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INTERVIEW

Early years and education

I was born in the eastern part of Switzerland and came to Oregon (where I had family) in the 1930s. I went to college at night while working for a casualty insurance company as a clerical employee and, after a while, as an assistant auditor.

My studies were interrupted for over four years by World War II. After basic training, I was detailed to a Russian area and language course. Upon graduation, I was unceremoniously transferred to an infantry platoon that saw frontline combat in France and in Germany. Later, I served with an intelligence team. Subsequently, I worked for a year in the Economics Division of the Military Government/Germany

On returning to Oregon, I completed my BA (political science) while working as an adjuster for my former- employer-. Two years later, I bought an insurance agency, l soon got bored and sold it when, after passing a competitive entrance examination, I was offered a position in the Commerce Department's Bureau of International Trade. In Washington, at night, I attended American University's Graduate School and earned an MA. degree in international relations with minors in international law and administration. I progressed to a program officer position in the East-West Trade Division, working mainly for the Interagency Advisory Committee on Export Policy. I attended its weekly meetings and became one of Commerce's alternate representatives.
The AID representative (for simplicity. I shall use the term "AID" throughout though those were the days of MSA) brought my name to the attention of the agency's personnel office. Since I spoke reasonably good French, I was immediately offered a position in Cambodia. This was subsequently changed to Laos, which suddenly had become AID's number one priority.

First assignment in Laos - 1958-1960

You may enjoy the anecdotal background of the assignment. The Far Eastern edition of the Wall Street Journal was having a field day with an article series entitled "Chaos in Laos". Indulging in a great deal of journalistic license, the correspondent alleged horrific incidents of corruption, bloopers and waste in the American assistance program. In view of my Commerce background in trade and commodity licensing, I was rushed to Vientiane to replace the USAID representative on the US/RLG (Royal Lao Government) Import Licensing Board. My predecessor was a somewhat crotchety retired army officer. He did not speak French and, according to the WSJ account, had signed off on a large import license for rails.

Unfortunately, Laos had no railroads and the license apparently authorized the acquisition of dollars for tile procurement of miles of toy rails at the official exchange rate (three times higher than the open market rate). Happily, within days of my arrival, the Lao currency was floated and the Board abolished. I was transferred to the vast Program Office and by the end of my tour had served as both Program Planning and Program Operations Officer.

USAID/L was huge; I would estimate around 100 direct hire Americans plus a large number of American and third-country contract teams. (Actually, the official appellation was U.S. Operations Mission (USOM). I mention this as this acronym was a source of hilarity for the Lao and the Thai. Depending on the tone used, "U.S.OM" translates into "useless" in Lao/Thai).

Possibly, even bigger was the Program Requirements Office (PRO), nominally a part of the USAID. An important difference was that their staff, though wearing civilian dress, addressed one another by military rank. These fellows were concerned with advising, training and equipping the Lao Army. They were either active military officers who had been discharged for the duration of their Laos assignment or bona fide retired officers. This scheme was designed to comply with the letter — if not spirit — of the Geneva Accords under which Laos was to be demilitarized. Since USAID was responsible for the generation of PRO's large local currency requirements through commodity import programs, the Program Office was extensively involved in this part of the U.S. effort.

It's a bit difficult to recall program details 40 years later. Basically the Mission had two themes: classic technical assistance, i.e. the transfer of skills by demonstration projects and training and much larger category of activities that was funded under "defense support". Later incarnations of this appropriation were called supporting assistance, economic support, etc. Its purposes ranged from budget support to financing road and airport construction, i.e. turn-key operations, far beyond mere technical demonstrations. These projects aimed at strengthening the RLG against the internal communist threat (Pathet Lao) and North Vietnamese incursions and propaganda.

In contrast to later years, mission directors, at least in the Far East Bureau, enjoyed a large measure of discretion in project initiations. The D/Laos could approve projects up to $5 million within the Mission appropriation ceiling without AID/W approval. Around 1959 AID/W imposed a more detailed programming style with a form, called E-1. It consisted of a summary sheet with life-of-project data, including annual obligations and estimated expenditures by component, local currency requirements, host country contributions and 3-4 pages of descriptive text.

The technical assistance activities, e.g. animal husbandry, upgrading statistics and customs services, mother-and-child clinics, handicraft, etc.,etc., were very much the same as those that I observed in the early 1990s during consulting assignments. Though the activities were virtually identical, their documentation now include the weighty annexes discussing social/economic/financial/environmental effects, the impact on the role of women, etc. This requires relays of experts, months and years of preparation and hundreds of thousands of dollars to achieve often no more than what we did already 40 years ago, but relatively simply and fast.
At a regional USAID seminar in the early 1970s, I suggested once that AID might have overdeveloped the art of helping the underdeveloped. This observation went over with the AID/W notables like the proverbial lead-balloon.

Lao officials were modestly involved in the formulation of our TA program but found it difficult to absorb our procedures. The Mission had very few Lao employees (who, if qualified, could find better paid positions) and was largely staffed by third-country nationals, mainly Thai, Vietnamese and Filipinos.

When it came to defense support activities, there was little conceptual consultation with the host country. We considered these activities a part of U.S. geo-political objectives, i.e. as much in our own interest as in the GOL's. Basically, we decided what was needed; cooperation was a matter of implementing our projects. For instance, our Public Safety people pushed measures that, in their opinion, made the police more effective. In contrast, the RLG's primary concern was the balance of power between various armed factions rather than increased efficiency.

I liked Laos, especially the relatively unspoiled countryside and tried to get out in the field as much as possible. In particular, I recall a rather arduous trip to Kampachak in the South to investigate the state of some abandoned tin mines. When we entered the village where the retreating Japanese supposedly had slaughtered the French mining staff in 1945, we were surprised to encounter white people. The neat houses flew a strange flag and the people spoke a language that was foreign to all of us.

However, most of the locals also spoke French. They explained that they had been members of the “Free Brittany Movement” [la Bretagne Libre] who had collaborated with the Germans in the hope of becoming an independent, Celtic-speaking state within the “New Order.” Many of the men had served in SS units. Their leaders had been tried and executed by the DeGaulle government but they had escaped and made their way to Laos. To judge from the number of kiddies we encountered, one of their main efforts must have been the augmentation of the group.

The African orientation program - 1960

At the end of my tour in Laos, I volunteered for AID's African Orientation Program. Around 1960, a considerable number of former African colonies had gained their independence, mainly in the region south of tile Sahara. AID's exposure to this area had been limited to Liberia and Ethiopia and since 1956, to Ghana. Foreseeing major involvement for many years to come, AID decided to train a cadre of officers who would specialize in the area for a number of years. We were a group of 20 mid-level officers with prior AID experience and, in most cases, FSI proficiency in French or Portuguese.

After initial briefings in AID/W, we moved to Boston University. Prof. Brown, former head of State's African Division, had set up a comprehensive program using both the university's and Harvard's Littauer School's resources. We received intensive instruction in the ethnographic, social, cultural, political and economic background of the area and briefings on U.S.-African relations.

The next phase took us to Oxford's Queen Elizabeth House, a dependency of Nuffield College. There, the academics, many with past African experience, were complemented

by ad hoc docents from various fields, all with backgrounds related to the UK's former African colonies.

