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JOHN COATES EDWARDS, CMG

interviewed by Malcolm McBain on 28 June 2007
at The Royal Overseas League, London

Education and entry to the Home Civil Service

MM: Shall we begin with your education, your time in the Forces and your eventual decision to join the Civil Service.

JE: I was born in 1934 in Tunbridge Wells, Kent and I was educated at Skinners' School. I went from there into the Army having already obtained a place at Brasenose College, Oxford. I spent two years in the Army. I was very fortunate in that I passed the War Office Selection Board and went to Mons Officer Cadets' Training Unit and was commissioned into the Royal Artillery. It was at the time when the Korean War was still going on and, in one of those fits of enthusiasm that strike young men, I actually volunteered for Korea. The Korean war ended and the Truce of Panmunjon was signed in July 1953, so I went to Hong Kong instead and spent two very happy years there. I returned and then went up to Oxford and, while I was at Oxford, I had to think about a possible career, so I decided to take the Civil Service exam, 'Method II' as it was called in those days, which involved general knowledge and interviews; if you were accepted on that basis, you had only to get a good second class degree – which I did, thank goodness.

I went initially into the Ministry of Supply which became the Ministry of Aviation shortly after I joined. I wasn't very happy there; it was very much financial control, research and development contracts, and I made some enquiries and discovered that they had cut back recruitment in the Colonial Office but, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, it was clear that, whilst the Colonial Office wasn't going to last for ever, they had cut back rather too quickly and they had a vacancy for an Assistant Principal, as I then was. I managed to get transferred to the

Colonial Office, where I was very happy. I enjoyed the work and the contact with the overseas world.

MM: What did you actually have to do?

East Africa Department of the Colonial Office

JE: When I joined, I was assigned as an assistant on the Kenya Desk in the East Africa Department. That was at a very exciting time because it was when Ian MacLeod had become Colonial Secretary following the 'Winds of Change' speech. We were working towards decolonisation. While I was there, I was involved with a number of constitutional conferences to try to discuss the way forward towards Kenyan independence.

Private Secretary to Parliamentary Under Secretary of State

From the East Africa Department, I became the Private Secretary to Hugh Fraser who was the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Colonies. His main interest was not actually East Africa but the Caribbean and I very fortunately had to travel with him to the Caribbean on a number of occasions.

MM: Was Hugh Fraser related to Harold Macmillan in any way?

JE: No, he wasn't related. His brother was Lord Lovat and he was married to Lady Antonia Fraser; that subsequently broke up and she married Harold Pinter. She was one of the most stunningly beautiful women I have ever met.

MM: She's the historian.

JE: She's the historian and wrote hundreds of well known books. She personally ran intellectual and social London.

MM: Hugh Fraser was very much in that category as well, wasn't he?

JE: He was a good old-fashioned Conservative from the Fraser family of which Lord Lovat was the head. He had a distinguished War and he was the sort of young man that Harold Macmillan loved and favoured. He went on from being Parliamentary Under Secretary at the Colonial Office to one of the Service Ministries. He was a good man to work for. It was in the days when Ministers had interesting cars; he had an old Humber, which he required me to drive from time to time. I'm not sure it was strictly speaking within my duties, but I was happy to drive this very large car around London.

MM: Was it an official car?

JE: No it wasn't; it was his car. I had to take it to the garage to be serviced once or twice. No, he wasn't entitled as a Parliamentary Under Secretary to a car at all. I think the only person who had a car was the Secretary of State.

MM: Life was a good deal simpler in those days. Did you have to work long hours?

JE: Not particularly, except during constitutional conferences because, even though he wasn't involved himself with East Africa, he joined the Secretary of State at various Lancaster House conferences that I went to, including the ones about Kenya and those sometimes went on till quite late in the evening. But he was a civilised man and he had a life outside politics and the office, and he liked to get away in the evening as much as I did.

MM: So it was an agreeable interlude and an insight into the way that the Conservative Government of the day operated.

JE: It was very much that. One also began to understand the House of Commons; if he was dealing with answering questions, as he did sometimes, on behalf of the Secretary of State, or was taking part winding up in a debate which the Secretary of State had opened, I sat in the official box and saw Parliament at work. It was interesting for a young Civil Servant to be a Private Secretary and was almost indispensable, because it made him aware of the other side of the 'university of life' that you see in the office. You tend to forget that the minister has to go and

be a different sort of man sometimes in the House of Commons or the House of Lords.

MM: Who was your Secretary of State?

JE: It was Ian MacLeod, then Reggie Maudling, and then Duncan Sandys. The Colonial and Commonwealth Offices were brought together and Sandys became Colonial and Commonwealth Secretary. They were very different people to work for. Ian MacLeod was of course exceptionally clever and a wonderful man to brief. If I could tell a story: we had to answer Parliamentary questions when I was in the East Africa Department. A Conservative Member had submitted a question asking the Secretary of State to give an undertaking that he would never release Jomo Kenyatta. Then somebody from the Labour Benches submitted a question asking the Secretary of State to give an undertaking that he would release Kenyatta. We put up Departmental briefs with replies to both questions. When it was time for MacLeod to reply he said, "With permission, Mr Speaker, I will answer both of these questions together: No, Sir " and sat down! They were both completely dumbfounded. That was the sort of man he was.

Reggie Maudling was of course very clever too. Duncan Sandys was a different kettle of fish; very slow, very laborious, very stubborn, very much a control freak. He wanted everything just so. When he moved to us in the Colonial Office, he brought with him a special supply of the only lime green blotting paper which he was prepared to use. As Secretary of State, he had to approve the designs of new Colonial postage stamps before they went to the Queen for her approval. It was expected that the Secretary of State would look at them and tick a box, but not Duncan Sandys; he would say, "Well I don't really quite like that. I think the Queen's head should be here," so they all got sent back to the Crown Agents to be redesigned, causing much extra work.

MM: What happened to Ian MacLeod?

JE: Well, he became Chancellor of the Exchequer and then went on to edit *The Spectator*. He died unexpectedly early and was a great loss to the Party.

MM: It was the fact of his sudden death which sticks in my mind. And Reginald Maudling was a different sort of character, but he too came to grief.

JE: He became associated with some rather dodgy people like Poulson and was tainted with some corrupt practices.

MM: That was when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer.

JE: Yes. He was again a wonderful man to work for; a very quick mind, solved things very quickly, good at dealing with people. And his contributions at conferences were different. I mean, take the Kenya ones with the extreme settlers, the New Kenya Party under Michael Blundell somewhere in the middle, and then the Nationalists on the other side. We had to get them sitting round the table talking to each other.

MM: What sort of purchase did the white settler community have on negotiations for Kenya independence?

JE: Well, they had quite a lot of influence within the Conservative Party and indeed the House of Lords because a number of peers had substantial land holdings in Kenya. So they were able to cause a good deal of embarrassment and difficulty for Ian MacLeod in the House of Commons by stimulating members who were not supportive of independence to ask embarrassing and difficult questions. But in the end, Michael Blundell, and the multi-racial New Kenya Party which he courageously founded managed to bridge the gulf between the extreme white settlers and the African nationalists, so he had a great deal to contribute to the process. When he came back from the Constitutional Conference some white settlers threw thirty pieces of silver at him, saying that he had betrayed them. In fact he helped to lay the foundation for a successful transition to independence, and he and MacLeod became quite close and helped each other very much.

MM: What were the implications arising from the fact that Kenya was two separate types of state? You had the actual Kenya Colony, which comprised the Highlands, and you had the coastal strip, which was a Protectorate.

JE: Yes, it produced legal complications; I don't think it actually produced any real political complications. It wasn't necessary to deal with the different status, as far as I recall, in the draft Constitution. There was a Protectorate separate from the Colony of Kenya, but politically it was absolutely essential and necessary, to have no distinction in the Independence Constitution or any different status for the Protectorate from the rest of Kenya.

