

tant points with a downward movement of the arm from the elbow as if chopping some imaginary log. After several 'chops' with one arm he would usually change to the other one! Historic footage of Hitler speaking at his rallies shows someone highly skilled in using public distance. It is an irony of our public life that the people who can command attention and respect at public distance are not necessarily those who have a personality we might look for in colleagues or friends. They are often not burdened too much with doubt or uncertainty, which is particularly hard to communicate at long distance. For this reason I find that politicians tend to speak as if the world were much simpler than it ever can be. We go away from the great end-of-conference address by our political leader feeling charged up and optimistic. As real life kicks back in most of us begin to see its complexities and contradictions again, but we have already voted for the simplistic policies that can never succeed! Of course television has altered all this. The skill of speaking close up in an interview on television is much less one of using public distance and more one of near social distance with the interviewer. Alarming, when you have to do this, and then see the broadcast, you also realize too late that for the audience sitting at home you will be effectively even as close as personal distance. This has undoubtedly undone some politicians unable to adapt to the wide range of skills needed. The American president Richard Nixon was, for example, quite commanding at public distance, and yet somehow appeared insincere and untrustworthy at the personal distance of television close-up.

We find some people who really have never quite learned the rules of interpersonal distance. We probably all have a colleague or associate who is somehow just too familiar; the person who stands far too close when engaging you in conversation and seems insensitive to your backing away. I had a colleague who was notorious for this and on one occasion was astonished to find that I had backed all the way down a short corridor during our conversation, only to end up trapped against a doorway! (Fig. 5.13). By contrast, studies of patients with certain psychological disorders and of violent criminals all show larger than normal personal distance. In particular, studies in prisons have shown that inmates with a history of violent crime as compared with those whose crimes are entirely non-violent show personal distances of up to four times larger (Hildreth, Derogatis and McCusker 1971). This work suggests that such individuals feeling a greater insecurity as they are approached are also more likely to show aggression and to feel less empathy with their victims.

I once went to give a lecture at a conference at the huge International Conference Centre in Berlin. The Germans are generally more formal in their use of distance than the British, as we shall see later. I was given very specific instructions by post not to use the main