Even 40 years later, I remember some outstanding lectures, especially one by Prof. Margaret Perham, Oxford's foremost authority on Africa and affectionately known as the "African Queen". Her final summary of our course was brief but concise: "Africa's basic problems can be summed up in a few words. In various permutations, they will account for most obstacles that you will encounter in your work. They are: racism, tribalism, nationalism and pauperism in all of their manifestations" (in retrospect, I believe there is one significant omission: "fertilism").

Our House Warden was a Mr. Witcher, a former officer of the renowned Sudan Service. Its members could retire after 20 years on a full salary. The only condition was that they could not engage in employment related to the Sudan. This arrangement struck us as a feature worthy of adoption.
From Oxford, we went on to the Sorbonne to study the administrative framework that France had handed down to her former African colonies. We became aware of the major differences and respective merits of Lord Lugard's concept of indirect rule vs. French-style centralized administration and the (dis)advantages of building a broad educational base from the ground up vs. a narrow pyramid, focused on a small elite segment of the population.

The final phase of the Orientation Seminar took us to the InfoCongo Institute in Brussels. The former Belgian Congo had become independent only a few months earlier. Mutinies of the Congolese army and social upheavals had sent some 100,000 Belgians fleeing back to Europe. Daily headlines revolved around Katanga's secession, rivalries and excesses of various rebel factions, etc. InfoCongo's archives were the World's largest repository of the Congo's recorded history and included over 40,000 photos, covering even the recent exodus of Europeans and the outrages committed by marauding troops against missionaries. Our interest in Belgium's former colony was further heightened by a rumor that most of us would be detailed there as a U.S. contribution to the UN Mission which was attempting to stabilize the situation there..

We were amazed by the degree to which Belgium had micro-managed its colony and used expatriates to staff even low-level positions, e.g. in the RR administration. The Belgians, assisted by the large missionary presence, had achieved a higher native literacy rate than the other colonial powers. However, their intentional neglect of education above the primary level meant that there were few high school graduates and, literally, only a handful of university graduates at independence. Naturally, the overnight departure of the colonial administration could not but result in the near-total breakdown of law and order and of the economic infrastructure.

Overall, the seminar had been excellent. The graduates had come away with a good deal of factual knowledge of Black Africa, its history, geography, economy and its socio-cultural make-up.

After longer exposure to Africa, I thought future courses might take account of two or three aspects (in addition to population growth): Firstly, developmental needs were discussed as the continuation of initiatives the colonial administrations had started and resource requirements were largely equated with reductions in inputs by the former metropols. There was no recognition that the new countries might have different priorities. Secondly, those of us who were assigned to francophone countries had not been prepared to appreciate the extent to which France could and would remain the dominant factor.

Assignment in USAID/Togo - 1961-1963

I arrived in Lome, Togo in January 1961. Knowledge of the city's existence was then largely confined to NY Times crossword addicts. Unsurprisingly, the U.S. Dispatcher's office in Singapore thought they had come across a misspelling and shipped my household goods to Rome whence they were returned to Laos and eventually reached Togo 15 months later in perfect condition. As we would say "All roads lead to Lome" - sooner or later!

USAID It took many plaintive cables to AID/W till we had a core staff of six direct-hire Americans. A few months later, President Sylvanus Olympio, a trilingual graduate of the London School of Economics, the Sorbonne and the University of Berlin, visited Washington. According to our ambassador, (the late Leon Poullada), Olympio greatly impressed President Kennedy. When he asked for increases in assistance, JFK phoned the AID Administrator (David Bell) and said "see what we can do for the President". A month later, our staffing pattern received four additional slots.

I had arrived with the title of Program Officer. A very senior director had already been appointed and was attending French training at FSI. The Ambassador, a protégé of Chester Bowles, arrived as an 0-2 and thwarted the creation of a full-fledged USAID in preference to an AID section within the embassy. Thus, I became AID Liaison Officer and later AID Officer.

Technical assistance
It became soon apparent that. the GOT was not enchanted by the American style of technical assistance. They were accustomed to the French OPEX (operating executive) format. We insisted on having host-country counterparts for our experts (advisors). In contrast, the French furnished experts, who worked for the GOT by filling slots. Understandably, many French experts had no intention of working themselves out of their cozy jobs.

The Togolese would tell us that, indeed, they needed people who actually filled vacancies, at least until students completed their studies and returned from abroad. They pleaded a lack of in-country, trainable understudies. Slowly we made some headway, especially in activities that were not only <u>our</u> priority. But the U.S. concept of pure technical assistance with its narrow focus on demonstration and training was never fully accepted. The saving project ingredient was the equipment component, particularly

vehicles and single sideband radios. The other element with great appeal was overseas training, especially short orientation tours.

Cultural anthropologists During the early part of my tour-in Togo I came upon a very important lesson. All of us had heard 2nd-and 3rd hand stories of cultural value systems that at times preordained development projects to failure. Everybody knows now that the introduction of white chicken in Cambodia was a mistake though they were far superior to the local varieties. White, in Buddhist countries, is the color of death and, naturally, the villagers fled when the American husbandry advisors arrived with their breeding stock. But these tales never impact the same as personal experiences.

Our "Ag" expert, on returning from a field trip to the North, reported that he could easily double crop yields at tile cost of a few pennies. He had observed that the villagers used a stick with a very short iron hook to turn the soil. The earth was totally leached though the soil a few inches below the surface consisted of rich humus. All it would take was longer hooks to permit the farmers to plough deeper-. We congratulated our colleague on his commanding technical insights.

Shortly afterwards, I met a French priest from that very area at a social occasion. I mentioned to him our expert's findings and plans. The cleric smiled wearily, apologized and told us that a few years ago a newly arrived young missionary with agricultural training had come to the same conclusion. He had promptly set up a demonstration plot. Using the rich subsoil, he achieved astounding crop yields. Overjoyed, the missionary had summoned the village council. He was taken aback by their totally negative reaction. The chief informed him that the local population condemned-the deeper tilling as it raked up the spirits of the ancestors. They would never, ever commit this sacrilege. End of story and of our budding PP (USAID project proposal).

Subsequently, drawing on this experience, I always urged discussing our observations with long term expatriates, especially missionaries whom I found to be an invaluable source of local information. I was glad to see during my later consulting stints that cultural anthropologists are now more involved in project design. I believe this should become a prerequisite to project formulation at the very earliest stages.

Later, when I discuss my tour in Liberia, I will relate another example how failure to consider cultural anthropology added one more grave to AID's cemetery of failed projects.

Highway equipment -"clasped hands"
The American assistance program to Togo started up with an independence gift consisting of a highway equipment package valued then at around #750,000, accompanied by one or two heavy equipment experts.

Here, I must digress here for a minute. American commodities, financed by the aid program, had to carry a decal showing the American colors and two clasped hands, both of which were white. On the day before the equipment turn-over to tile GOT, I verified

that it looked spic-and-span. Dozens of Togolese were admiring the shiny machines. Several seemed to notice the decals. I asked one what he thought it meant. Without hesitation, the citizen replied "two whites congratulating one another on having pushed off these machines on Africans."