Land Settlement programme after the Independence of Kenya

MM: Were any undertakings given at that time, as far as you can remember, in the direction of buying out the settlers?

JE: Yes. In fact the Land Transfer Programme and the funding of it was put in place before Independence. It was seen at the Constitutional Conferences as an essential prerequisite of Independence, not something that was just a useful add-on. Unless there was established a free market in land where those who wanted to leave could sell their land and get a reasonable price for it, there would be both tremendous security and social and economic problems because a driving motivation of the desire for Independence was the wish "to get back our land," particularly in the 'White Highlands' of the Central Province.

The Land Transfer Programme received money from the British Government but also from the World Bank at quite an early stage. And the need for foreign exchange was because the farmer would sell his land in Kenya for Kenya Shillings but he needed to be able to remit the proceeds overseas in the form of transferable foreign exchange so that he could go and resettle somewhere else: come back to England, go and resettle in New Zealand or South Africa or wherever. That was the essence of the Land Transfer Programme. It was based on the idea of there being a willing seller and a willing buyer. The Colonial Office set up a process of valuation where we funded valuers to go and value the

land. The farmer could also employ his own valuers and then there was arbitration so that an agreed price could be established. There was a fixed price for the farmhouses so that, if you had a magnificent farmhouse, you would have the same amount of money as if you had what was more normal in Kenya, a fairly simple, straightforward farmhouse; but the land itself was valued. These were mixed farms; the Land Transfer Programme only applied to what were described as mixed farms. Those were those that had a mixture of arable and pasture, and had I think a minimal rainfall of twenty five inches a year – I think that's right – so that it didn't apply to dry land ranches or to company-owned coffee or tea plantations. It was the typical European farm in the Highlands, a mixture of arable and pasture, which could be bought and made available for African settlement. There was a very good programme of agricultural extension; the farms were divided up into different-sized plots, some for peasant farmers and some for what we called yeoman farmers, so that you could settle African farmers on them who were then given proper advice on the crops to grow. Roads and the availability of water were improved. It created, in the Central Province of Kenya, some of the best farmland in the world.

MM: That's very good. What was the basis on which the native Kenyans, the black African Kenyans, were able to claim that it was their land?

JE: It wasn't so much they could claim that it was theirs. The typical arrangement, certainly in the White Highlands, was for the workers on the farm to be given small shambas on the farm as part of conditions of employment. So there were substantial African populations with their families already on European farms. I think the arrangement was that they would have first call on any settlement programme that took place on that land. And then other Kikuyu who were perhaps working elsewhere but had family connections could be included. There were some farms that were bought by individual wealthy African farmers; it wasn't only politicians but there were a number of farms that were bought by politicians. If they had the money, and they did so, then they usually farmed them very well because there was a tradition of good farming in the Kikuyu areas.

MM: What happened in the Masai areas?

JE: Well, they had a rather different arrangement. One of the things that accompanied the Land Purchase Programme in the Kikuyu village areas was a consolidation and registration programme so that everybody had a title to a piece of land. That worked within the arable farming areas. In the Masai areas where they grazed very extensively, they developed a system of what was called group ranches. Land was registered as a group ranch for a number of Masai clans, and they were then provided with a water point for their cattle and so on. The land wasn't owned by individual Masai but by clans.

MM: Did you form the impression that the Africans were content with the way this was worked out?

JE: Most were. When Kenyatta became President, there was an expectation on the part of some of the people who had fought with Mau Mau in the forests that they would be rewarded with land, and with senior positions in Government. Kenyatta made it quite clear that that wasn't what he was going to do. The old freedom fighters always felt slightly that they hadn't received their due from the independence settlement but it was a very wise and statesmanlike policy on the part of Kenyatta because it helped heal some of the wounds between the communities in Kenya.

MM: Within Kenya; not between Kenya and the UK?

JE: Well I think people like Dedan Kimathi who had been leading Mau Mau generals were dead anyway, but there were some members of Kenyatta's early administration – Paul Ngei was one of them – who had Mau Mau connections. They weren't excluded altogether but there was no sense that 'the freedom fighters have taken over.' Kenyatta was far too statesmanlike a political leader for that to happen. He made a wonderful speech when a large number of white farmers gathered in Nakuru, saying, "After Independence, you are welcome to stay." Indeed it was a very orderly transfer. When I was in Kenya in the 1970s, the Land Transfer Programme was still going on. There were still European farmers who had stayed on, taken Kenya citizenship and worked their farms. It

was one of the most imaginative processes of decolonisation that the British Government has undertaken. I think that now people realise how much better the history of Zimbabwe would have been if something similar had been put in place there.

MM: Thank you very much for that. I think we can now move on to your next appointment which was as a Principal in the Nature Conservancy. Was that a London job?

Principal in the Nature Conservancy 1962

JE: Yes, not only London but its headquarters were in Belgrave Square. It happened because I had got to the point where in 1962 I was due for promotion to Principal. It was quite clear that the Colonial Office hadn't a very long-term future, with the decolonisation process, and it was clearly going to be absorbed into another Ministry at some point. I had developed a very keen interest in the conservation of wild life as a hobby, and suddenly this job of Principal appeared in the Nature Conservancy. I volunteered for it, and was advised by people in the Colonial Office establishment that it was a very unwise move from a career point of view, but I said that nevertheless it was what I wanted to do. I was very fortunate in that I was able to negotiate a 'return ticket' so that, if I didn't want after a few years to stay in the Nature Conservancy, I could return to the Colonial Office or its successor Department.

Appointment to the Overseas Development Ministry in 1965

I had a very happy period in the Nature Conservancy but it was clearly not a long-term career prospect. It taught me an awful lot about my own country; in those days it covered Scotland and Wales as well as England. I was able to return, though, to the Overseas Development Ministry. The ODM had been created out of the old Department of Technical Co-operation by the Harold Wilson government after his election victory for the Labour party in October 1964. It had taken over not only technical assistance but financial and capital aid from the Foreign Office and the Commonwealth Relations Office as well. The fiery and

determined minister in charge, Barbara Castle, was a member of the Cabinet. It became a very exciting Ministry to belong to. A lot of academic economists came into the Ministry; the staff was recruited from hither and yon, and I was appointed to the South Asia Department in charge of the Indian Aid Programme. I visited India several times and it was a very exciting Department at a time when the concept of development aid, and indeed development economics, had really only just come to the attention of the political world.

MM: Did it not owe a very great deal to the Colonial Office? I thought that the Colonial Office itself contained a large number of experts and advisers and people of that sort, who simply transferred over to the Ministry of Overseas Development.

JE: A lot did, yes. Within the old Colonial Office we'd had the Colonial Development and Welfare Schemes, from which the Colonial Office provided money to Kenya, whether it be for schools or hospitals which couldn't be afforded within Kenya's own budget. And there were experts and advisers, including agricultural advisers, on those sorts of issues; they moved across to the Overseas Development Ministry; people came in from the Treasury; people came in from the Colonial Service. It was the time when a lot of people were leaving the Colonial Service because of independence and many of them joined the Overseas Development Ministry. So it had a much wider background of experience than most Home Civil Service Departments, which made it much more interesting.

First Secretary in the British Embassy, Bangkok and UK Permanent Representative to ECAFE, 1968

MM: Thank you for that. I think we can move on to 1968 when you went to the Embassy in Bangkok as a First Secretary and UK Permanent Representative to ECAFE.

JE: Yes, that's right. There was a very good arrangement under which the Foreign Office invited the Overseas Development Administration (formerly the ODM) to

put forward people for secondment to particular posts overseas which had a very strong developmental content. By that stage, I'd decided that I very much wanted to serve abroad, so I put my name forward. I think one of the other possibilities would have been Uganda, but in the end I went to Thailand on secondment to the Diplomatic Service to do both the aid job First Secretary Economic in the Embassy but also the regional job of Permanent Representative to the UN Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East, as it then was. I also sat on the Mekong Committee as the British Representative. The Committee was responsible for development in the Riparian States – Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and Thailand – and for the development of the Mekong River. That was an absolutely fascinating job.

