

BDOHP Interview Index and Biographical Details

Charles (Augustine Kaye) Cullimore CMG

Biographical details with (on right) relevant pages in the interview:

Born 2 October 1933

Educated at Portora Royal School, Enniskillen and Trinity College, Oxford

Married 1956, Val Elizabeth Margot (née Willemsen); one son and one daughter.

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Charles (Augustine Kaye) Cullimore CMG

interviewed by Jimmy Jamieson on 20 May 2009

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JJ Looking at your CV it seems you were quite a big businessman before you joined the Diplomatic Service. I don't know how you got in, but perhaps you will tell us about that first of all?

Late entry to HM Diplomatic Service 1971

CC The first thing is, I don't think I was such a big businessman. It is just that I was working with ICI, and it was from ICI that I joined the Diplomatic Service. Before that I had been in the Colonial Service in what was then Tanganyika, back in the late 1950s. I left in 1961. That was my first taste of a real job. I had done my National Service, or the Northern Ireland equivalent – it wasn't actually National Service before that, but it was really my first proper job, and I suppose from that – I left just before independence, when clearly there wasn't going to be a career in the Colonial Service. After I left Tanganyika I had an offer from ICI, which was quite attractive. I had family responsibilities, so I took the job. I had nine really very interesting years with ICI, but I always had a yen to get back into government service, and I applied in the spring of 1971 for the FCO; went through the usual entry procedure and, somewhat to my surprise, got through as what the Office used to charmingly call a late entrant. Some would say too late. That was what happened.

JJ So what did they do with you when you first joined?

CC I will tell you that in a moment. It came as a bit of a surprise. I didn't actually think I was going to get in, and I remember one of my referees was interviewed by the Office to check out whether I was a fit person. He was asked – he told me afterwards – why did he think I wanted to join the Diplomatic Service, to which dear John said: I really haven't the faintest idea. I think he must be stark staring mad. Despite that I got in. I think probably they thought my ICI experience might be of some use in the commercial sense.

JJ That suggests there weren't very many people who had any experience other than being in the Civil Service in one department or another.

Appointment to Financial Policy and Aid Department

CC To answer your question; I was thrown in, for want of a better word, to a desk officer's job in what was called in those days Financial Policy and Aid Department, and I was given the aid job. It really was quite interesting. It was all about aid policy, but I was really the interface with the then ODM, the Overseas Development Ministry, and the main FCO point of contact. But I was thrown into it, whether the Office forgot that I was a new entrant and because of my age they thought I already had experience, I don't know, but I had absolutely no training; nothing. No induction. I don't think I even had a one day induction course. I went straight in without preparation and started doing the job, just like that. It was a pretty steep learning curve.

JJ How to write a draft letter to the Permanent Under-Secretary, for example?

CC I hadn't a clue how to put a submission in, and suddenly all these little files with red flags appeared, and pins. I didn't know what I was supposed to do with them.

JJ You had to get them all in the right order, and different Ministers liked different ways of having the papers put together. I remember that. How long were you doing that?

Appointment to British Embassy, Bonn, as First Secretary, 1973

CC I survived that and did that for two years until May 1973, then I got a posting to Bonn. That was really quite challenging, because it was quite a high-powered embassy. I was given the job, in effect, of the No 2 in a rather esoteric body called the Bonn Group. You must remember that this was the height of the Cold War and the Bonn Group consisted of French, US, British and West German diplomats, whose job in life was to ensure the proper implementation of the Quadripartite Agreement signed by the three Western allies and the Soviet Union in 1971, and particularly to prevent the Soviets from making inroads into the position of the allies in Berlin, and indeed the GDR. So it was a very specialised role, but we had quite considerable responsibilities. For example, the whole edifice rested on accepted practice, which had grown up after the Second World War, because there was never a treaty at the end of the Second World War. There was no peace treaty. So all there was, was what the four victorious allies had done over the years after 1945. That became the accepted practice, which was embodied in the Quadripartite Agreement of 1971. One of the things that we were responsible for, was running the then three air corridors to Berlin.

There were only three corridors allowed. Aircraft were not allowed to fly above 10 thousand feet, because after the war that was the maximum height they could fly, so that became the established practice. So the Soviets wouldn't let them fly any higher.

JJ So it was the Soviets who were laying down the law, so to speak?

CC As far as they could. We were also laying down the law where we could. So the arrangements for looking after Hess; the arrangements for the British military train crossing the GDR going to Berlin; all of that was determined and was constantly under pressure from the Soviets and indeed from the GDR. We were walking a fine line to preserve the position.

JJ There was a military contingent for each of the countries – the occupying powers, if you like?

CC Indeed there was.

JJ But were they kept in barracks unless something really nasty began to break out?

CC We had a garrison in Berlin of about 4,000; quite sizeable, complete with tanks and artillery. But obviously it wouldn't have been able to defend Berlin.

JJ But it could perhaps have kept the Russians in place?

CC It was a demonstration of the will of the Western powers to maintain their position. But there were all kinds of strange arrangements. There was a British Military Mission, BRIXMIS, for example, which had the right to patrol anywhere inside the then GDR, but conversely so did the Soviet SOXMIS in the West have the right to go anywhere in the Federal Republic. So it was all a very fragile arrangement.

JJ It held together more or less?

CC It just held together, but it was a constant job. We met virtually on a daily basis. There were always new Soviet provocations that we had to decide what to do about and recommend back to capitals what the answer should be, and what our response in each case should be.

JJ Nothing's changed has it?

CC Well, except that it was quite high pressure because this was happening on a daily basis, and it was a salami tactic by the Soviets to see if they could establish something new without being challenged, and that would give them a slightly better position than they had before.

JJ So you weren't acting as a commercial officer, for example?

CC Absolutely not.

JJ Political?

CC Couldn't be more political.

JJ And did you have to report your daily or weekly meetings back to the Office?

CC Yes very much so, and the British Military Government in Berlin, with which we were in daily contact. Yes, as I said, the Bonn Group was meeting almost on a daily basis – the Bonn Group couldn't actually take decisions; minor decisions we could. But we had to agree what we were going to recommend to our respective capitals in each case. There was an absolute plethora of telegrams flying back and forth all the time in our case, between the embassy and the Foreign Office. Likewise the Americans were doing the same. The French were doing the same.

JJ Did you and the French and the Germans get on pretty well together?

CC It was a very interesting exercise in group dynamics. What in fact happened, because we were meeting in this kind of almost incestuous relationship, everyday, day in day out, we developed very close links with the French, the Germans and the Americans in the group; a dynamic all its own, which I think you get in any walk of life. That caused a little bit of concern from time to time. It developed its own jargon; shorthand. I remember on one occasion we sent a telegram back to the Office recommending – I can't remember the substance, but – we'd obviously used quite a bit of jargon in it, and the answer came back to the effect that: Insofar as we can understand this latest piece of Bonn Group gobbledegook, we think we agree with it. I hope that gives you something of the flavour.

JJ But then as you say, when you're working daily over a long period of time with diplomatic colleagues like that, it's bound to happen, isn't it? It must have been very exciting. How did the French appear in all this? And the Americans? Did you have things that you fought fiercely to protect because you were French or American or British, and so on?

CC It's a good question. I think that the answer is that we and the Americans, generally speaking, had much the same approach nearly all the time. The French were the odd ones out, because they were extremely defensive of their position in Berlin, and indeed in Germany as a whole – which was the phrase *Deutschland als Ganzes* – Germany as a whole, and they were very defensive about that. The Germans were in the Bonn Group quite reasonably, because what was being decided was actually affecting them directly, but any suggestion that they should sort of determine what was going to happen, was routinely rejected by the French. They made it quite clear over and over again – no, this is the position. We're the victorious allies. We're here as of right. We're protecting that position. They were the least flexible of the three, including the Germans. The Germans were very flexible.

JJ But presumably the overall objective was to get Germany settled down into peaceful mode and to bring democracy as we and the others knew it; at least we and the American knew it; so that they could gradually pick themselves up and become one of ...

CC Oh no, no.

JJ It wasn't like that at all?

CC No, absolutely not. That had already happened. No, good heavens, the FRG was a fully functioning and very successful democracy.

JJ That's true.

CC It wasn't about the old days of the Allied Control Commission, not at all. It was about the fact that in the absence of a peace treaty in 1945, which would have defined the position, we had to be eternally vigilant that the Soviet Union was not able to strengthen its position beyond the situation that pertained in 1971. That's what it was about.

JJ So it was all about keeping the Russians away?

CC Absolutely focused on that completely, that was why we were able to work so well with the Germans, because we had the same interests as they had.

JJ Fascinating. You could write a book about that.

CC Well I could yes. Except of course it's all changed.

JJ About the German government itself, I don't know whether you have any comments about that? As you saw - Brandt first of all, until they found a spy in his office, and then Schmidt who, my impression was, was accepted as a really excellent Chancellor by the Western nations. Very strong. Very clever with all the financial side and so on.