We sent a query to the AID/W's office in charge of the labeling act - I can't recall its acronym but there was a separate office monitoring this statuary requirement - asking why one hand could not be shaded. Two months later, we received a ten page airgram (remember them?) with at least a dozen clearances.
It advised that the thought-provoking question had been discussed at the most senior levels and had been extensively researched by graphics experts. However, it had been impossible to achieve a consensus regarding hues and shadings. The problem revolved around finding a formula that would be acceptable not only to Africans but also to oriental and brown-skinned people. Thus, for the time being the design would be retained though a high-level working group would continue the review of this sensitive issue. We heard nothing further, at least not during my tour and - who knows - the WG may still be pondering this issue.

Regional training center for equipment operators and mechanics
AID/W decided to set up a regional heavy equipment training center for operators and mechanics. Its location would be Togo or Cameroon. By citing statistics re rainfall and the number of rainy days when training would not be feasible in Douala and quoting sensational news reports of a bloody tribal revolt (Bamileke) in Cameroon that would frighten away potential trainees from other countries, Togo prevailed (much to the chagrin of my good friend Jim Roush who headed AID in Yaounde). President Olympio's personal satisfaction of the choice of Lome' guaranteed maximum cooperation by all GOT services.

Public Works was elated when we explained that the GOT's highway equipment would be used to demonstrate repairs (read subsidized maintenance). The Ministry did a first-rate job designing the facility. Our senior equipment advisor and I went to Abidjan to see the French distributors of U.S. equipment (Euclid, Caterpillar, etc). They agreed to provide training for a cadre of foremen and furnish some demonstration material.

Incredibly, as of 1993, the year of my first return visit, the Center was still operating. I understand that after the termination of AID support, the GOT solicited assistance from a series of sources, such as the IBRD and the Entente Fund and, mirabile dictu, it and other African governments apparently continued their (sporadic) contributions. The project is certainly one of the longest lived ones that AID has generated.

One clear lesson is that projects that somehow survive after our contributions cease, are those that the country itself really wanted. For me, it was a great feeling to know that I had had a leading part in the inception of this project and that the basic documents (probably long since shredded) bear my signature.

Self-help fund

Generally speaking, USAID staff, the Ambassador and the GOT were equally unhappy about the long delays that followed the signing of project documents before anything happened on the ground. With the Ambassador's enthusiastic support, we developed the idea of a self-help fund. It would supply one or more critical elements of small community initiatives that exceeded local capacities. The example used to illustrate the project for AID/W was a new village palaver hut. The community would provide all labor and local materials as well as cash for small items, such as nails. In return, we would pay for the aluminum roofing material. The idea was to respond quickly to meritorious proposals and make contributions to local development projects (and permit the Ambassador to cut some ribbons).

The AA/AFR was sufficiently impressed by the concept to have me come to Washington on TDY. The result was a $5,000 trial project which was a great success. Our $100-500 contributions permitted us to respond immediately to a series of small undertakings and extend American assistance into the hinterland. The Embassy appreciated the new capability to respond to reasonable requests from cabinet members and politicians. Just as in our system, they were trying to "bring home the bacon." As Tip O'Neill puts it "all politics is local" probably even more so in African societies.

In later years, the "Ambassador's Self-Help Fund" became an important and popular part of our assistance program or substituted for- it in the absence of a resident AID unit. Tile programming and administration was subsequently turned over to the embassies. The amounts are now, I believe between $100,000-500,000. Later, as a consultant, I found that AID staffs often referred to it irreverently as the ambassador's slush fund. I suppose occasionally the self-help element may have become secondary.

Personally, I sympathize with ambassadors who want to give tangible evidence of American assistance without having to go through the slow AID approval process. There is an old saying "he who gives fast, gives twice"- not exactly AID's normal battle cry (most of the blame lies, of course, with our Congress).

Financing of senior high school attendance

Another of my Togo memories involves an interesting initiative to increase the pool of high school (lycee) graduates for our training program. The existing system, inherited from the French, required tuition payments for the last two years (the baccalaureate). This involved about $100/yr, if my memory serves me right. While this may seem puny, it effectively forced students from poorer families, especially from the countryside, to quit after the 6th year of lycee.

The relatively small number of graduates had a choice of university stipends, offered by France, the USSR (Lumumba University), UNESCO and some European donors. We found it difficult to attract qualified candidates for our four year college training programs. For one, our fringe benefits were not competitive with the annual home leaves, generous allowances, etc., offered by the French. Moreover, the candidates had to pass an English language test and sometimes were apprehensive of the U.S. (these were the early

1960s). We hoped to overcome some of these handicaps by enlarging the pool of lycee graduates and by co-opting students that were studying under AID auspices during their final two years of lycee attendance.

I recall once accompanying the Ambassador to a meeting with the President who wished to review the AID program. When the subject turned to the difficulties we were encountering in identifying Togolese candidates for our training program, the Ambassador took the occasion to point out the dangers that would confront the country once students returned from communist countries. The President laughed, saying he was not concerned. The very exposure to communism was immunizing Africans against indoctrination attempts:
"l spoke to some students back from the USSR. Their visions of the workers' paradise had evaporated when Russians approached them in the streets wanting to buy their neckties. What I am worried about are young Togolese who study in France and get exposed to the Marxist atmosphere of the French university milieu. They are the potential revolutionaries."

After lengthy exchanges with AID/W, we received authorization to go ahead. The GOT Ministry of Education, i.e. its French advisors and inspectors initially opposed our entry into the educational sector. The President, however, welcomed the idea of creating a cadre of American-trained technocrats that would reduce France's monopoly. We worked closely with our USIS colleagues who insured that our protegees were invited to various cultural events. The Ambassador gave a few receptions for these young Togolese to make them feel special. I understood from our training officer who remained for a second tour that the program was a great success and had become the envy of other AID missions who experienced continuing difficulties in recruiting local candidates. Afterwards I lost track of this very low cost, high impact program. But when we suggested a similar approach years later in Morocco, AID/W nixed the idea which apparently did not fit the worldwide development priorities for the current program cycle..

Tied aid
The President had formerly been a senior executive of Lever Brothers. His past preoccupation with profit and loss statements had made him a bit of a bean counter. He liked to be kept abreast of our assistance programs, especially its tangible (read commodity) aspects. He was not above looking the gift horse in the mouth. For instance, he was highly critical of our "tied" aid, pointing out that the use of jeeps in the city was wasteful. Their high fuel consumption and costly replacement parts contrasted poorly with those of Renault-2HP cars with acquisition and spare parts costs that were 75% lower and gas consumption that was almost 80% less than that of jeeps. "You are giving us free razors but we will be stuck for years with your expensive blades". When we offered to divert future deliveries of jeeps to other countries, he thought that there would be a use for them in Togo. But he did have a point.

Measles campaign
A more serious problem was AID's campaign to eradicate measles. As ordered, I called on the Minister of Health, a younger French-trained physician and confirmed Marxist, to

offer Togo's inclusion into the regional project. The Minister immediately queried whether and for how many years the vaccine had been tested in the U.S. (it hadn't) or whether African children were to serve as guinea pigs. Moreover, assuming that this vaccine saved the lives of thousands of children, would American assistance then also feed and cloth them, provide schools, textbooks, train teachers and expand Togo's health system. I pointed out that there is balance of advantage in most propositions. In this case, the question whether it was preferable to save children or let them die seemed to be sufficiently important to be submitted to the President for review and I would recommend so to the Ambassador. The President, of course, ruled in favor of the campaign but emphasized that its very success - which he did not doubt - called for an expansion of American assistance. The Minister of Health died shortly afterwards in an automobile accident and was replaced by a cooperative, though ineffective, older party hack with a 'Medicin Africain" degree.