MM: What did you do on the Mekong? I can't remember that.

JE: Well, there were various projects - dam projects, boat-building, transportation – to try and make the Mekong into both a highway and source of economic development. The Mekong Committee was an international organisation run by an American but with a strong input from the World Bank and the IDA, with contributions also from all the member governments. It met regularly to talk about particular projects and try and arrange funding for them. It discussed general issues of navigation and so on. This was a time when the Vietnam War was still in progress and Laos was a considerably disturbed place. Cambodia was relatively peaceful then. So it had a great part to play in the economic progress and development of Indo-China.

MM: Did you have any collaborative arrangements with SEATO (the South East Asia Treaty Organisation)?

JE: The Embassy did, and we had quite a staff of Military Attachés who dealt with SEATO as a regional military alliance, but from the economic side I had no dealings with SEATO.

MM: Now what about your job in relation to Thailand itself? What were you doing there?

JE: We had a very wide ranging programme. We were very much involved with the Asian Institute of Technology, which served a regional function providing senior staff. We were involved with a number of agricultural development programmes, particularly, at one stage, trying to find alternative crops to be grown in Northern Thailand to replace opium as a successful cash crop! But we never actually got very far with that.

One of the things I very much enjoyed doing was establishing a link between Wye Agricultural College and the University of Chiang Mai, which I don't believe still exists, but we got it going while I was there.

MM: So it was really quite a worthwhile job, that.

JE: Very. And it involved me with the country in a way that perhaps political jobs don't always do.

MM: You left there and returned once again to the Overseas Development Ministry.

Assistant Secretary in the ODM, 1971

JE: I came back to the Overseas Development Ministry on promotion to Assistant Secretary, and it was at the time when the Overseas Development – I can never remember if it was a Ministry at that stage, or an Administration; it kept changing its name. I came back and served as Assistant Secretary as Head of East Africa Department very briefly, but then the ODM had decided to establish development divisions – out-posted groups of advisers, agricultural, economic, engineering and so on - in a number of regional centres with a Head Administrator (an Assistant Secretary) to be the out-posted element of the Overseas Development Ministry in the field to enable better relationships to develop with the Embassies and High Commissions concerned, and also to be more in touch with local needs and development requirements, and to act in the process of identifying and appraising projects. And we possessed quite considerable delegated authority, as far as I recall. If the project was going to cost under £250,000, we could approve it

locally. We had to keep the ODM informed of what was going on, but it was a very imaginative decision on the part of the Whitehall Department to say, "OK; you can go out there and run things, and spend the money in the way that you think appropriate." I was assigned to cover East Africa, and we set up the East Africa Development Division in Nairobi covering Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Somalia, Mauritius and the Seychelles. Very shortly after the Development Division was established, Uganda in a sense went off net because of Idi Amin; Somalia was always difficult because of the political problems there. But we had programmes elsewhere and I spent quite a lot of time in Ethiopia, trying to get a programme going there. So again it was an absolutely wonderful job; you don't often get the chance in the Government Service to start something yourself, to go out and do a new job which hasn't been done before. I was very lucky and enjoyed it immensely.

MM: That was 1972?

JE: 1972 to the end of 1975.

MM: Did you include Madagascar in your work?

JE: No, sadly we didn't.

MM: What about further south? Did you go south at all?

JE: No, because there was another Development Division based in Malawi which covered Malawi and Zambia and the southern bit of the African continent.

Return to the Ministry of Overseas Development in 1976

MM: You returned once again to the ODM in 1976.

JE: That's right. I was posted to the Aid Co-ordination Department, which dealt with general questions of policy, but also with the major financial institutions as well: the World Bank, the IDA. That again was a very interesting job because it was

dealing with aid policy and, in the field, the implementation of development policy. It was also good being involved with the World Bank and the IDA.

MM: Does that mean that if, for example, you were going to spend a given amount of money in, say, East Africa, you would go and tell the World Bank and some of these other international organisations that that was what you were planning to do, and check that it coincided with their plans?

JE: Yes, generally speaking in most of the countries where I've served on the aid side, there was a very active donor group in the capital city, so that we would meet together regularly to make sure that we knew what each other was doing; we would have both group meetings and bilateral meetings. Certainly, when I was on the aid policy side in London, I very much encouraged that, and the World Bank also organised in some countries what they called consortia or groups, and they would meet once a year with all the donors concerned, either in Washington or in Paris or in other capital cities. The recipient governments would come along with requests for aid in the next five years, and this would be discussed around the table. Aid co-ordination between those donors was fairly good, certainly at the macro level between capitals, but also at the micro level between representatives in posts.

MM: Did you have any dealings with the European Community?

JE: Not at that stage, no; later on we did, but the European Development Fund programme developed fairly gradually. I can't even remember when it started; while I was in Nairobi, I think, but it wasn't until much later on that we co-ordinated more closely with the European donors.

Head of British Development Division in the Caribbean 1978

MM: So that was an interesting period and it led, in 1978, to your going as Head of DevDiv in the Caribbean.

JE: That's right. I very much wanted to serve abroad again and said that, if a post were to come up, I would like to have it. This post did come up and I'd had some contact with the Caribbean before when I was at the Colonial Office when I was Hugh Fraser's Private Secretary; I'd always wanted to go back. So I was pleased to be based in Barbados, covering the whole of the English-speaking Caribbean; those that were in receipt of aid. Jamaica, by that stage, was too prosperous to have any capital aid and nor did Barbados, so my time was spent a little bit in Guyana but mostly in the smaller islands, including Dominica, St Lucia, St Kitts, and Antigua. Those islands had an ambiguous constitutional status and were called Associated States. They had internal self-government but Britain remained responsible for defence and external affairs. While I was there, the process by which they became fully independent was moving forward, and some became independent like Dominica and St Lucia. And then we also dealt with the remaining Dependent Territories, as they were then called (now Overseas Territories) – British Virgin Islands, Anguilla, Turks and Caicos, Montserrat. For those, we had a much closer relationship because many of them were in receipt of budgetary aid – that is, we not only supported development projects but we actually contributed towards the costs of administration. That meant that I had to go up with my team of advisers and go through the Government's accounts each year and say that they could have so much budgetary aid; those encounters were quite stimulating. We got very much involved in every aspect of administration. We also tried to encourage development projects which would lead to income for the local Government, which would get them out of budgetary aid. Our aim, generally, was to get them out of budgetary aid. This was also an over-riding policy of Her Majesty's Treasury in London. So there was a lot of pressure to get out of budgetary aid. One of the things we developed was tourism. We funded the construction of an airport on Providenciales in the Turks and Caicos islands as an inducement for Club Med to build a holiday village there, which has proved a great success. An interesting aspect of development aid.

MM: So you presumably found that a pretty interesting job as well.

JE: Yes, I've been very fortunate in having very interesting jobs. I can't think of any of them that I could say I wished they would come to an end. It was partly

because I chose them or was given the opportunity to volunteer for them. My colleagues in the ODA were very much home-based Civil Servants and didn't want to serve abroad. I had got the taste for it, ever since I was in the army so I was very keen to serve abroad and opportunities came up fairly regularly.

MM: Do we need to say anything further about the Caribbean?

JE: I don't think so. It was a very flourishing Development Division, and still is, and it played a leading role – everybody knew who the Head of the British Development Division was, partly because my predecessor was a rather splendid man called Sir Bruce Greatbatch, who was very much a figure in the land. When Bruce Greatbatch came to small islands, it was announced in the newspaper, and I had a good deal of his reflected glory when I used to visit. It was a major occasion when I would take my team to somewhere like Turks and Caicos.

MM: Did you have a Diplomatic Service equivalent?