CC I would go along with that. I think we had a high regard for him. People had a pretty high regard for Brandt as well. As you rightly say, the spy in his office was someone called Guillaume, and that affair did hit him quite hard, but he was, to do him credit, he was the original architect of the *Ostpolitik*, which was a kind of opening up to the east and a recognition that there needed to be dialogue with the GDR, and indeed with the other countries of the East, notably Poland. He really pioneered that.

JJ Yes he did. He went to Poland, didn't he?

CC Yes he did. I actually did two jobs in Bonn. The one I described was the first half of my time, and then I moved from that into the defence policy job in Bonn, which was totally different. The defence policy job was about the interface between BAOR and RAF Germany and the West German State, if you like, and particular problems arising from that, such as – there was a whole raft of them actually, but one constant irritant was the RAF low flying which used to happen regularly, and which caused lots of angst among German farmers, whose cows were always having premature calves, and stuff like that. So one had to sort out what kind of compensation should be paid, trying to arrange some kind of *modus vivendi*; the RAF saying, not unreasonably, that they needed to maintain their low-flying skills to provide a deterrent against the Soviet Union.

JJ Close surveillance?

CC No. Low flying over the West. They were practising their low flying skills in order to be able to go in at a lower level if they had to attack. That was it. Another feature of that was negotiating – and that was really quite delicate – with the Germans – and it's extraordinary to think of it now – but the British garrison in Berlin was paid for by Germany. We didn't pay for it. But we had to agree a budget every year. Now I had to negotiate the budget.

JJ But of course. You were the financial expert by that time?

CC That was quite tricky. Obviously the British Military Government was saying we need "x" million pounds, whatever it was. At the same time the German concern was to keep the cost to a minimum; so that was quite an interesting exercise. I also got involved – actually there is one story I might quickly tell. There was a frightfully secret organisation long since defunct called 'Live Oak', and every year we would have an exercise to try out how we would respond to a sudden armed provocation from the Soviet Union. On this particular occasion the exercise scenario was that the Soviets had started sending military aircraft down the corridors. This was not supposed to happen, and what were we going to do about it? Would we just accept it? Anyway, to cut a long story short, this American guy in Live Oak rang up on the public telephone. The exercise was taking place at a weekend. I was the duty officer for the Bonn Group and happened to be in the American Embassy – we all worked with each other – and I picked up the 'phone. He said: "This is so-and-so 'Live Oak' here. We've decided to send a squadron of fighters down the central corridor to counter this Soviet threat." I said to him: "You realise this is a public telephone," and he said: "Sure, heck, but this is only an exercise" [laughter]. I said: "If it had been real it wouldn't matter, would it?" It was a very interesting example of how people's thinking can get completely skewed when they're in these kind of strange worlds.

JJ It was a rather provocative act anyway, wasn't it?

CC By the ..?

JJ The Americans?

CC No, no, because this was in response to a Soviet act; they'd breached the rules, and the question was, what were we going to do about it. And this was the response.

JJ Interesting. If there's nothing more on that perhaps we can return to the Foreign Office.

CC I should just mention that it was a privilege to serve in a high powered embassy with some extraordinarily able people – Charles Powell was there at the same time, and also under successively two very able and very charming ambassadors – Nico Henderson who was the first one, and then Oliver Wright for the last couple of years.

JJ He was the chap who wore very flashy ties and suits?

CC He did. He cut quite a figure on German television.

JJ Just one thing before we leave Germany – did you get a chance to feel what Bonn was like, and German citizens and so on at that time? Anything that comes to mind? What life was like for Germans at that time?

CC It was a very prosperous place. It was a very comfortable place. Outside the actual jobs that one was privileged to be doing, it was an extraordinarily dull place. Not much happened in Bonn. There were two sayings about Bonn. One was German; one was American. The Germans used to say that in Bonn either the level crossing gates are shut, or it's raining, or both. That was their take on Bonn. A very artificial place to be a capital. The other was the American saying that Bonn was half the size of the Chicago cemetery, and twice as dead. It was of course never intended to be a permanent capital. It was chosen by Adenauer as a temporary capital because it was close to his home. But the thought was always there that one day Berlin would be restored to its rightful place as the capital of a re-united Germany.

We had some very good German friends, including our next door neighbours in Bad Godesberg, the suburb where we lived, with whom we are still in close touch. We did have friends outside the embassy.

JJ You then went back to the Office in 1977, and what happened there?

Return to Permanent Under Secretary's Department of the FCO, London, 1977-79

CC I had a fairly brief spell in PUSD, the Permanent Under Secretary's Department. This was a sort of coordinating role in contacts with other Whitehall ministries. Again one had some able and amiable colleagues to work with. I suppose it was interesting partly because it gave me a better insight into the workings of Whitehall than I'd had up till then. It was fairly brief before I actually got a posting to Delhi.

JJ But you were there for two years?

CC Just under.

JJ So that was spent in PUSD entirely?

CC Yes. Can I tell you one more story about Bonn – it was quite funny, because it also illustrates the sort of bizarre situation that still pertained at that time in the 1970s. It was 1977 – the Queen's Jubilee, and it was decided that she should review her army, because that's what monarchs do. But then the Treasury obviously felt that – by then most of the army was in Germany, and it would have been rather expensive to bring them all back to the UK, so it was decided that the Queen would go to Germany to review her army, and it was kind of conveniently overlooked that actually Germany, the FRG, was a sovereign country, and you can't just bring in the Head of State to review a foreign army. I found myself in the middle of this – this was when I was doing the defence policy job – and I had a series of meetings at the Palace with various courtiers who found it really quite hard to understand that we ought to consult the Germans about how this would work. Eventually, it was accepted that the Queen would have to invite the President of the Federal Republic to join her at this event. So that was okay. And in the end that worked all right. The Head of State; the President, then invited the Queen back for a *vin d'honneur* in a *schloss* somewhere, and then she went back to Britain. But a key protocol issue was which national anthem should be played first at the review, the German national anthem or God Save the Queen. There was a prolonged discussion about which one should be played first, and I'm afraid I jokingly suggested to the courtiers in the Palace that the best solution would be to play them both simultaneously. It didn't go down well at all.

JJ Very interesting. So you spent two years in the Office. It must have been a bit boring after what you'd been doing in Bonn?

CC Yes, in some ways I suppose it was, although it was very nice to be back home. It was actually a time which enabled us, for example, to buy this house. It was quite a good thing to have done. It was very good to be nearer our kids and sort out their schooling. It was a good time in that respect.

Posting to British High Commission, New Delhi, 1979-82

JJ After that rather calm stint in London you were posted to New Delhi. Would that have been a contrast to Bonn? Tell us about it.

CC I had always had a yen to go to India, having visited it a couple of times previously when I was working with ICI. So I was delighted to have the opportunity to go, and went as Head of Chancery in the High Commission, which was, at that time, I suppose, along with Bonn and Washington, and one or two other places, just about the biggest mission we had anywhere – very large, and a very large locally engaged group, and it also provided facilities for some of the other missions in the region. So it was a sort of regional hub.

JJ Who was the High Commissioner then?

CC My first was Sir John Thomson, for nearly all the time I was there. He was superb, and I think very much appreciated by the Indians. He had no kind of post-imperial or colonial hang-ups whatsoever. From a different generation, and I think they appreciated that, and he travelled very widely in India, which was also quite good for me. There was of course a Minister, but even so with the High Commissioner away I had a good deal of responsibility.

JJ You had to stay more in the office than some others who were no doubt travelling all the time?

CC I found then, and on reflection thinking about it since, that that was a bit of the organisation that never really worked satisfactorily. I just don't think – it may be all right in a very small mission in a small country, but in a large mission, and very major country, it's absolutely impossible to ask anyone to fulfil an inside job and an outside job both at the same time. The Head of Chancery was supposed to be the political counsellor as well as Personnel Manager so to speak. But it is impossible to do both jobs in my view, and you ended up doing either one or the other. In my case I tried to do the political counsellor job, because it was much more interesting, and I

probably didn't do the other job very well as a result. I don't think it made sense to try to combine the two.

JJ Did you get much travelling and seeing what the real India was like?

CC Yes I did. I got around a lot. I went to Calcutta, as it then was, and Bombay and Madras and Bangalore, and quite widely in the north, Rajasthan, up into the Himalayas and up into Kashmir also.

JJ Part of that presumably was seeing what your British colleagues in the different sub-posts were doing, and exchanging views, and you had regular meetings maybe every month altogether in Delhi to discuss whether they were doing the right things and so on?