Well, let's move on. "Au revoir", Togo! (I didn't return for another 30 years).

Back to AID/W - 1963-1965

My next assignment was AID/W. I became the desk officer for Mali and Guinea. Both of these countries were undergoing difficult times. Mali had split off from Senegal and thus, become landlocked. Guinea was the only country that had left the French Community and the Franc Zone. The Soviets thought they could fill the vacuum and turn the country into a communist bastion. The U.S. was trying to preempt the establishment of a USSR base with strategic port facilities on the Atlantic. Thus, our development program was largely a reflection of "overriding political considerations."

From the AID/AFR point of view, Guinea's ambassador (Karim Bangoura) was the outstanding member of the Washington diplomatic corps. He came to the office at least once a week to monitor in detail procurements under our large U.S. import program (CIP). He had me for dinner at his residence a number of times, mainly to discuss American assistance. He followed minutely the progress of the many Guinea students who attended U.S. universities under AID sponsorship and came down hard on those who did not measure up academically or otherwise. I remember his arranging a shot gun marriage between two Guinean students who aspired to unprogrammed parenthood. (Unhappily, a few years later, on his return to Conakry, the ambassador was accused by President Toure of being a CIA spy, incarcerated, tortured and eventually executed).

Regional USAID for Africa (RUA)
Around 1964, the Congress reduced the number of bilateral assistance programs to approximately 40 countries (I don't recall the exact number) worldwide. Washington decided to meet the limitation mainly through major cut-backs in the African region south of the Sahara. This area grouped a large number of countries without much importance to U.S. political and commercial interests. Further, it was reasoned that reductions would have no catastrophic effect on these countries as American assistance was dwarfed by other donors, especially France and the rapidly growing presence of various UN agencies. AID/W determined that the new legislation did not affect regional

programs. Thus, while many USAID offices were closed out, a considerable number of projects, both existing and new ones, were transformed into regional activities.

These were administered by a new AID Mission, located in Washington. It was called the Regional USAID for Africa (RUA) and eventually covered approximately 20 countries. It was structured like a larger field mission, with a director (Manlio DeAngeles), deputy director, controller, executive officer, etc. and, initially, two area operations officers. They functioned as desk officers and "circuit riders". One (Bill Gelabert) was responsible for West Africa and the other one (myself) for the Equatorial/Madagascar region. I had opted for the latter as I had always wanted to see "Great Red Island."

The area officers traveled extensively to help close out bilateral AID posts and to arrange for the take over, generally by the embassies' economic section, of any residual functions. AID offered to reimburse State for the staff time that would be spent on assistance matters. Of course, the ambassadors were not happy about the turn of events as the changes reduced the size of their small embassies and, importantly, the shared administrative expense budget to which AID traditionally contributed disproportionately. Above all, assistance, in the eyes of the host countries, was the most important element in their relationship with the U.S. and, thus, also the largest arrow in the ambassador's quiver. The countries themselves, on the whole, cared little how assistance was being administered as long as it kept coming in some form or another.

RUA's technical experts were formally based in Washington but spent much of their time in lengthy TDY's. The high costs linked to extensive field travel to and within Africa were more than offset by savings in administrative overhead, such as housing, COLA's, tuition, eliminating GSO functions and by centralizing accounting and other responsibilities.

The RUA-system worked surprisingly well. However, within a year or so, it became apparent that the embassies were not able or willing to invest the time and skills that were needed for AID's ever growing paper and data requirements and, particularly, for the on-going monitoring of activities. Thus, an arrangement was worked out under which AID officers were assigned to State under reimbursable details and posted in various African embassies as liaison officers. Slowly, their numbers grew and shortly after I left in 1966, RUA/W moved to Dakar and thence to Abidjan. At the same time, congressional restrictions apparently were relaxed. Before long, AID had again bilateral AID posts as well as regional super missions in East and West Africa. As the old French proverb goes "the more things change, the more they remain the same."

All in all, I believe RUA was a successful attempt to keep aid flowing in the face of congressional restrictions. This was not surprising to many of us with field experience as we had seen that the much larger French, UN and IBRD programs were administered by rather small staffs. Of course, much of this was due to differences in both the nature of the programs and, especially, the legislative requirements.

Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)

In late 1965, I was assigned to the Embassy/Ethiopia under a reimbursable detail. The AA/AFR wanted me to examine ways and means of transferring resources to African countries via the ECA. In essence, the question was whether under a new obligation code, funds could be provided to the ECA which, in turn, would use them for pre-agreed projects in designated countries. Remember, this was the period of congressional restrictions on the number of aid-recipient countries.

The ECA was located in Addis Ababa in a palatial building. It had a large staff, many of them expatriates who were on their second or third career in well-paid positions after having received the famous "Golden Handshake" from the British Colonial Service and/or one of the large multinational firms in the private sector, such as Lever Bros., which was "Africanizing" its operations. Some of the key African staff had received postings to the ECA as a sine cure or political pay-off (this is occurs even in some industrialized countries) and were inefficient. In contrast, the ECA's executive director (Dr. Robert Gardner, a Ghanaian) was a first-rate economist and knowledgeable administrator.

My report was positive on the programmatic side but cautioned that, in the case of audits, ECA accounting and oversight standards fell short of AID and GAO requirements. The ECA conduit would only work if American in-country staffs could monitor projects and resources that were funded from the ECA/AID account. ECA's controller seemed reluctant to set up the accounting mechanisms, i.e. a second bookkeeping system claiming that funds, once allotted to a UN organization lost their identity. If AID were granted audit privileges, other donors could claim the same right. However, Dr. Gardner was very interested in working out some compromise that would increase ECA's funds and invited AID to submit specifics of the financial practices and records that ECA would have to institute.

I understand that the proposal lingered for a long time in AID/W but do not know whether it was finally cleared by the legal and accounting staffs.

Returned overseas to Paris - 1966-1967

In early 1966 I was assigned to Paris as the AID Attache in the Embassy, a State Department secondment. Our office was located in the suite of the Treasury attache. This gentleman ran a semi- autonomous operation, having held his position for over 20 years. My job was liaison and coordination with the various French assistance programs. I reported to the Bureau for Policy Planning and Coordination (PPC) in AID/W.

French aid was bureaucratically split up. Aid to the former African colonies was handled by the Ministry of Cooperation; assistance to the remaining colonies and French territories came under the Treasury in the Ministry of Finance. Anything that pertained to North Africa, especially to Algiers, fell under the Foreign Ministry as did cultural affairs, worldwide. Loans were handled by a powerful, independent credit institution. Purely monetary matters fell under the aegis of the central banks, i.e. one each for West and Central Africa and for Madagascar, all located in Paris. Further, there was a special

Office for African Affairs in the Presidency, headed by the shadowy Jacques Foccart, former head of the French secret services and close collaborator of General deGaulle. Reputedly, his main concern was maintaining pro-French regimes in the former colonies.