JE: Not at that stage because the High Commissioner in Barbados looked after the Associated States, but not of course Belize, which was part of my bailiwick, and the High Commissioner had no link with the Dependent Territories. So there was nobody based in the Caribbean from the FCO who covered the same water front as I did. There was subsequently; but it was a brief experiment and wasn't very successful. Somebody was posted to the island of Barbados to do that. We and the High Commission worked closely together so far as the British presence in Barbados was concerned. Our functions overlapped slightly, very little in the case of Barbados, but more so in the case of the Associated States.

MM: Is there any possibility, given this dual representation, that the giving of aid to these territories could be represented as not being a major part of the British Government effort? Did you convey to the territories that they were getting aid from Britain?

JE: Oh very much so! We had lots of little stickers, which emphasised that every piece of equipment was donated by the British Government. No, there was no

doubt about that. They had been in a colonial relationship with Britain for so long, and there were very few other donors active in the area. The EU had begun a programme; the Canadians had a bit of a programme and the international institutions did, but the bulk of the flow of aid came from Britain though the EU programme was building up. In the case of the Dependent Territories, the only major flow came from Britain.

MM: That's interesting. Anyway, in 1981 you came back to a Department of the Foreign Office.

Head of West Indian and Atlantic Department of the FCO,1981

JE: Yes, my tour came to an end and I had made it clear a little earlier on that, if the opportunity offered, I would like to transfer permanently to the Diplomatic Service. This was not easy to do because the only way one could do it normally was on a head-for-head exchange basis. It meant that somebody in the FCO of the equivalent rank, Counsellor, would have to want to transfer to the ODA. There wasn't any such person around at that time so what happened was that I became the Head of West Indian and Atlantic Department, which – rather unusually – was a joint FCO/ODA Department. It sat in the FCO and it reported to an FCO Under Secretary, but it also reported insofar as some of its aid functions were concerned to an Under Secretary in the ODA. It wasn't an entirely happy arrangement because the FCO quite rightly had its own strategy and way of doing business and the ODA had theirs. I managed to put together a case for it becoming wholly an FCO Department, and that case found favour for various complicated reasons, both personal on the part of some of the individuals concerned and because it made sense on grounds of policy. It made sense particularly because some of the Associated States, by that stage, either were becoming independent or had become independent. Strictly speaking, before that, when it was a joint department, when Associated States became independent, responsibility for dealing with them got transferred to another FCO Department, the Mexico and Caribbean Department, whereas we had dealt with the Dependent Territories and the Associated States. That was very inconvenient and the balance of work was not equitable. So it was decided that West Indian and

Atlantic Department should cover the independent countries of the Caribbean and the remaining Dependent Territories as a fully-fledged FCO Department; and that is what happened. Because I was Head of Department at the time, I was able to transfer to the Diplomatic Service because an extra post was created and the FCO didn't have to find somebody to transfer out to the ODA. Whilst I had a certain amount of a part to play, I was very fortunate to be there at that time.

So I moved across with the Department and we took over responsibility for all the English-speaking countries in the Caribbean and remained responsible for the Dependent Territories; but the aid function went to a department wholly in the ODA. So aid and political functions were split as they were for the rest of the world.

MM: What exact responsibilities did you have in West Indian and Atlantic Department?

JE: It was a mixture because it was an extension of Atlantic Department, so we covered Bermuda, St Helena and its dependencies, Tristan da Cunha as well as the Caribbean proper and the Bahamas. In particular, I was there during the Falklands War, which caused a great flutter of interest in the role of Ascension because it was used as part of the air bridge to the Falklands, and St Helena was supplied by a vessel, which we subsidised very heavily, the RMS St Helena which was run by a shipping company called Curnow Shipping, based in Cornwall. That was commandeered as a supply vessel for the Falklands War, so we had to find temporary arrangements for St Helena because otherwise St Helena, which hadn't an airport, would have been completely cut off. You couldn't send new people there or take old people back; you know. It was a very difficult situation; St Helena used to be where Union Castle boats used to stop but, once Union Castle ceased to operate, that arrangement ceased. That is why we had bought this vessel, commissioned it and handed it over to this company to run. It was very heavily subsidised and one of the problems I had was to try to reduce the subsidy.

So that took quite a lot of my time, dealing with that, and I actually went out to Ascension at one stage when a great row had developed between the senior RAF officer looking after the airfield there and the British Administrator on the island responsible to the Governor of St Helena. (The airfield had been built by the Americans during the War and was still being used by the Americans to monitor their long-range rockets.) Troubles grew between the Administrator and the Group Captain in charge of the airfield who thought he was in charge of the whole island. I had to go out. I actually had an away day on Ascension Island; I went in an RAF VC10 because they flew VC10s to Ascension and then Hercules took over. The Group Captain had to be reminded that the Administrator was the Queen's Representative and he wasn't. It didn't help that he had been in command of the Queen's Flight – I can't remember his name. It worked out all right in the end; these things happen in small islands.

In the case of the rest of my responsibilities, there was progress towards independence in the remaining Associated States; the last one was St Kitts. That involved constitutional conferences, and it was like going back to my days in the Colonial Office in the 1960s. It was rather interesting, settling independence constitutions; all the same problems arose – well, not quite the same but some of the same. And then there was the whole future of the Dependent Territories which were clearly not going to be able to sustain independence.

MM: Presumably there was no land to be transferred.

JE: No, there were no expatriate owned estates. It was just a matter of an aid settlement; that was always the great figure which was bandied about during the constitutional conference. This was how much aid they would be getting from Her Majesty's Treasury. There was always a great battle between the Treasury who wanted to make it as small as possible while we wanted to make it as generous as possible. So a compromise was usually agreed, usually somewhat nearer the Treasury's point of view than ours.

MM: I suppose inevitably.

JE: And then there was the whole question of the future of the Dependent Territories, and we were also responsible – and I think this is worth mentioning – for dealing with the Governors of the Dependent Territories, and this was an unusual function for a Foreign Office Department which was used to dealing with High Commissioners and Ambassadors. I had to explain to some of my seniors in the Office that the Governor was not a sort of High Commissioner. He was a very different animal indeed. He was actually the Governor and he could be sent instructions by the Secretary of State but I couldn't tell him to do things as one can tell Ambassadors what they should go and do and say. And of course they were the Government of their territory. They weren't the representative of the UK to the Government, they were the Government.

MM: When you say the Secretary of State could send instructions, would that be through some formal instrument?

JE: Yes, there was a procedure, and complex procedure, and we were very fortunate in that we had attached to us a former Colonial Governor to give us advice about what a Governor's powers were, how things looked from a Governor's position rather than from a High Commission or Embassy point of view. Our former Governor was immensely valuable. We were also consulted about the process of selecting governors. One of the problems that the Foreign Office inherited as the old core of Colonial Service people began to dry up, was how to find governors from people within the Diplomatic Service. Fortunately some of those had had previous Colonial Service experience. During the process of decolonisation, they had been recruited by the Diplomatic Service and therefore had the background and they were sometimes very happy to go back into the Colonial world. But it did become quite a problem as the supply dried up, and the former Colonial Service people who had transferred to the Diplomatic Service began to reach retirement age. I know from talking to people more recently that it has remained difficult to find somebody prepared to go out and be a Governor. It is a lonely job. In the old days, each territory had at least two or three expatriate officers – the Attorney General, the Financial Secretary, the Director of Public Works etc. Now the Governor is usually the only expatriate there. Probably you may not even have a Financial Secretary. In some cases, when we had a crisis like the

Grenada Crisis, the invasion of Grenada by our American friends, I had to send instructions to the Governor of Montserrat in secret and there was nobody else for him to consult. He was on his own. Only he could decode the telegrams.

But we did solve the problem in one case. We had to send a very urgent message by telephone to the Governor of Montserrat, who was an ex-Colonial Service officer who had served in Kenya. My Adviser on Colonial Service matters was also an ex Kenya hand, so they spoke to each other in Swahili on the grounds that the Russians would not be able to understand it.