CC Yes, part of that. But I also had the opportunity to go to quite frequent meetings with colleagues from Western embassies. We used to compare notes with the Americans, the Germans and the French on a regular basis. And particularly after several notable events, which occurred when I was there. The very first one I landed in the middle of, was a huge row about the so-called virginity tests at Heathrow. This happened just about a week after I got there. We had demonstrations outside the High Commission on a daily basis. We had people waving swords and threatening "to castrate the Heathrow rapists," and emotions were very high. This was the case of an Indian lady who had contracted an arranged marriage with an Indian in the UK. There were a lot of arranged marriages which is part of the culture, but the term "arranged" in this context has a double meaning, because they were also arranged very often totally spuriously in order to enable the woman in question to get into the UK, and then the marriage, which wasn't a real marriage at all, would break up and she would have got in because she was the alleged wife. In its wisdom the Immigration Service decided that one way of testing whether a wife coming in was genuine or not, would be to see if she was still a virgin. The theory was that no self-respecting Indian would marry a woman who wasn't a virgin. And they actually carried this test out on this woman. She was examined by a female doctor at Heathrow, and it got out, and the proverbial hit the fan in a big way. The Indians, understandably, were completely incandescent. It was so serious that David Owen, the Foreign Secretary at the time, had to fly out a short notice to try and placate them. They were threatening all sorts of reprisals. I remember there was a very memorable exchange between David Owen and a group of Indian MPs. I can't remember whether the Indian Foreign Minister was in that group. Certainly David Owen met him, but at this meeting he, David Owen, said that we

apologised unreservedly. We in the High Commission had recommended that there was no other course but to apologise and say it would never happen again. We did that and David Owen at this meeting said: Look it shouldn't have happened. We're very sorry about it. It won't happen again, but don't you think perhaps you are making a bit too much of a fuss when you compare this event with what goes on all the time in the Soviet Union in the Gulags, and the monstrous abuses there of human rights. We don't actually behave like that. To which the answer was: But Foreign Secretary you don't understand the point. We do not expect the British to behave like that. That's why we're so upset. You've let down your own standards. I always remember that. It was quite a good response actually.

JJ A very good response, and of course, given the length of our running India in a very old-fashioned but stylish, correct way for hundreds of years, it was a let-down. Wasn't it? I wonder who dreamt that up? The Home Office no doubt.

CC Yes. It was a ham-fisted, and completely inappropriate, attempt on their part to counter one of the ruses which people were using to get round the immigration rules. By the way, we had not been running India for hundreds of years. The British government only took over responsibility from the East India Company in 1858 and even then there were many princely states which remained semi-autonomous right up to independence in 1947. We made a lot of friends in India; almost more than anywhere we've been. We still have a lot of Indian friends. It was a wonderful place to be.

JJ Did you, in those dim and distant days, have what are called "objectives" put down by the Office? You know: Here are your objectives for the coming year.

CC No we didn't. Not in a formal sense. It was so obvious we didn't need to. Well, in that particular case the objective was fairly obvious.

JJ It was a very large High Commission and then the country is so enormous, did you have in fact objectives whether they might be very short term or other – things that you wanted to get done with the Indians or for the Indians, or whatever? I suppose there was a lot of aid; financial aid.

CC Well yes, we did have agreed policy aims though not in an arbitrary time frame. I think one of the major objectives was to do whatever we could to broker a better relationship between India and Pakistan. We saw this as a key to the stability of the whole area. So that was certainly an objective.

When the Soviets invaded Afghanistan on Boxing Day 1979, this changed the whole scenario. We did argue quite strongly with the Indians that they should recognise that they had a common purpose with Pakistan. This was putting Pakistan at risk potentially, and did they really want to see that? The Soviet empire was coming right up to the doorstep of India. Even though India and the Soviet Union were allies, was this really what the Indians wanted? So that was a major objective.

JJ You dealt with it by just discussion and its possible implications?

CC Another objective was of course commercial. India was a major market for British goods. There wasn't much scope for investments, because they were still running a command economy – a closed economy in that sense. They weren't really open to foreign investment, but there was scope for exports, and particularly defence sales. During the time I was there we concluded what was at the time I think the biggest defence sale that the UK had ever done, which was selling to the Indian Air Force about 150 Jaguar fighters, some of which were to be assembled in Bangalore.

JJ Did you have Indian businessmen coming over on invited visits to the UK from time to time?

CC Indian businessmen – not so much, not through the High Commission. There were lots of arrangements for Indian ministers and politicians to visit, for example, and also for journalists, and All India radio people coming over on British Council sponsored visits. A lot of that going on. There was some British investment in Indian Government sponsored schemes. I remember there was a British involvement in a large steel project, for example. And yes, you're right about the aid programme. The biggest single British bilateral aid programme by far in the world was to India. Far bigger than anywhere else.

JJ Enormous. It's still going on I believe? To a certain extent.

CC I believe so.

JJ It's unbelievable.

CC I can't understand why it continues. It was very big at that time.

JJ How much of that money was put to its proposed purpose?

CC That's quite a good question. We could do another interview on that. Don't get me on to it. Maybe we'll get on to it when we talk about Uganda. I have fairly strong views about the effectiveness, or ineffectiveness of aid. Not particularly in the case of India, but certainly in the case of Africa.

JJ I remember reading quite a hard-hitting article by a senior Indian in the Financial Times about corruption – let's use the word; and it was horrifying.

CC Well, corruption was certainly there, and was and is, I suppose, endemic, but the Indian press was beginning to pick it up, and there were beginning to be investigations. There were the beginnings of the famous Bofors scandal for instance, where it was alleged that there had been backhanders paid in return for the Indian Government buying Bofors anti-aircraft guns, so it was beginning to be an issue. I never came across corruption personally. I suppose we were very privileged as diplomats, but I never, ever, was asked for, or offered a bribe by anybody at any time, and I don't know that any of my colleagues were either. But obviously, it's there.

JJ So you enjoyed your time there?

CC Hugely. Especially in retrospect. At the time it was quite tough actually. The great thing about it was that you had to accept that the unexpected was likely to happen most of the time. Whatever you thought was going to happen, wouldn't happen. Something else would happen instead. India and its multitudes of people was then, and is now, always full of surprises.

Of course, another feature of life in the High Commission in Delhi was the frequency of high level visits from the UK, which was fairly exceptional – we had David Owen, as I mentioned. That was a one-off perhaps, but Lord Carrington came once or twice, and Margaret Thatcher came and spent about three days, including a three hour session with Mrs Gandhi, at which nobody was present from either side. So you can imagine the sort of consternation among the officials on both sides at not actually knowing what had transpired, and all we could deduce was that they wouldn't have spent so long talking about the weather. They clearly got on rather well. We also had a thirteen day visit by the Prince of Wales, who flew his own aircraft and made a tremendous impression on everyone, including on us. Just an interesting little aside, but he was writing a daily letter to Diana, even though at that stage their engagement wasn't official; just an interesting little insight there. He

presumably didn't need to do that, but he did, and it went in the bag. It was a very interesting time and I think of all postings that I've had, and all the jobs I've done in the service, India was the most interesting, because the country is just so fascinating, and the people are so warm. We had a very good and friendly personal relationship with a lot of Indians.

Deputy High Commissioner, Canberra, 1982-86

JJ After that you went to Canberra as Deputy High Commissioner in 1982. Were the Australians as friendly to those Poms?

CC Good question. That was a strange cross-posting. The Office had asked me if I had any particular preferences, and I had said that I would really quite like to be within easy reach of the UK for a few years, because the children were going through a difficult period going on to university. So the response to that was Canberra. Anyway, I couldn't really complain because it was a wonderful posting, and a wonderful place to be. I found Australia really very easy, and the Australians very easy to deal with. What I discovered very quickly, that suited my nature anyway, was that Pommie bashing is partly a game which they enjoy, and the best way to deal with it is to respond vigorously and bash them back. They like that, and then they're fine. What you mustn't do is just roll over and get all upset because they're attacking you. It really was never a problem. What was surprising initially was the, in some respects, remarkable formality of Canberra. That I had not expected, because everybody else had said they'd found the Australians laid-back – the people are very easy going. Canberra is not like that. Two examples – it was not done to arrive even a few minutes late for a dinner party. You were expected to be there on the dot. They certainly were, sometimes even a bit early, and also it was quite surprising to see how formally the men, the Australian men particularly, would dress for an ordinary evening dinner: dark suits, white shirt and a dark tie, was pretty well *de rigueur*. That we had not expected. But I think it was peculiar really to Canberra, and not so much true of the rest of Australia.

JJ You don't hear a great deal about Australia, really, apart from sporting events and stuff over here. Do we? They're split up into different states; like New South Wales is one and you've got the Western states and so on. How does that work for them politically and yourselves as well, trying to deal with all Australia?

CC For us it wasn't really an issue at all. It was no problem. The High Commission was dealing with the Federal government in Canberra. We had very important Consulates-General in Sydney and in Melbourne, and also in Brisbane and Perth, but particularly in Sydney and Melbourne. There's a lovely story about John Mason, who was my boss. Sadly he's now dead, but I don't think he would mind me telling it. Because he spent so much of his time in Sydney and Melbourne, and so little in Canberra he was known in the office as Sir Sydney Melbourne. As for Australia itself, it works okay, but there is a constant tension between the Federal government in Canberra and the states, and there is huge sensitivity in the states about states' rights. States' rights are an issue, and if you are an agency of the Federal government you intervene in states' rights at your peril. The states have very considerable autonomy. They have their own education system. They have their own police forces, to name but two. They control the water supply in the state. That is a serious issue, with the difficulties now with the Murray-Darling water catchment area being under successive droughts, the question of which state takes which water is a very live issue.