General deGaulle was President during this period and prone to take anti-U.S. positions to demonstrate France's independence. This was the time when France quit NATO and all American military installations were moved to other locations. French officials were under strict orders to speak only French in any official contacts and to avoid "franglais" which had been both chic and popular since World War II days.

The Embassy's Minister for Economic Affairs (the late Stanley Cleveland) introduced me to the major players in the various French offices. In the next few months I became familiar with French aid philosophy, plans and operations, especially in Africa and the various players in the bureaucracy. As instructed, I explained AID's approaches and operations. AID's objective was to make our respective aid programs complementary and to avoid duplications by coordination during the planning stage.

The Director of FAC (Fund for Assistance and Cooperation), a pleasant, slightly cynical gentleman, listened carefully. He picked up immediately on the term "coordination" and pointed out that instructions from the top specifically precluded the type of advance coordination that Washington was proposing but that the French aid missions and his offices were prepared to collaborate. "To sum up", he said, "coordination - non; cooperation - oui!".

France with her long colonial history and experience in development operations still considered the newly independent states as her wards. Many of the officials were veterans of the colonial service and had transferred that mentality to their new positions. When we discussed development funds, they remarked that their in-house term for project funds was "write-offs" (fonds perdus). They fully understood but had little concern for sustained development. Their policy line was that all members of the French Community were entitled to assistance. However, once France's contribution to an activity was completed, it was up to the host country to carry on or not, as it saw fit. Beyond this, they expected the African countries, in exchange for assistance (often tailored to French interests) and budget support, to endorse French positions in international forums and to perpetuate France's status as the privileged importer within the Franc Zone.

I found most of the French officials personally friendly but convinced that France's role and experience in her former colonies was sufficiently paramount to obviate the need for exchanging detailed data and program plans with AID. On the other hand, neither- in Paris nor in the field, did the French make the slightest effort to convince us of the correctness of- what they considered- tried and tested approaches to development in Africa. In sharp contrast, AID felt that France and other donors should share their programs with AID at an early stage so that they could benefit from reflect our- frequently changing - new insights and priorities (ranging from project or sector approach to emphases on women, the rural poor, the poorest of the poor, etc.).

On the whole, French officials were disinterested in the details of American aid as long as we did not displace French importers and contractors. The only other sensitive area was a perceived threat of our trying to anglicize the cultural sphere. I had already seen in Togo that the French would try hard to keep us out of the education sector. To them, the intellectual area and, especially, the school system were the underpinnings of the very future of the French Community. The continued predominance of the French language was acclaimed as the essential "mortar" that bound the bricks of the French Community.

The Embassy was responsible for all bilateral economic matters (in contrast to multilateral aspects that fell under OECD/DAC). Throughout my tour, I spent considerable time, e.g. on the Laos currency stabilization fund to which the French contributed only reluctantly. We had ongoing difficulties reconciling U.S. and French requirement calculations. Many French officials who had seen service in Indochina before and during the war felt at best ambiguous about our successor role. Other financial matters involved various loans, e.g. a U.S. proposed moratorium on Chile's payments on all foreign loans.

It took AID/W a long time to understand France's unsentimental, pragmatic view of development as a means to her ends as opposed to AID which considered it the end per se. This reflected that, in contrast to France, we had few political and economic interests in Africa (except for preempting the USSR and China designs).

The outstanding official among my various counterparts was the Director of the Treasury (J. de Larosiere) in the Ministry of Finance who invited me several times for dinner at his house. (later on he became Executive Director of the IMF and President of the Bank of France). He was a member of the Corps of Finance Inspectors from which France - since the days of Napoleon - draws its senior civil servants. Supposedly, this institution served as the model for the Senior Civil Service in the U.S. though the latter never reached the mobility of its French counterpart.

Special letter of credit

My time in Paris paralleled a White House injunction against the purchase of local currencies, including that of CFA, the currency of the former African colonies that formed the French Community. (Guinea and Mali were the exceptions that had decided to go it alone, albeit with catastrophic consequences). The CFA, in turn, was fully convertible into French Francs.

We developed a scheme, called Special Letters of Credit under which AID would deposit a bloc of U.S. dollars with two of the largest French commercial banks. They would finance some of the letters of credits they issued for imports from the U.S. and credit AID's account in French francs/CFA. AID would then use these for program operations in Africa. Thus, AID's periodic reports to the White House would not show any direct conversions. The banks, of course, benefitted from the spread between the !ow interest rate earned the sizeable AID deposits and the high rate they charged their clients for L/C's. As a fringe benefit, I enjoyed a number of truly excellent luncheons in the private dining rooms of the two bank presidents involved.

Inauguration of the Central African Economic Community
During my Paris tour, AID/W nominated me the AID member of the U.S. Observer Delegation to the inaugural meeting of the Central African Economic Community in Brazzaville. I was a veteran as I had been assigned the same role on the U.S. Delegation to the East African Economic Community's initial meeting in Lusaka, one or two years earlier.

The dispatch of this State Department delegation involved the senior levels of State/AID. Congo/Brazzaville had cavalierly disregarded a number of covenants of the Vienna Convention, e.g. the incarceration of an AID officer (Stanley Berenson). The U.S. had suspended diplomatic relations and remanded the protection of its interests to the German Government. The team was met at the Brazzaville airport by the German ambassador in person. He was a friendly, gregarious gentleman with family ties to one of the German champagne dynasties (not Ribbentrop's). The U.S. Delegation benefitted nightly from his large supply of vintage libations.

The Conference achieved little as the French Central Bank could not come to an agreement with Zaire's (Belgian) advisors on terms for monetary and customs integration. The only other thing of importance that I recall is the Delegation climbing up the outside spiral staircase of a large government building. A soldier was stationed on each step. One suddenly dropped his rifle and loudly cursed in Spanish. This incident, confirming the presence of Cuban military, became the subject of an immediate NIACT.
Vietnam
A priority telegram from AID/W suddenly detailed me for 90 days to Vietnam as member of small program review team, drawn from all AID regions. The Ambassador (Chip Bohlen) was incensed that his concurrence had not been requested. The DCM who had just returned from Washington cautioned him that the President had ordered anything Vietnam-connected be given absolute priority. The Minister for Economic Affairs bet me a dinner that I would not make it back to Paris at the end of my 90 day TDY. I knew Saigon as I had been there on a temporary assignment while posted in Laos. However, this pre-dated the American build-up.

My first task involved the HQ administrative budget. I noticed a doubling of the building rent. I asked a colonel why the projection was totally out of line with the escalator clause. "Don't you know who owns the building?"
"No idea, what's the difference? ....”
:This building is owned by Gen. XYZ. If we antagonize him, he'll oppose our fighting here." "Wouldn't that be just too bad," I said.
This short dialogue sums up the HQ mentality of those days (though certainly not that of the men in the boondocks).

Subsequently, our group of about ten AID officers was split up into teams. I was put in charge of the Delta Region. We were to establish what projects were actually underway and analyze what was being planned. USAID had lost track of just what was being implemented and projected. Most of the planning and requirement estimates came from

the military who were engaged in AID-financed civic action projects.