MM: One of the things that I recollect a governor had to do – and this applied in Caribbean Territories – was to confirm death sentences that had been passed by the courts in that territory but had to be confirmed by the governor before they could be carried out. At the same time, the death penalty had been abolished in Britain itself, so it put some governors in rather a tricky position.

JE: Yes, one particular Governor of the British Virgin Islands, Jim Davidson, was required to confirm the sentence of death because, not only had the man undoubtedly committed the crime, but he wasn't a British Virgin Islander; he was an 'out islander', so he was seen to be doubly guilty. There was very strong local feeling about it. Jim had trained as a barrister and had very strong views about it. But, in the end, he had to do it; he had more or less to be instructed to do it. He hadn't a proper Mercy Committee at the time and what we did try to do was, first of all to persuade the governments concerned to change the law, and also to have a proper Mercy Committee so that extenuating circumstances would be looked at by the Mercy Committee, who would then advise the Governor. Although he was still responsible, the sole responsibility would not then have been with the Governor. He could have a group of people he could listen to and consult. But it was difficult and I felt sorry for Jim, but he knew when he accepted the post that that would be one of his jobs. The death penalty existed, and he as Governor was required to confirm sentences, so it should not have come as a surprise to him.

That was the only case that happened in my time. And then there was the whole question of reference to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. There was

an Eastern Caribbean Court of Appeal, so there were quite elaborate legal processes by which appeals were taken from local courts to the Eastern Caribbean Court of Appeal and then, if necessary, eventually to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.

Deputy High Commissioner, Nairobi, Kenya, 1986

MM: So when that appointment came to an end you went back to Nairobi.

JE: Yes. While I was there, I had joined the Diplomatic Service properly and formally, and then I applied for postings in the way that one does. The number two post in Nairobi came up and I applied for it, and I was very fortunate to get it. The High Commissioner was Len Allinson who had been the Deputy High Commissioner when I was there as Head of the Development Division, so we knew each other. It was a great delight to be going back. As Deputy High Commissioner, I dealt with the economic side of things. I was involved with economic and commercial affairs as well as giving general support to the High Commissioner. I was able to revisit projects that I had started in the 1970s, so I was very lucky.

MM: What sort of problems were arising politically at that stage?

JE: Well, politically the succession to Kenyatta had taken place remarkably smoothly. Daniel Arap Moi had become President. There were two difficulties: (i) he was favouring his own tribe in a kind of general way at the expense of the Kikuyu, who had obviously prospered under the presidency of Kenyatta. This was causing tensions, partly because a number of the people he had promoted to senior positions were frankly incompetent as compared with the Kikuyu. (ii) The other problem was the growth of corruption at the time. That is not to say that the Kenyatta regime was free of corruption. In the Kenyatta period corruption was at the top of the administration and there was a particular Minister, Kiano, who was known as Mr Ten Percent while he was in charge of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. And the other culprit was Madame Ngina of the Kenyatta family. But it hadn't spread down through the system. I remember when I arrived in

Kenya the first time from Bangkok. In Bangkok if you had to do something practical like getting something out of the Thai Customs or from the police, you sent Mr Fixit from the Embassy who knew exactly how much money was to be paid in order to induce a swift result. When I arrived in Kenya, in the 1970s, I would be told for example that my consignment of goods had just arrived at the airport. I asked how long would it take to get the goods. And the reply was just go to the airport with your passport and pick it up. And I could! You just went out with your passport and got it! That was how Kenya was in the 1970s. By the time I went back in the 1980s corruption had spread down through the system. Every weekend, the police would find any excuse to hold people up because the police wanted a bit of money for the weekend. The only way to get away easily was to give them a few shillings. That was an interesting way in which corruption had spread throughout the system and become rather like the 1960s in the Far East.

There were a whole host of economic difficulties and problems. There was the problem of HIV/AIDS, which wasn't fully recognised by the Kenya Government at the time, and the usual problems of a rising population with rising expectations and the difficulty of raising sufficient taxation to meet those requirements. We had constant discussions, among the international community as a whole with the Kenyan Government, about proper budgetary control, proper budgetary management, getting rid of corruption, having properly thought through development aid programmes, and not merely locating projects in a particular place because the Minister concerned happened to be the constituency MP and that was his district. So there was that dialogue which was constant. But Kenya still prospered. At the base of the Kenyan economy there was this wonderful farming sector which had been created by the land settlement programme. Those wonderful Kikuyu farmers in Central Province produced very good coffee. Tea was very well organised by the Kenya Tea Development Authority. The KTDA ran the factories and supplied the farmers with tea plants. The farmers picked the leaves every morning and they were collected by the factory. There was a base of a solid Kikuyu agricultural middle class, a yeomanry if you like, which was a tremendous bedrock of stability, and very enterprising. If there was an economic opportunity, they would seize it.

There had been problems for the Asian community although they had not suffered in the way that the Uganda Asians had suffered. There was pressure for Asian shopkeepers to be replaced by African shopkeepers for example, but it was done in Kenya, not always thoughtfully, but not as it was done in Uganda or of course more recently in Zimbabwe. There was always a realisation of the economic and social costs of destroying a productive part of the economy. There was never in Kenya significant pressure on white farmers once the land transfer scheme had come into operation. There was never any forcible take-over of white owned farms. There is still a substantial white farming community in Kenya. Many of them have had to take out Kenyan citizenship. If a British citizen hopes to farm and to leave the farm for his son to inherit, the son has to take out Kenyan citizenship. So a lot of white farmers are now Kenya citizens.

MM: Can they also retain their UK citizenship?

JE: The Kenyans won't actually let them do that. We, the British, as you know, don't mind if people have multiple citizenship; we don't ask people to give up their citizenship, but the Kenyans do. I can remember we had a bible in the Consular section of the High Commission so that people could foreswear their allegiance to the Queen. That was quite a formal ceremony and we had to certify that they had foresworn UK citizenship before the Kenyan citizenship application could be properly processed. Those who did not have Kenyan citizenship had to have work permits, which were usually required by British companies who needed people with special skills. This wasn't easy because there was tremendous pressure for all jobs to be Africanised or at least localised. That was a dialogue we had constantly with the Kenyan Government. And also, at the time, another big problem was foreign remittances because the Kenya government was desperately short of foreign exchange. British companies made profits and wanted to remit them to their shareholders back in the UK. Sometimes dividends were frozen and then released gradually so that one of our jobs at the High commission was to constantly engage in dialogue with the Finance Ministry telling them, "You won't get any new foreign investment, unless you make dividends freely remittable." That went on until the great liberalisation of the

Kenya economy, which happened after I left, when exchange control regulations were almost entirely removed. When I was there, the regulations were very tight and if you left the airport with your last Kenyan shillings in your possession anything in excess of 120 shillings in your pocket had to be surrendered to the airport officials. You did not ask what happened to the money after that.

MM: It was an admirable country in many ways. I was going to ask you about family planning. I know that, in the early days of independence, Kenyatta refused to countenance the arrival of anyone from the International Planned Parenthood Federation.

JE: Well the feeling then was that the more people in the Kikuyu tribe, the better. And so nobody wanted his own tribe to reduce its birth rate, and that certainly persisted in Kenya in the 1970s. It had one of the highest rates of population increase in Africa. By the time I got back, the fear of AIDS was making Kenya think again about the use of contraception not to prevent births but to prevent infection. The rate of population increase had gone down, partly as a result of relative prosperity, and the need to educate your children. Of course at that time you had to pay to educate your children. Education was always seen as a great good in Kenya. People built their own schools and the Government provided a few teachers, but the school fees were a big consideration. Our servants would come along to us and say, the school fees are due – and ask for an advance of pay. There was a great hunger for education. So that helped to slow population increase a bit. Also, in some areas of Kenya, family plots were getting divided into quarter acres and that sort of thing. So there was a realisation that there was a downside to having a large family.