JJ It sounds like a photocopy of the American system, as far as states are concerned, and also the water?

CC Yes, there are definitely parallels. There are quite a lot of parallels anyway between the States and Australia. They are both immigrant countries. They are both pioneer countries, although Australia is more a pioneering country now than America. To illustrate this thing about states' rights: droughts. I remember an occasion involving the then Attorney-General, Gareth Evans, who later went on to be Foreign Minister. He was a splendid character, very forthright. There was an issue with Tasmania because the Tasmanian government decided that they needed to build a huge dam at a spot on the river called Gordon below Franklin which was a great beauty spot, and had been declared a World Heritage site. As a World Heritage site this meant that the Australian federal government had a responsibility for protecting it, but that didn't make any impact or impression on the Tasmanian government who wanted the water. Tasmania started building the dam, and the Australian government told them to stop it, and they said they wouldn't. The issue was referred to the Supreme Court, which rules on demarcation issues between the Federal government and state governments. The court decreed that it needed to have evidence of what stage the dam had reached before it could come to a ruling. The Tasmanian government refused to cooperate so it was suggested to Gareth Evans that the quickest way to find out what stage it was at, would be to send the Australian Air Force over to take high level reconnaissance photographs, and provide the evidence that way. Unfortunately, on the day in question, there was 10/10ths cloud at about 100

feet, so the Australian Air Force, having been given the task, went in with a whole squadron and criss-crossed the area for about two hours taking photographs. As you can imagine, there was an almighty political row about that.

Coming back to the role of the High Commission – obviously when you have the situation like Britain and Australia, the links are numerous and so deep. There were something like 3 million people, at that time, with, or entitled to, British passports. Beyond that the vast majority of Australians were descended from British or Irish settlers. The connection was very strong. To some extent you could take the view that the relationship would just take care of itself, but in a funny sort of way, that meant that there was a role for the High Commission in trying to ensure that we didn't take Australia for granted, and they didn't take us for granted. Even in the best of friendships and relationships, you still have to work at it to keep it going. To some extent that was what we were doing.

JJ Given the large number of British people there, was there a need to provide consular assistance for quite a lot of them over a period?

CC No I can't recall that actually being an issue at all, which is probably another function of the fact that the relationship was so close. People didn't really get into difficulties.

JJ Did they mainly apply to become Australian citizens after a period of time, for example?

CC There was in fact an issue which arose while I was there, because the Australians changed the rules for citizenship, making it compulsory if you wished to acquire Australian citizenship, that you should renounce all other citizenships, and that had not previously been the case. And that did cause large numbers of British citizens to come to the High Commission for advice and say: What should we do? We don't want to lose our British citizenship, but we are living in Australia and we'd like to have Australian citizenship. What should we do? We were able to tell them, rightly or wrongly, and I don't know whether it's changed now, that they needn't worry, because they could renounce British citizenship till they were blue in the face, they wouldn't actually lose it.

JJ I'm sure that's right. They would always be British citizens as far as we were concerned.

CC Yes, unless they'd gone through a very specific process which they didn't need to do. That was how that particular issue was resolved. I don't remember consular cases with difficulties at all. It wasn't an issue. We did have an issue of the fall out from the nuclear tests that was carried out in a place called Maralinga, in South Australia, which came up in a big way, and because of allegations that former Australian servicemen on the one hand, and groups of Aborigines on the other, were suffering from the results of exposure to radiation, not so much because of the actual blasts at Maralinga itself, but because of a botched clean-up operation which had made the situation worse. And Bob Hawke was put under great pressure, and set up a Royal Commission, because ironically a Royal Commission was needed to investigate this, and that became quite a hot political issue, which the British government in its wisdom decided it needed to contest. Very expensive legal counsel was engaged to go out from London and put the case that there was no real evidence that anyone would have suffered as a result of the tests or the clean-up operation. That was towards the end of my time.

JJ Delicate matter though.

CC Very delicate. It was actually. That was the occasion when Sir Robert Armstrong came out and as part of his evidence had to admit that he might have been "been economical with the truth". That was that famous quote.

JJ Did we do a lot of trade with Australia – exports to them as well as the other way round?

CC Yes we did, and of course, the UK then, and possibly still now, but certainly then, was the number one investor in Australia. It was more about investment than trade, and there were large joint interests, particularly in the defence field. British Aerospace had then, and perhaps still has now, manufacturing plants in Australia. And there was a very close relationship between the British Armed Forces and Australia. We had a Major-General as our Defence Adviser and there were at any one time, while I was there, about two or three hundred British servicemen in Australia, all on individual assignments or postings, and a similar number of Australians in this direction. I'd like to think that that still continues, but I'm not sure that it does. And we would have frequent visits by Royal Navy ships and that sort of thing, on a regular basis. So that relationship was very close.

JJ Even in your time, how did the non-white immigrants going into Australia – because they were welcomed because they needed the labour apart from anything else, I suppose – how did that work? Did it work quite well?

CC Yes, I think better than in most countries, actually. Okay, they've had their moments since, when there's been a minor backlash, but on the whole, I always thought that – it's a pity we can't somehow learn lessons from Australia – about how to handle mass-immigration, but also post-war from Greece and Yugoslavia and Italy in very large numbers, then, and indeed from the Baltic states; from all over Europe. It has worked perhaps slightly less well with Middle-Eastern people, Arabs, and perhaps the Vietnamese, and Indians, but certainly with these huge groups of southern Europeans; there's an ethos in Australia which is different actually from America, whereby "you're very welcome to come here mate, and you can keep your customs and your language and so on, but don't you bloody bring your politics here." Absolutely taboo, and it seems to work. There are proportionately far more Irish in Australia than there are in America, yet there was never any suggestion that the Irish in Australia would somehow support the IRA, or get involved in the problems of Northern Ireland. That just didn't happen. It was completely taboo. But it wasn't a case of saying you'll lose your identity and you've got to give it up – you're allowed to keep the cultural side of it. And it wasn't done through legislation. It's somehow a social phenomenon in Australia – just don't talk politics about any place you've come from. Leave all that behind. And it works. There are many examples I could quote. It's quite strong; very strong.

JJ That's interesting, isn't it?

CC It's just completely, I don't know, can't think of a parallel. Something that you just do not do.

JJ We could learn something from that, perhaps.

CC I really think we could. They have a very strong view that this is Australia, mate. You behave like an Australian. You can still speak Italian or Greek, or whatever, but behave like an Australian.

JJ That suggests that there isn't really a class system in Australia?

CC No. That's true. They have what they call a "tall poppy" syndrome; that anybody who gets a bit uppity, gets cut down. So there is a very strong kind of egalitarian streak in Australian society;

very strong. I think it is partly due to the strong Irish influence, but that's not to say that there aren't gradations. Of course there are. I suppose you could say the Australian equivalent of the old aristocracy would be the long-established sheep farming families with hundreds of thousands of acres of land; the graziers; the old graziers. Malcolm Fraser, the former Prime Minister, came from that strata of society, so they do have stratas.

JJ For that reason and perhaps others they have their millionaires, just like other countries do?

CC The other potential political issue which has never really taken off, but was there all the time and still is, and is not going to go away of course – is the whole question of having the Queen as Head of State. Prime Minister Hawke's answer to that, who was in harness at the time I was there, was that this was just not a live issue and he wasn't going to put it high up the agenda, and so managed to kick it into the long grass. But I think it is an issue which won't go away.

JJ I was going to ask you about that. It's still active?

CC I think it can't go away because, for purely practical reasons, the more important Australia becomes, and it is becoming increasingly important in world affairs all the time, the more difficult it is to have a situation where they do not have a resident Head of State. Indeed they have a Head of State that they are sharing with a number of other countries, notably this country, and they try just to avoid the issue. But how do you answer a question like when the Queen goes on a state visit to France, shall we say, she's not going there as Queen of Australia, so what is this? How can they reciprocate when they invite a Head of State to Australia, like the President of the United States? The Americans can't invite the Australian Head of State to reciprocate that. To some extent these are technical questions, but they are also political; very political.

JJ There's a sensitivity about that. There's bound to be.

CC And my goodness, when the Queen visited Australia, as she did while I was there, whenever she visits Australia, then it really is very clear while she's in Australia, she's our Head of State, mate, and don't you come near her. The High Commission was not involved at all in anything to do with the Queen's visit. I mean, we'd be the last people to be involved. We had to stay right out of it, because that's the one time when she is exclusively their Head of State. So there's all of that difficulty which is not going to go away.

JJ It's going to go on and on.

CC At the same time they are very conscious that they have no clear idea what sort of alternative they want to have.

JJ It might only change when our Queen passes on and Charles is on the throne, I think.

CC I think that might be the catalyst for change.

JJ I think you have a little story to tell us and we'll record that now.