A brigadier general explained that he expected to double the number of schools that his predecessor had planned to construct. We asked about local labor availabilities in the light of the government's new draft quotas. We then posed questions regarding additional fuel needs and how they would be met with some 50 cargo vessels and tankers standing off-shore waiting to be unloaded, what about corrugated roofing, etc. The general referred the questions to a colonel who summoned a major who queried a captain. Shortly after returning to Saigon, the USAID Director commended the team on a great job (I suspect this view was not shared by the military) and assigned me to a special task involving post-war planning. On completion of my part, I was transferred to the Multinational Projects Office which dealt with assistance from other Free World sources, titled so-called "More Flags" program. This activity was a White House priority in an attempt to increase the number of allies, joined in the fight against North Vietnam. Washington went to almost ludicrous length to augment the number of flag poles in front of the HQ building. When a Central American country offered a couple of tons of coffee, a joint Vietnamese-U.S. mission was dispatched to Latin America for the solemn presentation. It was of no importance that coffee was not used by the Vietnamese army.

At close of business on Day 90, I departed for Paris via AID/W.

The Program Office had asked me to hand carry the Mission's draft budget to Washington. The head of the Vietnam Office (Walt "Stony" Stoneman) literally gasped when he saw the four inch-thick submission. On learning that it covered 1400 projects, he sat down in stunned silence.

It is easy today to quarterback our Vietnam involvement. At the danger of being considered a troglodyte, going back 30+years in time, I understand our intervention, the domino theory and the validation of solemn commitments that we had made not only to South Vietnam but also to Taiwan, Israel, Korea and others. Of course, had we known then what we know now, our policies would have been different. AID played a vital and, in many aspects, very positive part. Roads were built, gigantic ports with industrial zones were constructed, the agricultural, health, etc. systems improved and above all, a large and varied body of technical knowledge was transferred. Whatever political systems prevails, the improvements of the country's human resource base and infrastructure that USAID's efforts have left behind will remain a contribution to the improvement in the living conditions of, especially, the rural population. So much for Vietnam.

Back in Paris, I collected my dinner from the Minister Counselor.

Helas, in fall 1967, the Assistant Administrator for Program Planning (Joe Saxe) arrived in Paris. After praising my work, he informed me that my job would be abolished. In spite of explanations, some members of Congress remained highly critical and continued to insist that the position was somehow linked to aid to France. Thus, the Administrator had decided to eliminate the slot altogether.

Assigned to USAID/Thailand - 1968-1971

I moved on to Thailand, at that time a major component of the "domino theory" that was then cited as a principal justification of our involvement in Vietnam. We had a large Mission in Thailand and numerous contract groups. The basic thrust of our program was counterinsurgency (CI), although it also had a classic technical assistance component.

I had the resounding title of "Special Assistant to the Director for Village Security" with the rank of assistant director. In the name of the Director (Howard Parsons; later Rey Hill), I was to act as coordinator between the USAID divisions concerning their CI projects and, in addition, was to head the Village Security Forces division (VSF) which was still on the drawing board. This was the director's pet project. It was intended to assist the Thai to train and equip villagers, enabling them to defend their communities against Thai communist terrorists (CT's in the jargon of the time) and North Vietnamese and Chinese border crossers.

The Thai were not easy to deal with. They were very conscious of never having been under colonial rule and felt that they had a better understanding of Thailand, its needs and problems than non-Thai speaking, non-Buddhist Americans.

There were many American cooks in the CI kitchen besides USAID. In the Embassy there was a Minister-Counselor for CI who job was to coordinate all American elements on behalf of the ambassador. That included the various U.S. military advisory and research groups, the CIA station, USIS and, of course, USAID.
My VSF associates (mostly selected for their experience in Vietnam) and I made extensive field trips to the border provinces in the North and Northeast. We became convinced that villagers must be given tangible reasons why they should go to the effort of organizing themselves and spend part of their working hours on guard and patrols. After many discussions, the Director and Ambassador (Leonard Unger) agreed that the project should be transformed into a village development and security project with the new acronym "VDSF."

We argued that responses to development needs defined by the villagers not by Americans or the Thai bureaucracy in Bangkok would motivate these communities to fight off communist marauders and propagandists. The heavily armed terrorists would appear at night, corral the villagers and lecture them, pointing to GOT neglect and disinterest.

The Thai had their own agenda. They were far less apt than we were to consider their country a domino. Arming of villagers was a contentious issue and, in fact, often opposed by local authorities and especially the police who saw their authority in the villages and over the villagers threatened. "Authority" was frequently a euphemism for levying local taxes and shake-downs.

A compromise was finally reached that limited fire arms to shotguns for the villagers, a fairly ineffective answer to the CT's automatic rifles. However, it was felt that the

American side could not afford to antagonize powerful police generals since the modernization and reorganization of the police force was a priority U.S. objective. In the byzantine, internal GOT power struggles, even this objective was complicated as the army did not want the police strengthened beyond a certain point. The police itself was split into semi-autonomous units, e.g. the airport police, immigration, highway police, RR police, Bangkok municipal police, etc. The one faction that supported our efforts at the village level was the Border Police, the singly best trained unit with its own parachute company. It was considered the King's anti-coup force.

Our immediate counterpart agency was the powerful Department of Local Affairs Division (DOLA) of the Ministry of Interior. DOLA controlled the provincial governors and their staffs, i.e. the government outside of Bangkok. However, both the police and the army felt ambiguous about the emergence of an armed village force, controlled by DOLA, a civilian entity.

To further complicate these on-going power machinations, DOLA's ultimate master was the Minister of the Interior, an army general who also was vice-prime minister.

It was almost impossible for foreigners to appreciate fully the ever shifting ins and outs of these complex maneuvers. While the American side tended to look upon military and civilian assistance in the light of the communist threat to Thailand, the GOT was even more concerned about the implications for the different factions in its internal balance of power struggles.

Within USAID, the Public Safety Division was the largest division and, in some respects, its most powerful with a direct line to AID/W. They were not enamored by the VDSF project as they were trying to make points with their counterparts by defending the position of the Thai police within USAID.

Sir Robert Thompson, the former governor who had put down the Malaysian insurrection was invited to review our VDSF project. He told the Country Team in the presence of the visiting Deputy Administrator (William Gaud) that we had developed a realistic concept (speaking of the development component) and a pragmatic approach to our objective. The VDSF team felt vindicated.

Yet, except for localized successes, the progress of the VDSF project was halting as it simply did not have the full support of very powerful factions within the GOT. Eventually, we drafted a memorandum for the Ambassador pointing out the actions that needed to be taken and what leverage the American side could and should marshal to pressure the GOT. If it were to be the conclusion that such actions were not feasible or counterproductive, the project should be terminated. The Ambassador, after a lengthy rounds of review, concluded that for a number of overriding reasons we should not pressure the GOT to support the project.

The Thai hated the term"advisor" as they felt it put them on an inferior student level. The police were especially sensitive. The colonel in charge of liaison with USAID, member

of an elite family, with two Ivy League degrees, was also the head of the Investigations Division. He complained that he was being "advised" by a former police sergeant, "a high school graduate", he said with contempt. The Director told me to work something out and it was agreed that the signs on the doors of our Public Safety 'experts would simply read "USAID" rather than "USAID Advisor".