And of course health care improved; if you wanted to have six children, you didn't have to have twelve. That began to have its impact. It wasn't particularly evident when I was there but became more significant after I'd moved down South. But again, Kenyans are reasonably pragmatic about these things. It is one of their great qualities I think, as a people.

MM: So you don't feel that population increase was out of control.

JE: It had been in the 1970s I think. There was a serious fear that the population had completely out run economic resources and jobs and all the rest of it. But I think that, by the time I was back there in the 1980s, it was seen to be manageable.

MM: At the time of Independence, the population, as I recall it – I might be wrong about this – was something like 7,000,000, and the latest figure in 2007, according to the latest Whitaker's, is 34,000,000.

JE: Yes, my feeling is that it had got to about 12,000,000 by the time I was there the first time and 25,000,000 is the figure I have in mind when I returned in the 1980s, but I haven't prepared myself by looking these things up. But certainly it had massively increased. One noticed it, particularly on the streets of Nairobi; the place just filled up. The second time I was there you were terribly conscious of the enormous number of people.

MM: How about crime?

JE: Yes, well that has become a real problem. When I was first in Nairobi, you could drive down to Nairobi in the evening to the cinema, go to have dinner afterwards, leave your car and walk around the centre of the city without fear of being mugged or of your car being stolen or car-jacked. By the time the 1980s came, that was becoming a problem. And by the time I went back in the 1990s as a visitor, expatriates didn't go into the middle of Nairobi unless they had to. Out-of-town shopping centres like Westlands were where expatriates went to restaurants and cinemas, and to do their shopping. There was even one enterprising woman in Muthaiga who set up a business the slogan of which was we will run your errands in Nairobi for you. If you had bills to pay or things to do, she would send one of her drivers down to do it for you. Carjacking really did become a problem. Somebody from the High Commission was actually shot, because somebody wanted to steal his Land Rover Discovery. All drivers of 4x4s were particularly vulnerable to carjacking.

MM: So that was Kenya.

JE: Yes, I think so. I am still doing voluntary work for Kenya; I am Chairman of the Kenya Society in this country. I must remember it's called 'Kenya' now *(pron Ken, not Keen).*

MM: What do you mean 'now'! It was called Kenya in 1963!

JE: Well it was, but those people who lived there still remember the then Governor in the 1920s who decreed that it be called '*Keenya*'! So most of the older generation call it that, and I sometimes forget that it's Kenya, possibly to rhyme with Kenyatta. I still keep in touch with what's going on there, and I'm still impressed with the transition. There have been problems, but Mwai Kibaki has been quite genuine about tackling corruption. It hasn't been entirely successful; it's a coalition Government after all, and a number of people who joined it were the 'outs' before and are now the 'ins', and don't see why if the previous lot still have their noses in the trough why shouldn't we! Some of the people in the Government were themselves not uninvolved with corruption in the past, so it isn't an easy job, but I think it's getting better.

MM: Have you anything to say about the recent case when the High Commissioner said that 'the elite were being sick on their shoes'?

JE: Yes, he did say that. I think he thought it was probably time that someone spoke out about it because it was at a time when corruption wasn't being as effectively tackled as it is now, but he said it and caused a great furore there, and here actually, but I've talked with him many times since, and he subsequently talked to Kenyans about it and I gather all is well. There was good reason for what he said, although it was expressed in a rather dramatic way.

British High Commissioner, Lesotho 1988-89

MM: Shall we move on to Lesotho?

JE: Yes, I'd finished my time in East Africa. If I was going to have my own post, it was time to move on. Lesotho became available and I was pleased to go there. It was interesting politically as it is totally surrounded by South Africa. It was very much dependent upon South Africa, but at the same time politically independent and trying to be an African country opposed to apartheid South Africa. There was a very delicate balance between Britain and Lesotho and the South African Government, and the previous Government under Jonathan had not got the balance quite right. The South Africans were quite pleased to see him go. He was replaced by a Military Council, so called, of people from the Lesotho Defence Force; but King Moshoeshoe remained throughout this period. He was a moderating influence on the Military Council, which actually ran the country reasonably effectively. But there had been times when the South Africans had thought it necessary to come into Lesotho to deal with ANC activists. The ANC had gone there to get away from South Africa. While I was there, the relationship with South Africa was actually pretty good and there was no problem about border crossing or anything like that, though at that stage they were wholly dependent on South Africa for power and, although Lesotho had its own airport, all major imports came by road through South Africa. It worked because the Military Council managed its relationship quite well.

And while I was there, they started a very important project called the Lesotho Highlands Water Scheme, which I was much involved in, which was to divert the Malibamatso River in Lesotho which flows into the Orange River, which then goes into the sea through Namibia. The idea was that they needed the water in South Africa in the Vaal Triangle. It was technically possible to pump the water from the Orange River to the Vaal River within South Africa, but hugely expensive in terms of the cost of pumping and the rest of it. So the idea was developed to make a big dam on the Malibamatso in Lesotho and then a tunnel had to be bored to transport the water which would have flowed into the Orange River into the Vaal River, and that was the essence of the Lesotho Highlands Water Scheme. It was a tremendous scheme, still going on because it had lots of different phases. There was a very good deal negotiated with South Africa whereby a handsome royalty was paid by the South Africans for the water. That was negotiated before the project was completed obviously. At the same time,

Lesotho got its own hydro electric power station. Turbines generating all the electricity that Lesotho needed and a bit over, were built in the tunnel which was delivering the water to South Africa, so Lesotho was able to export electricity to South Africa, and this gave them a degree of economic independence that they hadn't had before. It is a very successful project involving British and French companies. Sadly there were some problems with people in the Lesotho Government who were accepting payments from French companies for ensuring that they got the contract and so on. Leaving that aside, it has been a very successful project. I was talking to a friend, an engineer, who has been there quite recently, and he said it has created a wonderful inland water because the dam is not just a big round dam; it has filled a huge valley and what has been created is a sort of loch, and quite high. Lesotho is actually the highest country in the world in the sense that its lowest point is higher than that of any other country. Nepal is of course the highest country but bits of Nepal go right down into the steamy jungle where it meets the border with India. But Lesotho at its lowest point is about 1,250 metres above sea level, and the highest point is about 3,500 metres. It is called the Mountain Kingdom, and they are very proud of that; they have deep frosts in the winter in the capital and in the mountains they have snow. There was a ski club in Johannesburg that used to come to Lesotho to ski.

MM: Did you have very much to do there, diplomatically?

JE: We had quite a substantial aid programme. There was the whole question of Lesotho's relationship with South Africa and, as it were, being understanding about that but possibly giving them the occasional nudge or bit of advice. There was the relationship with the King. I had regular discussions with the King. He had been a Constitutional Monarch, but the Military Council wanted to give him more power, and some of the Military Council were his kinsmen. He claimed to be a socialist. He had been up at Oxford at more or less the same time as me and we got on all right. But he was very much a Gucci Socialist, or a *Gauche Caviare* as they say in France. But he fell out at one stage with the Military Council and it all got very difficult. He went to England and stayed there so that involved us. In the end, between the FCO and the Lesotho Government, we managed to decide that he was deemed to have abdicated because he hadn't come

back, and his son, who is now the King, David Letsie, became King with his father as a sort of King over the water. That was the sort of thing that produces quite a lot of political complications – what was his status in this country and so on. But it all worked out in the end, and Lesotho moved towards elections and sorted themselves out. It was a strange country because it depended almost entirely on South Africa - well over half of its national income was derived from mineworkers' earnings in South Africa. So it is an odd country since as a result its Gross Domestic Income is half its Gross National Income. Under the new South Africa, those mineworkers earnings became increasingly under threat; the new South African Government wanted jobs for their own people, not for these Lesotho workers who were big strong chaps who liked going down goldmines. They were favoured by the South African Miners' Association and they had a recruitment office in Lesotho. It wasn't a very healthy situation because the so many men were off in the goldmines. In up-country Lesotho when you went into a village there were children, old men and women, but men of working age were hardly to be seen, except when they were on leave. When they came back they used to bring cattle with them bought with their earnings in South Africa. Cattle were seen in some African countries as a store of wealth.