CC There is actually one particular incident which I think in a way well illustrates the nature of the relationship between Britain and Australia, and that is when John Leahy came as High Commissioner, which was about half-way through my time there, and the question arose as to when and how he would present his letter of introduction to the Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, because, of course, Australia being a realm, and sharing the Queen, as it were, with us, as we've just been talking about, you cannot have the usual formal letter of credence from Her Majesty to the other Head of State, because she can't very well write a letter to herself. So what one had instead was an informal letter from our Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher at the time, to Bob Hawke, introducing Sir John Leahy, but it still needed to be delivered. It so happened that it was just before, like a day or two before, the start of a lengthy election campaign; not an unusual coincidence, because in Australia they are forever having elections, where parliament sits for only about a maximum of three years, sometimes less. And Hawke was about to depart on the campaign trail, so we had to devise some means of doing this just before he left, and the only day that was left, was the day on which he, along with fellow parliamentarians, was playing cricket against the press corps in Canberra, at the Kingston Cricket Ground. I remember it well. So I arranged with Bob Hawke's private secretary that I would bring John Leahy along to the pavilion and he would hand over his letter to Bob Hawke in the pavilion. That was all fine except that when we turned up and just as I had introduced them, the parliamentarians were batting. Hawke was waiting to go in – he was all padded up, ready to go in, and as we arrived the man before him was out, and it was Hawke's turn to go in to bat. So there was very little time for the formalities. I just had time to introduce them. John Leahy just had time to hand over the letter, but Bob Hawke only had time to shove it into the

back pocket of his cricket trousers before going out to bat. I can't think of a better illustration of the relationship between the two countries.

JJ Very laid back.

CC Hard to imagine it happening anywhere else.

JJ Certainly not at the Court of St James. You moved then back to Central Africa Department.

Return to FCO as Head of Central African Department, 1986-89

CC That was to take over – it wasn't really Central Africa, but the Foreign Office's geography has never been terribly good. It was actually six of the southern African states, which were known at the time as the front line states, because they were in the front line, as it were, in the battle against apartheid. The Office thought it convenient to lump them together and have one Department. This meant of course that there was a good deal of tension between ourselves and South Africa Department, which was specifically responsible for relations with South Africa. The main focus apart from this was ongoing tension between on the one hand, supporting the front line states, and on the other hand not being willing, because that was the policy of the Thatcher government of the day, not being willing to get engaged in sanctions against Pretoria. The other main theme of the policy, I suppose could be best summed up as focussed on doing everything we could to roll back Soviet influence in that part of Africa. It quickly became apparent to me that anything that I came up with that might help to do that was almost certainly going to meet with the approval of not just the Foreign Secretary, but more importantly the Prime Minister; using that kind of hook, I managed to get agreement to setting up a military training programme for officers in the Mozambican army, even though at that time, relations between Mozambique and Moscow were quite close. I think that was actually quite a successful programme. We also managed to arrange for a Royal Navy ship visit to Maputo. Oddly enough at that time, Mugabe was still running things in a generally sensible way, except that there was very ruthless suppression of the Ndebele people. But apart from that he was still pursuing a policy of reconciliation with the white Rhodesian settlers in Zimbabwe, and generally the economy was being run on sensible lines, and Zimbabwe was prospering. Far cry from the way it is now. One of the episodes which I recall was accompanying Sir Geoffrey Howe on his rather difficult tour, through the front line states, when he was going round trying to explain British policy to them. We had a very fraught meeting with Kaunda, which I well remember, but

then that was followed by an extraordinarily warm and good meeting with Samora Machel, who at that time was President of Mozambique. I always remember Machel saying how he regarded the Afrikaners in particular in South Africa as simply another tribe. They happened to be a white tribe, and they happened to be a white tribe which had acquired a lot of power, and the solution to the problem was somehow to persuade them that it was in their interests to share that power with all the other tribes who happened to be black. He was very clear in trying to see the problem as being a problem of power in the hands of a particular group of people, rather than as a colour issue. Okay, they happened to be white. In fact he said, I'm sure not intended for publication, that he was quite concerned, that when blacks in South Africa would come to power, Mozambique might find itself under a lot more economic pressure from the new South Africa than from the white South Africa. It was a very interesting and enlightening discussion at that time. Sadly of course he was killed not long afterwards in a 'plane crash. Anyway that was nearly four years in Central Africa Department, during which time I came to have great admiration for Geoffrey Howe, who I think did a splendid job as Foreign Secretary, sometimes in the face of considerable difficulty.

One other episode I do recall is going with Chris Patten to Gaborone, when he was Minister for Overseas Development. It was the first time that a British Minister had attended a SADC meeting (Southern African Development Community). SADC has since become quite an important regional political grouping. It was in its infancy at that time. We had the misfortune to be going to a High Commission where there was a pretty eccentric High Commissioner who decided that he had more important family matters to attend to than the visit of a Minister, and we arrived at his house to be told you are very welcome here, Minister. I'm just about to leave. I'm going up to the north. Sorry about that, however, please make yourself at home. There's some coffee and a percolator and there's tomato ketchup in the cupboard and butter and milk in the fridge. Bye bye.

JJ Did he leave a note to that effect?

CC No, he said it to the Minister's face. I must say Chris Patten handled it extremely well. He concealed his fury until after he got back to London. As this was an ODA delegation of which I was the FCO member, as the only representative of the FCO I did feel more than a little embarrassed by the situation. But Chris Patten was very good about it. Obviously it wasn't my fault.

JJ Are you naming this individual?

CC Well I don't think that's necessary. It was a pretty unorthodox way to handle a ministerial visit.

JJ So what else did you do in the CAFD?

CC If I'm honest about it, it was really a damage limitation exercise, because the policy that the Thatcher government was pursuing in its wisdom at that time was, of course, hugely unpopular in Africa. Our refusal to take part in, or authorise, sanctions against the Pretoria regime, meant that there was a very strong perception that we were actually somehow or other in cahoots with them, which we certainly were not, and that made life quite difficult for any British mission or part of the Foreign Office that was trying to look after relations with the black African states.

JJ It lasted quite a long time, didn't it?

CC Yes.

JJ So they cut us off, I suppose, as countries? They didn't want to know much about us or do any deals with us, or whatever.

CC As I have said, there was an attempt by Geoffrey Howe to go down there and try to explain our policies. Apart from Machel who as I said received us very warmly, and very well, it didn't really work very well. However there was then a subsequent visit to the region by the Prime Minister herself, Margaret Thatcher. I didn't go with her, but I was involved in preparing for it; writing the speeches and that sort of thing, and that went off remarkably well. She visited Zimbabwe and Malawi and Namibia, and that was really quite a successful visit, but it was a difficult time in our relations with black Africa.

JJ She could be very charming of course, when she wanted to be.

CC There's a lovely story about her. She got on particularly well with Machel, and in fact Machel was credited, I think rightly so, as having been influential at a critical moment in persuading Mugabe to go along with the Lancaster House agreement, which he was, I think, quite reluctant to

do, and he was persuaded by Machel to do it. She, that is the Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, was very well aware of that, and very conscious that Machel had been helpful.

JJ Can you just briefly explain what the Lancaster House agreement was?

CC The Lancaster House agreement was the agreement concluded in 1980 between the British Government and politicians in Rhodesia, subsequently Zimbabwe - at that time it was still Rhodesia - to bring the country to full independence. As I said, Machel played a key role in the background in bringing that about. There is a lovely story about how several years afterwards, when Andropov who had, very briefly, been the President of the Soviet Union died. There was a grand funeral in the Kremlin. Margaret Thatcher attended from the UK, and Machel attended for Mozambique, and they apparently met on the grand staircase in the Kremlin. One was going up and one was going down, and they allegedly walked across and warmly embraced each other, much to the astonishment of the Soviet officials who couldn't understand what this fellow was doing embracing the arch-priestess of capitalism. That was a splendid moment. I did also then, after the death of Machel, which happened while I was running Central African Department, arrange for Chissano, his successor, to come on a state visit to Britain, which was actually his first visit to any country outside Africa. So that was an interesting and worthwhile episode, and again this was part of the policy of trying to do whatever we could to roll back Soviet influence in Africa while the Cold War was still at its height.

Posting as British High Commissioner to Uganda, 1989-93

JJ After that you went to Uganda in 1989 as High Commissioner? Uganda was quite a well advanced country by that stage, was it not? Had a good economy and ...

