that came out from Nigel West had a whole series of things in it that neither he [Tsarev] nor Nigel West understood the importance of, but which one could fit in with what we knew about other intelligence activities and make a lot more sense out of. The Foreign Ministry archives and some of the more top ones do give answers. But since we do not really know, and there is nothing annotated on [the documents] (they are only the equivalent of Foreign Office minutes) to say who saw a document, what basis the document was for subsequent decisions, any of the sort of things with which most of the people sitting behind me do work in the normal way in their research, cannot easily be done. Indeed it was a senior Russian historian who said to me in despair, 'I don't think we shall ever know really how Stalin worked his office'.

WOODING

It isn't strictly a comment on the business of the Embassy, but it is a comment on the very early recognition of Gorbachev as an agent for change. We had his first visit here in December 1984, and one or two of us were involved in briefing Mrs Thatcher for that. Subsequently there was a large lunch given for him, I think at the Savoy, by the CBI* and present at that was Mr Harold Wilson in an important position on the top table. Halfway through lunch Mr Wilson, for reasons best known to himself, got up and tried to get out of the Savoy through the kitchens, which caused a certain amount of to-do and therefore a lot of people saw it happening. He eventually got out by another route and somebody from this office came across to where I was sitting and said, 'We can't have this gap on the top table, will you very kindly come and sit there'. He didn't say, 'And look intelligent', but … On my left was Komarov, whom I knew well, who was First Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations, and on my right was somebody whom I knew of but had never met, Zamyatin. Komarov had a copy of the speech Gorbachev was making and whenever Gorbachev evidently departed from his script he hastily got out a red pen. Halfway through the speech Mr Zamyatin on my right said, 'Be so kind as to pass the sugar, this is giving me bellyache'! It remains in my mind that it was evidence of a rather sharp change.

CBI, the Confederation of British Industry.

WRIGHT

I hope this isn't very impolite, perhaps I should strike it from the record, but given the number of times Mr Zamyatin gave most of us bellyache, maybe it is good that he suffered from it occasionally too!

PALLISER

One anecdote, which Donald Watt made me think of, and one sort of lesson learned in Moscow which has a general application. The

anecdote is that we were in Moscow with one of the Wilson visits on Gromyko's, I think is was 57th, birthday. We discovered this at some point and this produced a great enthusiasm on Harold Wilson's part to be nice to Gromyko and we all sang 'Happy birthday dear Andrei', which I think slightly startled our hosts. But it went down as well as that kind of thing can. After dinner of course we were divided into the usual sort of sheep and goats, or at least the top table sat around drinking coffee and liqueurs and then the rest of us were at different tables, and Denis Greenhill (the Permanent Under-Secretary at that time) and I were at the table presided over by Gromyko. So as it was his birthday we talked about that and I think Denis asked him if he was going to write his memoirs. He said, 'Well, an awful lot of Western publishers have suggested this to me, but I haven't yet decided'. And he paused, and then he said, 'Of course one of the problems is that when I look at the records of the meetings that I have had with people, I find they don't correspond at all to my recollection of them'. Now whether that was a serious comment or tongue-in-cheek, we never knew. Of course since then he has written some extremely dull memoirs, published in the West.

The general point, if I may, I think actually *is* of general interest. It was the last day of one of our visits and Kosygin was coming to lunch at the Embassy and we were going to conclude the communiqué after lunch. Kosygin made the mistake of telling Harold Wilson the day before that he would willingly come to lunch, but he would have to get away rather early because he had to go down to Kiev for a meeting of some kind. After lunch, around 2 o'clock, we were negotiating on this communiqué and there was one particular sentence, don't ask me what it was or indeed what it was about, I think probably it had something to do with Vietnam, but anyway there was one particular sentence to which Wilson attached great importance and which Kosygin did not want to accept. They argued the toss quite a bit, and I saw Kosygin looking at his watch. Wilson sort of whispered to me 'Do you think we ought to give way on this, we must have a communiqué', and I said 'No, he has got to leave in five minutes' and he wants a communiqué too: you stick to your guns'. I worded it slightly differently And of course we got our communiqué and Kosygin left in a hurry to go off to Kiev. The object lesson that I draw from that is: never negotiate under a deadline or a timetable, always leave yourself time so that the other guy maybe has to leave the negotiation first.