But again it was a delightful country, topographically, scenically and, in its own way, culturally. While I was there, we had a very exciting event. The Pope visited and a bus was hijacked. The Pope was due to arrive and he had not wanted to get involved with South Africa at all, for obvious reasons at the time, so he wanted to fly direct to Lesotho. We were concerned by the impact of the influx of Catholic Pilgrims from South Africa coming to see the Pope. We had quite a big Compound where the High Commission offices were, and we increased our one Lesotho guard to two Lesotho guards. And to cut a long story short, just before the Pope was due to arrive, a bus containing pilgrims, was intercepted by the Lesotho Liberation Army, a group of people opposed to the Military Council and the military wing of the opposition. They hijacked the bus and they came to rest outside my offices. Fortunately the guard had locked the gate and told the hijackers that they could not come in. I informed the Lesotho authorities immediately and required them to provide appropriate protection for the High Commission, which they did; the Lesotho Defence Force came and

surrounded the bus. Then the hijackers sent out a message saying that they wished to discuss the whole political situation in Lesotho with the King, the Pope and the British High Commissioner. This request was not acceded to. And then the Pope was delayed because of bad weather and couldn't fly into Lesotho because it the airport was pretty small. So his plane landed in Johannesburg and Pik Botha, the South African Minister, took him over and brought him to the border with Lesotho in a great motor cavalcade. For some reason, just before this happened, the Military Council had asked for Special Forces from South Africa to supplement their own skills, and they surrounded the bus by our Compound and, as the Pope arrived, the hijackers decided they were going to crash the gates; and they also exploded two grenades in the bus, and then leapt out, whereupon two of them were killed by the South Africans – well, we think it was by the South Africans. They were killed – with good reason at the time. One was arrested. Meanwhile the Pope had arrived safely and next morning I was due to go out with colleagues to meet the Pope. I heard about all this and discovered that the one hijacker who had been arrested had been shot through the back of the head during the night while trying to escape. That was quite exciting, except for the poor people who were killed. It was one of the few occasions when Lesotho made the front pages of the world's press. I had people ringing me up from all over the world asking if I was all right.

We never discovered quite what the hijackers had intended or why they had done it. The people concerned had been eliminated, so there was no embarrassing evidence coming out. The Lesotho Government just didn't want evidence of the intentions and purpose of the hijacking to come out. The Pope's visit went very smoothly and overshadowed the hijacking event very quickly in people's minds. Soon most people had forgotten it had happened.

Then the next morning the Lesotho Government asked to be given a day to clear up. When I eventually regained possession of my High Commission offices, I found lots of bullet holes, and various bits of debris lying around. As I was poking around, I found a large piece of somebody's skull sitting in one of the flowerbeds. I kept the various bits of spent ammunition I found either inside or outside. While the clearing-up operation was in progress I had no means of communicating with London except by telephone. I couldn't get the

communication facilities working for about forty-eight hours. It was at a time when the Secretary of State was overseas, and I had to use the telephone to let him know what was going on.

MM: OK. So I reckon that deals with Lesotho. What about your next post, which was Botswana? Did you go direct from Lesotho to Botswana?

High Commissioner to Botswana, 1991-94

JE: Yes. I came home and flew back out again, but it was very convenient. I left my dog in Lesotho and was then able to go and fetch him and drive him across to Botswana. I knew it was going to be quite a quick transition because the President of Botswana was about to make an official government visit to the UK (next step down from a State Visit). So I got there and presented my credentials, and almost immediately came back again! But it was wonderful to be with the President so early in one's time. I got to know his people very well, and we had a marvellous programme in England and in Scotland.

MM: You accompanied him throughout?

JE: I accompanied him throughout. We went to Scotland because David Livingstone, the missionary explorer was Scottish. Livingstone first of all went to Botswana or Bechuanaland as it then was. Almost his only converts were made there and that is where he established his Mission. I finished my career in Botswana and it was very a pleasing African country to be in, and to finish in, because it was democratic; it had proper free and fair elections. It was incorrupt. I mean relatively incorrupt in a continent where corruption causes endless problems. No country is likely ever to be totally without corruption, but there was no established practice of corruption in Botswana.

MM: Like this country then?

JE: Well as this country is now. Actually, later on Botswana did develop a bit of a problem and immediately the President came to me and asked for help. And we got an anti-corruption expert from the Metropolitan Police who had been working in Hong Kong. They asked before it became a major issue. And Botswana was a prosperous country. It had started life poor, one of the poorest countries in Africa

at the time of independence. Its only resource at that time was cattle. Then de Beers found diamonds, and we helped the then Government agree a very reasonable sharing arrangement with de Beers. They set up a joint company called Debswana and there was a very fair distribution of the benefits of the diamond trade, as a consequence of which, when I was there, Botswana had foreign exchange reserves larger than South Africa's. They were very high per capita because of the small population. Both Lesotho and Botswana are countries with small populations. But while Lesotho is the size of Belgium, Botswana is the size of France, and most of it is the Kalahari Desert, so the population is on the fringes. They're very decent people and a very decent government

The major problem that developed while I was there was AIDS. They have a very high incidence of AIDS. They were one of the first African countries to recognise, accept and admit this, so they had an AIDS programme in place before other African countries, and of course they could afford anti-retroviral drugs. They had already established a health system out of the taxes raised from the diamond business, which also financed education and infrastructure. OK, they bought a few toys for the Defence Force, but on the whole they spent their money wisely. Having grown up with habits of thrift when they were poor, and, unlike other countries in Africa, they had not had a very dense form of colonial administration. We had always used the indirect principle of ruling through the chiefs rather than establishing a densely structured administration as we did in Kenya where as you know there had been the Emergency in the 1950s. In Kenya there had been a structure of Provincial Commissioners, District Commissioners, and District Officers everywhere. There were very few such officials in Botswana. In the early days a lot of them had come from South Africa, so there were some slight problems arising from racial attitudes. But once Independence had been declared, they maintained a sensible but robust relationship with South Africa. They developed a Defence Force partly to make sure that the South African Defence Force didn't come across the border searching for ANC activists. They maintained a sensible relationship with South Africa at the time that the great change in South Africa was taking place. Before I left, I had a South African colleague, an Ambassador, and it was a marvellous time to be in Southern Africa, to watch the transition. Because we had South African

television, one could see the marvellous process of voting live on South African television. So it was a very good place to finish.

MM: Does it attract settlers?

JE: There is a group of people of mostly South African origin just across the border from South Africa along the Limpopo, and there's another bunch in the middle of the Kalahari, but they were never significant politically or socially. South Africans were involved in technical jobs in the diamond mines. There was also a copper mine which was pottering along, but the price of copper wasn't very high so it wasn't very profitable. There was a good deal of South African investment; and South African supermarkets in Gaborone with South African wines on sale. They had always had a sensible relationship with South Africa but they maintained their political and economic independence; they benefited greatly from South Africa with the jobs that were created.

MM: So it was a great place to go.

JE: Yes it was. Most people know about Botswana because of the books by Alexander McCall-Smith about *The Number One Ladies Detective Agency*. Those books do actually convey the flavour and feeling of Botswana remarkably well. I read them, and I can hear the sounds of the doves and the smell of the dust, and the way people speak in an almost formal way.

MM: They're lovely books.