CC No, no, no. Uganda had been one of the more developed countries in East Africa, and possibly the best of the three East African countries, that had been part of the empire, but it had an absolutely tragic history after independence. First of all there was the Obote regime, and then Amin took over. There was the appalling period of the Amin regime, and then Obote 2, the second Obote administration, during which time, although it wasn't so well known, far more Ugandans were killed than were ever killed by Amin; far, far more. Indeed one could almost call it genocide of one particular tribe north of Kampala. Then Museveni came to power in 1986, by force of arms. When he came to power in 1986 Uganda was absolutely in the depths of despair. The economy was in

freefall. Kampala, for about a year, by all accounts, more or less resembled Beirut at its worst, with warring factions in different parts of the city. Law and order had broken down completely. And most Ugandans I spoke to, many Ugandans while I was there, recalled how their main concern each day was to stay alive. It was that bad. So when we got there in 1989, yes, things were beginning to get better, but it was still pretty hairy. There was shooting every night, all night; mainly shooting in the air, but the trouble is that after you've had such a long period of civil war or quasi-civil war, there are just so many weapons and ammunition out there, that it's very difficult to bring about a return to normality. And of course the economy had been in freefall – everything had collapsed. The police force had disappeared. The judiciary was non-existent. There was no street lighting. Nothing worked. It was appalling. I was very fortunate, because I came in at a time when Museveni was doing his best to put it back together again, and so it was a very positive, a very constructive time. I was also, I think, very fortunate in that we had a pivotal role. I don't think that's an exaggeration – not least because Lynda Chalker, bless her, had gone to Uganda very early on in the piece. She was the very first Minister from any country outside Africa to go there after Museveni took over, and she spent about three days with him in fairly intensive talks, and I think that really sowed the seed of a special relationship between Museveni and the UK, which to some extent I think still persists. In any case, I was the beneficiary of that. I was very lucky. It also I believe helped in the process of his conversion from a socialist view of the world to a more pragmatic, market oriented approach to the considerable benefit of Uganda.

JJ She was a very good diplomat. She came to the Ivory Coast when I was there and she and I did an air tour around two or three different towns in the space of one day. She was very well received and she did the job well.

CC Especially if she didn't have to speak too much French.

JJ I did that for her.

CC I was in a rather privileged position there. To give you some examples of Museveni's attitude – early on in the piece he asked me if I could arrange for somebody to come out from London to take charge of his private office and I managed to arrange for one of the APSs from the Foreign Secretary's private office, to do that for a month. That says it all. He was sitting in a key position in State House and Museveni had been having great trouble because there was nobody organising his diary and the flow of paper to him. Well, that is an indication. He asked me rather later than

that if we could find a suitable senior police officer, preferably from the Metropolitan Police, to come out and take charge of the police force. And I remember saying to him: But surely, Mr President, that could create some difficulties for you, could it not, we are not back in colonial days. He said: No, look, that's my problem. Let me take care of that. But of course, almost needless to say, I couldn't persuade the FCO or ODA, that this was something we were willing to do. We did actually send a very senior police adviser from the West Midland police, but he wasn't in charge of the police force. Apart from that, there was a major programme to help to put the police force back together again, which included resurrecting the police training school in Kampala. One of our biggest aid programmes in Africa which was obviously central to the relationship – the biggest at the time, the biggest single aid project in Africa if not anywhere, was the rehabilitation of the Owen Falls Dam and of the generating station at Owen Falls which provided the entire electric power needs of the whole country. That was a major project.

JJ The whole thing needed to be replaced?

CC Well, we had to rebuild all the generators from scratch because they hadn't been maintained for thirty years. The wall of the dam was in danger of collapsing because it hadn't been maintained either.

JJ Why was that?

CC Because of the state of the country ever since the 1970s.

JJ Too busy fighting wars?

CC Too busy fighting, and it was only thanks to the fact that the dam was built in the 1950s – I think it was opened in about 1955 – the dam at Jinja, and the generating station – it was only because it was built then, and therefore heavily over-engineered, that the dam had survived at all, because it had huge cracks down at the base, and I was told by engineers from British companies who were involved in the reconstruction, that if the dam had been designed today, it would not have stood up, because they don't over-engineer any more. Everything possible is done to cut the cost of the project. There was an extraordinary scene on one occasion, to do this work, which meant actually filling cracks and holes at the base of the dam on the upstream side, as you can imagine that's where the damage was being done, we had to bring out North Seas divers, as nobody else

could do it. They had these guys coming out from the North Sea absolutely foreign to any concept of Africa, and diving down to a depth of about 30-50 feet into very dark Nile water with crocodiles, and having to work in those conditions. They did a fantastic job.

JJ They didn't get eaten by the crocodiles?

CC They didn't get eaten by the crocodiles – that's a bit of an exaggeration. That bit of the river didn't actually have any crocodiles because the flow is too strong, but very difficult conditions, because the water was very dark and black, so there was very limited visibility. They had to go down with a very high powered torch, and they could only stay down for about half an hour at a time and then they would sit on the bridge stripped to the waist, with their ear-rings and their tattoos. They were a source of huge attraction to the locals who'd never seen anything like it. That was one of the projects.

JJ How long did it take them?

CC It went on certainly most of the time I was there, and it had started before I got there. I think about five years altogether, that's including the rebuilding of the turbines and generating station. But it was critical because it was Uganda's only source of electricity; still is.

JJ They must have had to order all sorts of high-tech equipment from the UK once they saw what damage had been done?

CC Yes they did. There was an involvement of quite a number of companies in the whole operation.

JJ And did the Ugandans pay for any of that?

CC No, it was entirely paid for by the aid programme. It was about £50million I believe in total over the period of the project. The aid programme itself in total was running at about £30 million per annum, which in those days was big; it was seriously big. It was a lot of money. We were also involved in education – primary schools particularly – in health, mainly clinics in rural areas. A certain amount of road work. We rebuilt part of the road from Entebbe to Kampala, that's the main airport, and so on, and crucially also, the judiciary. We had three British High Court judges trying

to put the court system back together again. We also – the ODA somewhat against their own instincts – agreed to get involved in trying to kick-start some industrial production – textiles in particular and sugar refining. So we had a textile project in Jinja and were involved in rehabilitating a sugar refinery up in the north at a place called Kinyara – we had a multi-faceted, I suppose would be the way to put it, aid programme. Finally and, in my view most critically, we also ran training programmes at full capacity, bringing lots of Ugandans over to the UK, organising training programmes, and putting individual experts into some of the key ministries, like the Ministry of Finance to try to help them in their planning. We were in short heavily involved in trying to put Uganda back together again.

JJ But it was a successful operation?

CC Well, yes. We were part of that. This is where I was so fortunate because at that time – I stress at that time – it's changed a lot since then – Museveni really was doing, or trying to do pretty well all the right things politically where he was trying to build a government of national unity, and bringing in people in the north, as well as from his own tribe, but also economically, trying to put the right measures in place. It was an exciting time to be there; very satisfying. And I probably saw him on average once a fortnight, if not more than that.

JJ So it was a very close relationship between UK and Uganda at that time?

CC It was. It was very close. I remember one occasion he rang me up on Christmas Day and said could I come down to State House. I thought, I can't really say, it's Christmas Day – what do you do? So I hopped in the car. I had a Royal Military Police escort. There was a six strong RMP unit in Kampala to provide a bodyguard, but also a quick reaction force to reassure the High Commission staff, because as I said it was still pretty hairy, and security was not great. Anyway, because of that I had an RMP who came with me to State House. He happened to be black, black British; the one who happened to be on duty. He was a splendid chap called Andy. I'll never forget him. He was a corporal, tall – originally from the Caribbean. However, he was born and grew up in Peckham. He came with me, and because it was Christmas Day, there was no protocol at State House – they were all on holiday. There was nobody there in fact, except Museveni's presidential guard, who manned the main door. Well I knew my way because I'd been there often, so I went straight through and sat in a small anteroom where I knew one was supposed to sit. Unbeknownst to me, the Ugandan – this is typical of Uganda – the Ugandan soldiers were very fascinated by

Andy who was sitting in my Range Rover outside the front door of State House, and they called him in and they got chatting. And eventually they said, well why don't you go and wait inside, and they pointed him to another room where they thought he'd be more comfortable waiting till I'd finished. The thing was Museveni in those days used to always receive people in a specially built tent, which, incidentally, we provided, on the lawn, because he was still somewhat in military mode, and he felt more comfortable in a tent than he did inside – anyway he always received in a rather special long tent. But to get to it he had to go through another room from State House to get out to the lawn, and that was the room that Andy was sitting in. As he came in – I heard all this detail from Museveni and Andy afterwards. Andy, being Andy, saw this person walking through – didn't know who it was – he'd only been in Uganda for a week, but he thought he'd better do something, so he stood up and saluted smartly and said “Merry Christmas, sir”. Museveni said: And who are you? And then Andy tried to explain. This had all happened without my knowledge, and then I was asked to go out to the tent which Museveni had then arrived at. His first question was: High Commissioner – who's that African you've got with you? And I said: He's not African. He's British. And Museveni said: But he's black. And I said: yes, he's black British. How is that possible, said Museveni? So we had this interesting conversation about citizenship and how you could actually become British by being born in Britain, which was very relevant to the situation in Uganda, which at that time was host to hundreds of thousands of Rwandans who had no hope whatever of ever becoming Ugandans because they were Rwandans. Anyway it was an interesting little episode.

JJ Did he finally accept that you could have black British people?

CC Well it obviously made an impression. It had never occurred to Museveni before that you could automatically acquire the citizenship of a country just by being born in it.

JJ Something for Andy to tell his folks back at home?