The Thai would have done without many of our public safety and a few of the other advisors as opposed to commodities. Privately they pointed out that their perceived inefficiencies, e.g., separate procurement divisions for each police branch, was a essential element of the Thai system (the implications are rather obvious). At the same time we were under great pressure to AID/W to increase the number of police advisors. I remarked to the colonel "look at the jeeps, the radios, laboratory equipment, etc. and simply accept that the bodies come with the goodies." About a year later, the Director asked me to inform the colonel of upcoming major reductions in the public safety project. When I imparted the information over lunch, the colonel smiled sardonically and said "well last year you explained that the bodies come with the goodies. Now, we are saying "fewer goodies, fewer bodies."

Our central counterpart, except for public safety, was the Department of Technical Coordination (DTEC) staffed largely by American educated officials. On the classical technical assistance side, the Thai came closer to AID's definition of looking for transfer of techniques by training, teaching and demonstration than any African country that I am familiar with. Project proposals were elaborated bilaterally, including sizeable Thai contributions (including the cost of housing for U.S. experts) that would increase as U.S. project assistance was being reduced.

The Thai insisted on having counterparts that would understudy our experts and training periods were carefully calculated to dovetail with the project timetables. Even when it came to recurrent costs, the Thai took a very analytical approach to the longer-range budgetary implications. The qualifications of proposed American technicians were carefully evaluated by DTEC. They were not above rejecting a candidate. I remember the case of an automotive motor instructor was turned down because his basic background was in diesel rather than in gasoline engines. I found this assertion of independence by the Thai refreshing and validating the term "cooperation"

Once the head of DTEC complained about the inadequate progress of a technical school project. The Director asked me to investigate. I found that the USAID instructor had no Thai assistants though he had been teaching at this institute for three years. I suggested to him that it might be appropriate to put priority emphasis on training Thai instructors so that the GOT could gradually take over this project. He replied angrily that he had no intention of working himself out of a job as he planned to return for at least another tour. The expert left a few weeks later. He would have fit perfectly into a French aid mission.

Just when the VDSF project demised, I was TDY'd to AID/W to serve on a promotion board. After we had been sworn to evaluate individuals impartially without regard to race, sex, creed etc. the Director of Personnel (Johnny Johnson) made a brief speech

urging us to give special consideration to women and minorities. When asked how this could be reconciled with the oath we had just taken, he gave a graphic response: "you have been very carefully selected in the belief that you have the qualifications to handle an admittedly difficult mandate. Goodbye and good luck!".

Liaison in Geneva during the Nigerian civil war and Biafra crisis - 1971

As soon as the panel had terminated its work, I was TDY'd to Geneva as AID's field contribution to the Presidential Task Group for the Relief of Victims of the Nigeria-Biafran Civil War (or similar, I do not recall the exact appellation). The titular head of the Group was Under-Secretary Elliot Richardson. The actual chief was Ambassador Clyde Ferguson, on leave of absence from Harvard Law School.

My role in Geneva was to liaison with the various aid agencies. This included, first of all, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC); others were the League of Red Cross Societies (LICROSS), the Catholic Relief Service, the World Council of Churches, OXFAM and lesser players. The U.S. Mission in Geneva was headed by Ambassador Roger Tubby, Pres. Truman's former press secretary and Democratic Party stalwart. Before long, the Ambassador would complain that Biafra consumed over half of his time; it also accounted for almost 35% of the Mission's cable traffic.

The most important agency was the ICRC which had delegates working in Nigeria and in Biafra. The U.S. was the major donor of both food and funds. Most of this was channeled through the ICRC. Major policy matters needed to be discussed with its President (M. Naville) who followed developments closely, especially because both parties frequently harassed ICRC field delegations claiming that they were partial to the other side.

One problem was that the President of the ICRC traditionally receives only ambassadors and heads of state. Thus, only the Ambassador could request an appointment and I was trailing in his wake. After some introductory words, he would ask me to state the U.S. position, request or whatever. The ICRC assistant directors, by statute, all Swiss nationals, were highly competent and frequently had a private sector or military background. The ICRC President had been the head of a prominent private bank in Geneva while his successor was a former chairman of Nestle. The ICRC's Nigeria/Biafra interventions were headed by Ambassador Lindt, a very senior Swiss career diplomat (and member of the chocolate dynasty).

While the USG tried to be neutral, a number of the religious assistance agencies acted with a clear pro-Biafran bias, as by all indications, relief flights also ferried arms and ammunition into Biafra.

Parallel with its relief efforts, the U.S. side was negotiating with emissaries of both sides in Geneva, trying to arrange for a compact under which shipments by sea (Cross River) would vastly augment supplies and improve distribution logistics. It was difficult to persuade the Biafrans to agree to any sort of negotiations. I spent hours on the phone with the head of the Biafran delegation in Europe who was based in Frankfort.

Once both sides arrived in Geneva, they would be taken to separate wings of the palatial mansion of one of Geneva's private bankers. The American group, i.e. Ambassador Ferguson, a Pentagon colonel (Eugene Dewey) with a background in logistics, a State Department lawyer and myself would go back and forth between the delegations trying to advance the Ambassador's complicated plan. He explained to us that his approach was based on the 2-tiered Suez Canal Authority project that had been crafted by John Foster Dulles in 1955.

As part of my responsibilities, Ambassador Ferguson dispatched me to Paris to brief the Embassy and backstop them (I knew many of the officials) in enlisting French support for his proposal. A similar mission took me to Portugal as we thought that the Biafrans would listen to the power that controlled shipments (especially of arms) from Sao Tome, then a Portuguese province.

One day, the secretary came into my office saying the foreign minister of Iceland was here to see me. I asked her to show the gentleman to the Ambassador's office as he was evidently on the wrong floor. She returned stating that the Minister wanted to see me not the Ambassador. After the usual courtesies, I again offered to take him to the Ambassador.

The Minister replied that he knew that I represented AID and that was where the money was. He then explained that he had flown to Geneva to explain that Iceland was facing an economic catastrophe. Nigeria had been one of the country's largest customers for its cod fish. The strong communist party was about to pose a vote of non-confidence and the next government would probably formed by them. Their first act would be withdrawal from NATO and the closing of our air base in Keflavik. To survive, the Government needed immediate contracts in the amount of six million dollars for the shipment of codfish to Nigeria/Biafra.

I accompanied the minister to the Ambassador's office. Afterwards we sent a NIACT to State/AID/Iceland, etc. suggesting that action if any (we only knew the minister's version) take the form of an extra credit to ICRC with the proviso that the funds be used solely for cod fish procurement from Iceland. Within hours we were directed to proceed. Most cables from Washington required numerous State/AID/etc. clearances and went out only after the close of business. Due to the time difference, they were received in Geneva after midnight. Under the then existing rules, the action officer (i.e. myself for Nigeria/Biafra matters) had to be informed immediately of incoming NIAC's. Since all this traffic was classified, I had to call for the duty car or a taxi to take me to the Mission in the middle of the night to acknowledge receipt. This could happen two or three times a night.

The AID/W office of the Task force was greatly enlarged over time and was staffed by exceptionally able people, most with overseas experience. Excellent communications and rapid responses made my Geneva TDY a most interesting and rewarding assignment. Now, 30 years later, I remember people like Haven North who eventually headed the Washington end of the operation, Helen Wilson, Hildy Shishkin, Ron Davidson, H.

