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him around the various punishment pits. (If you're not particularly wicked, you get to choose which one you will spend eternity in.) And so you go past the pit of eternal flame, and the one with the thumbscrews and the racks. Fairly depressing tour, as these things go. Eventually our ex-naval person came to the pit of liquid manure, which was full of people standing up to their chins in the aforesaid liquid manure. But given the options, he said, "I'll take that one," and slid gently in so as not to cause waves and discomfort to the others. And he was just turning to his neighbour to say, "Do you get a break here from this?" when the demon cracked his whip and said, "Okay, stand easy is over. Sit down."

The moral being, things aren't always as good as they seem. So I am not issuing guarantees here. I am just observing a chain of events that I think gives cause for real optimism. I think — and I believe many people in Foreign Affairs think — that it is worth shaping policy on the assumption that these changes are probably real and they create an international context where pessimism and realism are no longer synonyms. And that's a pleasant change. Thank you very much.