CC I expect he's been dining out on it ever since. Then going back to helping to put the country back together again – the other thing which I managed to persuade the Office and MOD to agree to was to set up a small military training programme for the Ugandan army which started about a year before I left. I don't know whether it's still going on. I have always thought it was one of the more useful things that we actually did, if only because I think that the part of it about trying to get across – this was not training in tactics – it was about the role of a properly disciplined army in a properly

run, governed state; respecting the rule of law; respecting the rights of the individual citizens, the things, that we take for granted and the MOD teams did very well. Hopefully it made a bit of difference, but who knows.

Of course the situation was always a little difficult because there were two major causes of instability. One was the long running insurgency in the north with Joseph Kony and the Lord's Resistance Army, which still goes on today. I was indirectly involved in a process of trying to bring about peace and reconciliation in the north with the Acholi people. I knew Betty Bigombe well, who was the Minister appointed by Museveni with special responsibility for the north. She herself was an Acholi, and there were occasions when we went into the bush together. She was absolutely fearless in trying to go out and contact the dreadful LRA people, and Museveni, even then in the early 1990s, was trying quite genuinely to bring peace to the north. He offered an amnesty, a complete amnesty, together with a resettlement package for any of the rebels who would lay down their arms. They were entitled to a resettlement package of seeds and corrugated iron sheets and tools to use in the fields. But it didn't work and that insurgency still goes on, and I don't think Joseph Kony's ever going to be brought to book. He will probably die fighting. Things are made worse now, in my view, by the International Criminal Court having issued a warrant for his arrest, which makes it extremely difficult to conduct a peace negotiation. As ex-President Chissano of Mozambique said recently in London: How do you negotiate with somebody you're trying to arrest? So it goes on. The LRA was never a threat to the government as such. There was never any prospect that Kony could succeed in actually overthrowing the Museveni government, but what he has done is hugely retard the development of the north of Uganda and there is always a great deal of suffering for the people who live there, which is really very sad.

The other major development which happened while I was there was the invasion of Rwanda by the RPF, the Rwandan Patriotic Front from Uganda, which happened in 1990, and we all know the ultimate disaster there. The RPF invaded to try to overthrow the government of Habyarimana. This did lead to peace talks, which had started before I left; peace talks in Arusha, in Tanzania, which in my view might well have succeeded. It looked as if they were going to succeed, resulting in some sort of government of national unity, had it not been for the fact – and I don't mince my words about this, because I really do believe it – had it not been for the support of France for the regime of Habyarimana, which caused perhaps the hard liners in his administration to believe that they could ultimately defeat the RPF in battle, so they didn't need to make peace with them. So then when it appeared that Habyarimana was going to make peace, they, in my view, which is not proven,

arranged for him to be killed. His aircraft, as you may know was shot down on his return to Kigali from Arusha, and that then was the signal for the beginning of the massacre of the Tutsis. I do believe that the French policy was partially responsible for that scenario, although that was after my time. At the time I was there, the French were trying to blame Museveni for having been complicit in arranging the invasion of Rwanda from Uganda by the RPF. It is a very murky story, and quite hard to deal with in the course of a short discussion like this. I think Museveni had great sympathy with the RPF. I don't think he knew that there was a specific plan at the time they did invade. He was in New York at the UN General Assembly. He'd just been made chairman of the Organisation of African Unity. Very hard to imagine that he would have sanctioned such an operation at that particular time, and a little bit difficult to see exactly what it might be thought he was going to get out of it. To the obvious question of how could it possibly have happened without him knowing – the answer is you have to know the detailed disposition of the Ugandan army just before it happened. Some of the key officers in the Ugandan army were Rwandans as were many of the soldiers – they weren't Ugandan. They had helped Museveni in 1986. The Chief of Intelligence was a Rwandan. I remember saying to the brigadier who commanded the nearest Ugandan unit to the entry point into Rwanda, and who had been ordered to intercept these Rwandans – there were only a couple of thousand of them but they were well-armed – because they just took all their arms with them – they were all in the Ugandan army so they just took their arms and left. He was ordered by the commanding officer of the Ugandan army to intercept the Rwandans before they could cross the border, and I remember saying: Why didn't he do so? And the answer was: He couldn't, because that particular brigade was heavily composed of Rwandans, and when they got there they just joined the others. As I say it's a murky scene.

To give you an idea of the attitude of the French to all of this, I remember the then French Minister for Overseas Development came out about a few weeks after the invasion, so the fighting was still going on in Rwanda, and he had a meeting with Museveni, and I was at the meeting. Why was I at the meeting? I was there because we were acting as Presidency of the EU at the time in Uganda, and the Ugandans therefore invited me to attend in that capacity. So I was at the meeting and I remember the French Minister castigating Museveni, first of all saying: Why did you not prevent it? And secondly: What on earth are all these people going into Rwanda for, I mean they don't even speak French? To which Museveni said, with very large eyes which would get very big when he was a bit cross, first of all "I didn't think I was supposed be the jailer of the Rwandans. Uganda is not a prison". And secondly, he said: "It may have escaped your notice, but they all speak Kinyiwanda. That's their mother tongue."

JJ Collapse of French Minister, I hope.

CC It was rather. I don't think it was the proudest chapter in French history and, of course, it's still being played out to this very day, as you know. The French have broken off diplomatic relations. The French Ambassador has been expelled.

JJ I didn't know that.

CC Yes, and Paul Kagame, whom I know, because I used to see him in Kampala, semi-officially, when he was in command of this force in northern Rwanda, has made it clear now that individual French people are perfectly welcome to come, but he won't have any official dealings with the French Government. He has just recently declared English the language of instruction in schools. You know that Rwanda has applied to join the Commonwealth?

JJ I didn't know that. All thanks to you.

CC No, nothing to do with me. It goes back to the role of France at that time. It wasn't just a diplomatic role. There were French military advisers with the Habyarimana army trying to shore them up and help them in the defence of the country. So that was a major development during my time there, and the repercussions still rumble on.

JJ So your last posting must have been stressful in quite a number of ways? Quite a tough post for you?

CC Yes. But it was tremendous fun.

JJ Was Val there with you all the time?

CC Yes she was and she was very involved in many charitable activities. Still is to some extent. The contrast between that and a conventional diplomatic role could not be more stark. It was exciting, and I wouldn't have missed it for the world. So much was happening. The constitution – there was a major exercise to fashion a new constitution for Uganda, and in my view, really one of the most democratic exercises you can imagine. How do you consult a country about what sort of

constitution to have? There wasn't anything. It had all collapsed. And Museveni said, early on, we must have the rule of law. We must have a constitution. The usual way would be just to promulgate it, then you have it. But he didn't do that. He set up a commission of 25 people from the judiciary, from the academic world, from the army – inevitably; that was very important obviously; from the private sector – a complete cross section. Okay, they were educated people and they were appointed by him. You could say that wasn't democratic. But they were a commission of the great and the good. It wasn't party political, and they were given the task of consulting the people of Uganda and then framing a constitution. They spent two years travelling to every last village in Uganda. Sitting down under trees. They produced a document first of all saying: what is a constitution? They had to educate as well as ask. A huge operation; especially for a country with limited resources. We helped a bit with that; providing transport – Land Rovers and computers. At the end of that they had something like twenty thousand submissions from all over the country - from trade unions, from villages, from tribal chiefs, from schools, from all kinds of organisations. They put it all on computers and worked on it and produced a draft constitution – well actually produced two constitutions. They produced one which envisaged continuation of what was known as the non-party system; ie – the National Resistance Movement; and a parallel constitution which would be what we would recognise as a multi-party system. There was then an election for a Constituent Assembly whose sole purpose was to consider this draft, amend it, change it, whatever. They sat for three months, and it was considerably amended by the representatives who'd been elected specifically for that purpose, and then that new constitution in the two versions, was put to the people of Uganda in a referendum. Well I just can't imagine how you could have a more elaborate consultation process. They've got that constitution, and the second part of it, the multi-party part of it has now come into force, because there was a provision in it that if it was decided to implement initially the non-party system, then there must be after five years the opportunity to switch to a multi-party system and that happened, and the people voted for a change.

JJ It all sounds very well organised?

CC Well, it was. Of course it had its imperfections. Quite a lot has been written about it. It's one of the most elaborate constitution making exercises that there has ever been in any country, I think. As a result, I think, by and large, there is a feeling in the country that people own the constitution of the country. So that was also happening. It was a good time to be there. I didn't see that through to its conclusion though I wrote about afterwards. It was still in the process when I left, but it was well in train.

JJ Perhaps we could get them to come and sort out the British constitution?