BRAITHWAITE On this question of the reliability of records and what gets into archives, I have another anecdote, from a Wilson visit in the summer of 1966 when Wilson had a *tête-à-tête* with Kosygin in one of the Official *dachas*. Sukhodrev, the man Brian mentioned, was Kosygin's interpreter and I was taken along as Wilson's interpreter. I told Sukhodrev that I was not an interpreter, and I asked him to do the interpretation in both directions, which he did. Wilson was

trying to persuade the Russians to put pressure on the North Vietnamese not to put on trial American pilots whom they had shot down. He put this question in various ways in the course of an hour and Kosygin made two answers. He asked, 'What were the American pilots doing over North Vietnam?' He said, 'If you think we can affect what the North Vietnamese will do, you are wrong, you exaggerate our influence'. So there were these two propositions. That went on for an hour. Kosygin would not let me take any notes and Wilson, when we got back to the Embassy, asked me to write up the conversation. I did so, knowing that my memory is fallible and knowing that Wilson's memory was supposed to be perfect. I showed him the draft record. He said, 'You have got it absolutely right, mark it – I think only secret, it may have been top secret – and give it to my Number 10 staff, don't let the Foreign Office have it'. He then went to talk to the press and he said, 'I just spent an hour with the Soviet Prime Minister, during which time we covered a wider range of subjects in greater depth than I suspect any other Western politician has ever done before!' I was still very innocent at that time and I was rather shocked. But I think it was a very salutary lesson. It does mean you should be careful about what you find in the archives, because it may or may not be a reflection of what happened.

WRIGHT A very good comment.

PALLISER Am I allowed an additional anecdote? It is actually not related to the Moscow Embassy, but it was after a return from a visit to Moscow, and Wilson did as he very often did, he got in a small group of American correspondents in London, very good ones. There was a good team of American correspondents here, there probably still is. There were about five of them. He told them in considerable detail things which probably he did not want the Foreign Office to know. At the end of it all I said, 'Well that's fine, that is going to make the American Embassy and one or two other Embassies very happy', and he looked at me in total amazement and said, 'But I haven't been talking to the Embassies'. I said, 'No, but they are going to talk to all those journalists, they will know you have seen them, and that is what Embassies do abroad'. I don't think he believed me, but of course it *is* what Embassies do.

ALEXANDER Could I address a question, which is a form of postscript, to Professor Watt – though not to be answered this evening? I was reminded, by Brian Fall's remarks about the Helsinki agreement and by what Michael said just a moment ago about not getting yourself in a position where you are under time pressure, of the final phases of the Helsinki negotiations in Geneva which I was involved in, where indeed the Russians got themselves into precisely that position and paid a rather heavy price. We had the impression in Geneva that, in the early summer of 1975, the Rus-

sians were seriously divided as to whether to sign the Helsinki Agreement or not, and that the decision went right to the top. I have heard Kondrachev, who was one of the leading Russians, say that there was a real disagreement in the Politburo and that Suslov, for instance, was opposed to signing. I know for a fact that Dubinin, my opposite number in Geneva, was opposed to signing.* It would be fascinating to know sometime whether there is any record of those debates for the summer of 1975.

Dubinin was subsequently Soviet Ambassador in Washington and New York, and Russian Ambassador in Kiev.

WATT

This would be the Soviet records. They certainly don't observe a thirty-year rule, and we had before tea Mr Keith Hamilton, a Foreign Office Historian, who edited the British documents on it. I don't know if he could tell us whether there has been any Soviet publication of this, but I am not aware of it. There is a considerable joint programme between an outfit in Washington called the Cold War Studies Group and their Russian equivalents, but I don't think as far as I remember they have got as far as this. They are still working over the Vietnam War and that sort of thing. They have done the Cuban Missile Crisis in enormous depth by now. They hold witness seminars very much like this one and there is a great deal of publication from both sides, but I don't think they have covered this.

WRIGHT

Now we have had very wise advice that you must never negotiate under time pressure, but we are now running a seminar under time pressure.

BRAITHWAITE

Just a point about the record of what was happening in the 1970s. There is now, although the documents may not be available, endless memoir literature written by people who were in the Central Committee Secretariat at the time and who took the record of those kind of meetings, and they spill the beans in a way we are not yet allowed to. Of course they tell a lot of lies, so the challenge for historians is to work out which are the lies and which is the truth. But on that particular issue I have a feeling I have read, I don't remember the details, an account of the row that went on.