JE: Alexander McCall-Smith spent some time in Botswana setting up the Law Faculty in the University there. He's a delightful man. Although he spends most of his time in Edinburgh at the Law Faculty there, he has put Botswana on the map. People used to say, where's Botswana? Now people know. And again, people say all Africa is corrupt, a basket case. And I say, no, there is one country that is neither corrupt nor a basket case: Botswana. Good news isn't news so Botswana gets very little publicity. There was a bit of a fuss recently stimulated by environmentalists in South Africa about the treatment of the Bushmen, more properly called the San, in the Kalahari. The San did not want to take advantage of the same benefits of government as the rest of the population – schools, hospitals, that sort of thing. They are stone-age people, hunter-gatherers, and the

Central Kalahari Reserve was established as a game reserve for animals. It was perfectly all right for the San to go hunting with their bows and arrows but to hunt with Kalashnikovs was having a considerable effect on the animal population so there was a desire to move them out, and there were various organisations in South Africa which took this up, misrepresenting Botswana Government policy. Undoubtedly the majority of people in Botswana regarded the San as pursuing a very odd form of life, rather like the Lapps in Scandinavia or the Aboriginals in Australia. And they were different; different language, different culture, different in physical appearance. On the whole, though, the Botswana government dealt with them fairly, I think. Mistakes were made but Botswana policy towards the San has been misrepresented.

MM: So it was a splendid end to your diplomatic service career, except that you went of to an important job with the EC Monitoring Mission in Yugoslavia.

JE: Yes. I retired as we all have to but I managed to stay until the night before my sixtieth birthday. I left just before midnight on 24 November. You have to be out of post when you reach sixty because then your pension starts and they can't pay you for service in addition to a pension.

Head of UK Delegation, EC Monitoring Mission in former Yugoslavia 1995-99

I came back and had got to know Julian Metcalf who had been dealing with Southern Africa in the Foreign Office and then crossed to the Eastern Adriatic Unit, which looked after the EC Monitoring Mission in former Yugoslavia. Julian Metcalfe was responsible for the former Yugoslavia at a time when, before the Dayton Agreement, there was still a shooting war going on in Bosnia and to some extent in Croatia. The European Community had set up the European Community Monitoring Mission (ECMM) in former Yugoslavia sometime early on in 1991/92 – I can't remember the precise date – at the time when Yugoslavia broke up and the European Community wished to recognise the new states, Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia, but particularly Croatia and Slovenia. These states had emerged from Yugoslavia. It was thought appropriate that the EC should play the role that normally the UN would have played, and they needed a monitoring team there to make sure first of all that the ceasefire was being

observed when the Yugoslav National Army withdrew from Slovenia. And then the Mission gradually grew to provide political reporting to Brussels and to the capitals of member states. The reports covered security reporting and breaches of the agreement. A few non-EC member states were included in the early stages – Canada for example, and Finland and Norway. And then it developed into a reporting and monitoring structure throughout the whole of former Yugoslavia and included also Albania. The Mission's headquarters were in Zagreb at that stage because Sarajevo was under siege. It was organised in an odd way. It was nothing to do with the Commission in Brussels but was connected to the Council of Ministers. So it had a Head of Mission who was supplied by the Presidency at the time, and that position rotated every six months so that each country took a turn. And then each delegation had a Head of Delegation to look after their Monitors and represent their country within the ECMM. Each Member State provided monitors some coming, as in the case of the Belgians and the French, mostly from the ranks of their serving soldiers. The Foreign Office recruited people to be our Monitors; a lot of them were ex-Army because it was the time of 'Options for Change' and a lot of officers were looking for new jobs. It was decided by the FCO that the Head of Delegation should be a retired Head of Mission. The problem was that, since it was a FCO job, if you took it, you could earn only that amount of money that was no greater than half your pension, or your pension would be abated. Because it was slightly advantageous, we were paid on a daily fee basis and, in fact, in four months I earned as much money as I was earning in six months before I retired. We were all in the same position, and I suggested to a couple of colleagues that we do it for four months each, then we could all do the job without having our pensions abated. Julian Metcalf accepted this as a sound plan, so we did it in rotation. I did four months in Yugoslavia each year for five years. It actually worked very well because, when each of us came back each year, we were filled in with what had been going on and, okay, you had a bit of catching up to do but we had all been brought up in the same way and to run things in the same way, so it was a smooth transition. The job was unaccompanied and you worked, theoretically, seven days a week; you lived and worked in the same hotel on the outskirts of Zagreb where we had our office, and the people I had working with me were from my own Delegation. It was lovely to be working with a great range of people from young captains of thirty to a

retired Lieutenant-General of the Royal Marines the same age as me. That was Sir Martin Garrod, who liked to be called Monitor Martin. And then there were the other delegations, a great mixture from all the Member States, all very different in character and we all worked and lived together in remarkable harmony.

MM: What did you actually do?

JE: Well, part of my job was to make sure that my Monitors were a) behaving themselves and b) given a proper crack of the different jobs going, because there was a tendency when the French took over the Presidency for the decent jobs to go to the French, and when the Germans took over for the decent jobs to go to the Germans and so on, and we had to try to insist that our people, who I'm bound to say were by far the best and most competent, got a proper crack at the decent jobs – there were good and bad jobs, and good and bad places to go.

MM: What would the good jobs be?

JE: Where something was happening; where you weren't just parked in a dreary town in the middle of Bosnia where nothing was going on; that you were somewhere near the front line (because the war was still going on between the Croats and the Muslims and between the two together and the Serbs). So there was a lot going on and the military people were quite keen to be near the front line rather than back in Headquarters doing desk jobs. Every outpost produced a daily report which came back to Headquarters saying the following things happened to-day: there was a hijack of a vehicle by a group of Republika Srbska irregulars …, that sort of thing; security reporting, but also political reporting. They might say the local mayor is trying to organise a better relationship with his colleague from a different ethnic group. So there was a flow of reports coming in from all over the former Yugoslavia to headquarters which then had to be digested into a daily report to Brussels and to capitals, so that every day a political and security report went to Brussels and to capitals saying what was going on. It was a very thorough reporting system. It was particularly valued by the smaller countries that had no diplomatic representation in former Yugoslavia; we did have missions in Croatia and the other states of former Yugoslavia, and an Embassy in Albania, so we had people on the spot. But most of the smaller countries like Ireland

didn't, so that the ECMM reporting was very highly valued. There were also occasions when we had to supervise body exchanges after conflicts. At the stage when I got there, the UN were also there, armed and doing the usual parading around in white vehicles. So at that stage we were doing the political reporting and liaising with the UN. which was of great help to them because we had by far the densest structure of people in the field. It went well while the conflict was going on, but by the time it got to 1998/99, I began to think that I wasn't fully engaged while I was there. We had moved our Headquarters from Zagreb to Sarajevo after the Dayton Agreement. I suggested to the then Ambassador in Sarajevo that, as the Dayton Agreement had brought peace and the shooting war was over, the situation was changing in terms of security especially and it might be sensible for the Embassy to take over as Head of Delegation. I eventually got them to agree to that. We had also reduced our staff of Monitors from fifty or more to ten or twelve.

So again, it was a wonderful place to retire from because you didn't completely retire, but you didn't do a five days a week job week in and week out. You did an intense job away from home for four months with a lot of exceptionally congenial colleagues, and the other eight months you were able to prepare yourself for full retirement. In fact I am profoundly grateful to the Foreign Office for the marvellous career they gave me and for accepting me into the Diplomatic Service, given that I was a Counsellor equivalent in the Ministry of Overseas Development and I would be filling a job which could have been filled by a member of the Service on promotion. They were immensely welcoming, and I always thought I was well managed. I took the opportunity under the Freedom of Information Act of getting hold of my Personal File to see what they'd been saying about me, and of course mine didn't go very far back. But I was pleasantly surprised by how fair and balanced the reports were. There was one post which I didn't get even though I was a strong candidate because the other candidate had been in the Office a long time and in the words on my file "deserves better of the Office," or something like that. It was perfectly reasonable and I might well have written the words myself! But I had great respect for the Office as it was; now it has certainly changed whether for better or worse I cannot possibly comment.

MM: Thank you very much indeed.

Transcribed by Joanna Buckley