CC Absolutely. They certainly didn't do it the easy or the quick way. Partly because of the awful experiences they had under the previous one, which of course was a British one they were left with. It didn't work. That's one of the arguments Museveni used to use, and I think still uses, when he is criticised, and his administration is criticised for not being as democratic as it might be. At that time it wasn't, other parties were not allowed to function, although in a curious way they were allowed to exist. They could have an office, but they couldn't campaign and they couldn't put up candidates, so it wasn't really democratic. Part of Museveni's argument was that Uganda actually did have a multi-party system in the 1960s, which indeed Uganda had, and it was a complete disaster. So we've been there. We know what you're talking about, but it doesn't work at this stage of our development. Sure, in due course this is what Uganda is going to need, but not yet. And I think the great difficulty, and I had many arguments with the Office about this, the great difficulty is that, yes of course his argument is self serving, but the fact that it's self-serving doesn't mean that it's not valid. That was the difficulty. People thought because it was self-serving it wasn't valid. But I didn't agree. That was and still is my view.

The other courageous thing Museveni did in 1991 was to invite all the Asians to come back and reclaim their property – the Asians who'd been expelled by Idi Amin, in the 1970s when he chucked them all out except those who were Muslims. Museveni invited them back, which was hugely unpopular with the African middle class as you can imagine, because they had benefited from all the shops and all the businesses and hotels which they'd just been able to move into. And now the locals were being told they had to give them back.

JJ Oh dear. That's difficult.

CC It helped put Uganda back on the map as a country where the rule of law applied and which people could seriously consider the possibility of investing in.

JJ Well it was a very exciting and interesting time for you, your last post. It sounds as if you did a great deal to push them forward, so to speak, and having a President who was a good communicator with the High Commission.

CC Good communicator with his own people. That's why he was so popular because of his grass roots support.

JJ How old is he now?

CC Getting on a bit. But he's still only in his sixties. He's been there a long time. I do need to qualify all of this by saying that was then. That was the early 1990s. It was possibly the high point of both Museveni's rule and of our relations with him; in that respect I was very lucky. I am very conscious that many things have gone wrong more recently, and that he has done perhaps what he shouldn't have done, and that he has become a much more difficult person in the last few years. Which is the old story, isn't it? All power corrupts. He was not immune. That was the other thing about him at the time. I am convinced that he personally was not corrupt. He had a very simple lifestyle. I spent some time with him on his private ranch in the west of Uganda. He really lived very simply. That also has changed, sadly. State House itself was just a modest building – the one that we had left, having been Government House. Since then it's been hugely extended and he's built himself a Presidential Palace in Kampala, which wasn't there at all, and I think perhaps most importantly of all, he used to be at that time – and this was his great strength – very accessible. He was willing to listen to anyone who had sensible ideas to put forward. He was quite willing to say maybe we should do that. I gather that now he knows it all. He won't listen to anybody, and that's really rather sad.

JJ That sounds familiar.

CC He had one very able economic adviser who is now the Governor of the Central Bank of Uganda, a chap called Emmanuel Tumusiime-Mutebile, he was at that time the Financial Secretary, or Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Finance. A first class honours graduate from Balliol, and extremely able, as many Ugandans are. Very able indeed. A first class mind. That was important a) because Museveni listened to him and implemented very often what Tumusiime was suggesting and secondly because, unlike in many African countries at that time, it meant that the World Bank and the IMF, instead of coming along with pre-arranged packages, and imposing them, which has not worked very well, in the case of Uganda there was a real dialogue even then with Mutebile able to say to them: No, no. You've got that wrong. We shouldn't do that, we should do this. And so that was a much healthier state of affairs.

JJ It reminds me of the Ivory Coast where the big guys from America would come out and lay down the law, and it often didn't work. They got it all wrong. They didn't really know the country. They just came in with their suitcases and two days later they were out, and on to the next country.

CC That happened too in Uganda, but at least there was some input from the Ugandan side, into the formulation of new policies.

JJ Have you thought of going back there on holiday at any time?

CC Yes we went back in 1996 and I've just been back. I went back in March with a trade mission actually: a joint British-German trade mission. We went to Uganda and Rwanda. I'd never been to Rwanda before, so it was very interesting, but it was splendid to go back, and we met lots of old friends. We didn't actually see Museveni. I've seen him in London, but I didn't see him in Uganda. And all I can say, and I really only went to Kampala, and was amazed at the change. Kampala is absolutely booming. It really is. It got a great boost from the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting which was there the year before last, and there was a huge amount of hotel building. It helped to put it on the map. But apart from that one just had this sense the whole place was buzzing. Lots of businesses starting up, and new buildings, and a mood quite optimistic in the midst of the economic crisis we're all supposed to be in.

JJ Well looking back, I think you had a good time in the diplomatic service, from your account of it, anyway?

CC Absolutely. I never regretted leaving ICI.

JJ You'd got such a variety of tasks to do.

CC And there's a sort of intellectual challenge as well. I can't imagine I would have been happy spending the rest of my time doing a personnel job or selling paint or whatever it might be. But it does enable me, having seen both sides of it, to reflect a bit on some of the pros and cons. I think the first thing that I realised when I joined the Service, and it was quite a shock, was that the expectation of what an ordinary person could do in a day, was much higher than in industry, certainly in ICI, and I suppose was typical at that time of British industry. Much higher. No comparison. That was a bit of a challenge. Not necessarily in terms of the kind of tasks you might

tackle, but just the sheer volume you would get through. I remember early in 1972 I went to a meeting at ODA and came back at 7 o'clock in the evening. My boss Peter Marshall was still there, and Peter said: Had a good meeting? I said: Yes, it was all right. He said: Well you do a record. I said: I will do that in the morning. He said: What? Do it now. And I realised expectations were different. It was not going to be done in the morning, because in the morning there would be other things to do and there wouldn't be time. That was a bit of a shock. Then I think one of the other comments I would make if I'm invited to comment, is that the contrast between ICI, the private sector – it's probably still true, but hopefully less so – you were asked to do a job; you were given a job to do, and it was assumed that you needed to have the resources to do that job. Say you were given the charge of a marketing programme in a particular region, it was assumed that you would know what resources you needed, and if you say I've got two, say, and I really need three, four, five, then you would get them, and you had better jolly well make a success of it, otherwise you might be sacked. But you would get the resources. Conversely in the FCO and the Civil Service generally, I think, certainly in the FCO – one almost had the feeling that you were given a job to do and it was assumed that you would do it regardless of whether you were given any resource with which to do it. And indeed in some case you do it in spite of the obstacles that are being put in the way of doing it. Now that's very different.

JJ It's financial resources can be blamed partly for that attitude, I think. We've always struggled a bit to have sufficient funds.

CC Yes, but it is also an attitude of mind. It's not just about financial resources. It's how you deploy the resources and about matching resources to do the job that has to be done. But you're right. There's some truth in that.

JJ But you don't regret overall your diplomatic career?

CC No, no on the contrary, I've been very fortunate to have had the opportunity to do it, and also if one is honest to have been doing it at that time. I'm not at all sure, I don't know how you feel, that I would be happy to be in the Office now?

JJ I don't think it encourages me to want to go back, I must say.

CC There seem to be so many departments which have nothing whatever to do with foreign policy, but seem to be part of Marks & Spencer.

JJ Whatever happened to the word diplomacy?

CC The other thing about it is, also, perhaps with one exception, I always was able to have considerable respect for my boss, including Geoffrey Howe, Lord Carrington, and Douglas Hurd. One had respect for them, for their ability and, yes, integrity too. Whereas I'm not sure that I'd be able to say that more recently. We were lucky to be there at that time.

JJ It's not clear that the Foreign Office is master of its own house either?

CC No, no.

JJ I think that's one of the main weaknesses of it now. It used to be the king of the street, really, didn't it?

CC Yes.

JJ But that's disappeared.

CC Well there's been a tendency for quite a long time for No 10 to really usurp the role of the Foreign Secretary. But I think in a funny sort of way – superficially, it's easy to think that: Oh well, we're in a globalising world. We have instant communication. We have IT. We have email. We have the internet. Who needs the Foreign Service and what's it for now, because everyone's in touch with everyone else? But that has speeded everything up, and means, I think, that things happen faster - at least it feels that way - than they ever used to, and more than ever, I think, you need people on the ground who can very rapidly feed back what is the importance and the significance of these events that are taking place. The fact that you know about them more quickly doesn't mean that they matter any the less. It may be the other way round. You have to decide even more quickly how you're going to respond. I don't know – that need is still there as much as ever it was.

I was encouraged -- to end on a slightly more positive note -- I was very encouraged last week -- we had a briefing at the FCO which I had arranged for British companies doing business in Africa, and it was a briefing which had been intended to be led by Mark Malloch-Brown, the Foreign Office Minister for Africa and the Commonwealth, and unfortunately, at the last minute he couldn't make it, so the Director of the Africa command and his team were in the firing line for two hours. This was unrehearsed, because we had thought that Malloch Brown was going to do it and we all had questions for him. They were answering questions for two hours from a whole range of businessmen covering all the key countries of Africa. They must have had to field scores of questions because there was no formal speech to take up much of the time, and do you know, Jimmy -- they did superbly. I was quite proud of them. I thought well, it still works.

JJ That's comforting.

CC Just as good as ever, I think.

JJ Well, that's ending the interview on a up note. Thank you very much for that. Good interview. There was a lot of information.

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