Kellerman and a few others. Recalling the horror pictures that emerged from Biafra, the members of the Nigeria Biafra task force, in AID/W and Geneva, can claim with good justification and pride that they contributed to a truly humanitarian and, in the end, successful humanitarian initiative..

Returned to USAID/Thailand Bangkok - 1969-1970

The Director/USAID (Rey Hill.) requested my return for a 2nd tour to Thailand to fill the new position of Implementation Officer. Its tasks were broadly defined. The Director and his deputy felt that their field travels involved so much protocol that they seldom had an opportunity to form independent assessments of the over-all impact of our activities. The division chiefs were unavoidably biased advocates of their projects and the evaluation office tended to look at individual projects.

I did not want to lose this challenging job over several extensions of my TDY. Ambassador Ferguson was understanding. Requests for extension of my Geneva assignment went to Bangkok, captioned "from Undersecretary (Richardson) for Ambassador/USAID Director" and couched in the first person ending "request your priority concurrence". Lo and behold, they always concurred promptly.

Back in Thailand, I traveled extensively. We had a network of provincial offices, patterned a bit on USAID/Vietnam, headed by senior area representatives. These were, for the most part, seasoned AID veterans.

My immediate task was an examination of this system, level of delegations from USAID/Bangkok, existence/lack of parallel structure on the GOT side, imbalances in authorities, how to strengthen coordination of the USAID and Thai budget process at various levels, etc.

Much of the job was a public relations effort within USAID. I was always careful to discuss problems and recommendations for possible solutions with the responsible division chiefs and avoided springing any surprises. Some observations, especially, in the personnel field, I made orally on a personal basis. This was much appreciated and earned me some chits that I could redeem at later occasions. Whenever possible, I involved the Thai counterparts in the process. Even the most worthwhile efforts became largely ineffective when the GOT did not support them. I had learned a good deal in this respect from the VDSF project.

This was a great job as I loved the extensive field travel involved. During my first tour I had taken night classes to acquire some facility with Thai, not an easy the language. While I never reached the level of professional conversancy, l knew enough to break the ice. I had the advantage of remembering some Lao, an older, closely related country dialect. This got me occasionally in trouble as some perfectly respectable Lao words have become four-letter words in the more evolved modern Thai language. I will spare the reader an example.

I oversaw a Mission evaluation of our staff's Thai language capabilities. We had several ex-Peace Corps volunteers who were quite fluent. However, only a minority of Americans could cite a few courtesy formulas, count or ask simple directions, even after having spent more than one tour in country. Of course, there was also a number of individuals who made it their hobby to learn Thai. The Director wanted to attach a minimum language qualification to all positions. He pointed out that any Thai embassy officer in Washington who couldn't count to ten in English after two years in America would be considered an idiot. Surprisingly, the proposal encountered considerable opposition at the senior staff meeting.

Points raised involved budget implications, loss of time from work during business hours, legal aspects of requiring mandatory overtime, lack of need to know the local language in view of the many counterparts who spoke English, disruptions of the assignment cycle in AID/W if a one month course were required there, etc.

The matter was to receive additional study and I lost track of what happened. I found it unacceptable that some Foreign Service members refused to make the slightest effort to communicate in the language of the host country. Such individuals, undoubtedly upstanding citizens, should stay home and not be assigned to overseas positions, all of which include a measure of cross-cultural relations.

New assignment in USAID/Morocco - 1971-1975

Though I was to fill the number two position (Deputy Mission director), I arrived as Acting Director. Ten days later, Morocco underwent a failed but bloody military coup against the King that traumatized the government for months.

A word about the general setting of the USAID program: the GOM felt that it was entitled to American assistance for the important military base rights and stand-by facilities that we enjoyed. While there existed specific payment modalities for these military accords, the GOM considered all American aid as a quid pro quo. Moreover, the country exercised a moderating influence on more extreme members of the Arab League and Kind Hassan II was an important go-between in Middle East negotiations that were of great importance to Washington.

Understandably, the Embassy was not prepared to spend a lot of effort on the USAID program which was dwarfed in size and importance — and appreciation — by U.S. military assistance.

Our program was undergoing major changes. In past years, our assistance programs had emphasized large-scale infrastructure projects, e.g. the construction of the Lower Mouiouya multi-purpose dam. Under new guidelines, such undertakings were to be left to other donors and, especially, to the World Bank. We were to stress that any funding by the latter included a 25% contribution by the USG. Simultaneously, we were cutting back on our non-project financing of imports (CIP). The Moroccan-titled local currency funds that it generated provided a very flexible funding mechanism and required much less

documentation than standard, dollar-financed projects.

The GOM took badly to this change in AID's approach. They stated bluntly that the country needed U.S. assistance for major projects. The Minister for Cooperation (the former "tough hombre" Minister of the Interior) told us point blank that technical assistance was available from a dozen donor countries. “Technicians stand in line to come to Morocco and they even speak French."

Moreover, Morocco adhered to the French OPEX (operating executive) style of technical assistance under which foreign experts fill slots rather than formally train and demonstrate. Except for Thailand, this was the definition of technical assistance in most countries with whom I was acquainted. The GOM felt that their junior officials would learn from OPEX experts by osmosis and informal understudying. Those who returned from abroad after training would be placed into appropriate position, under a "swim or drown" approach.

At times, I felt that the Moroccans went along with our technical assistance projects, to some extent, as a quasi good will gesture. We found it difficult to obtain genuine cooperation from GOM officials in planning and evaluation of projects. Exceptions were the commodity components, especially vehicles and certain types of training activities.

For long-term higher education courses, most students preferred to go to Europe, especially France. Given the country's French-based legal and administrative system, this was understandable. Moreover, France, in an obvious attempt to coopt the next leadership generation, provided stipends, home leave transportation, etc. that were more generous than those provided under our training program. However, increasingly, Moroccan students started to look to the U.S. for higher education in technical disciplines, both under AID auspices or self-funded. Those who had received their education in both France and the U.S. felt that American institutions were far ahead in teaching practical applications of scientific and technical subjects.

I am convinced that over the years our training programs have made major contributions to Moroccan development and at the same time have imbued a small, but growing segment of Moroccan leaders in government and the private sector with American methods and values. Our technical assistance programs did contribute, in a more limited way, to Morocco's socio-economic progress in various spheres. Unfortunately, by frequently not providing qualified counterparts, as provided in the project agreements, the GOM did not fully exploit these projects.

One of the basic shortcomings of our approach was that we wanted some of the technical assistance projects more than the GOM. We knew that they would frequently not make their contributions as stipulated in the project agreements. However, the greatest sin a USAID could commit was not to obligate its funds. We took cover by advancing the argument that we had no right to question a commitment by a sovereign nation a priori.

Morocco had been selected by AID/W as a testing ground for the application of the new

sector approach which was to revolutionize the development process. We were instructed to explain AID's new approach and obtain clearance for a AID/W team to cooperate with the GOM in recasting the AID program. The GOM was totally unsympathetic and disinterested.

The Minister of Finance, product of a French elite school, was now in charge of cooperation. We had met with him several times to expound the advantages of AID's new concept and left pour memoirs with him. At a final meeting on the subject, he stated that after a discussion within the GOM, he was authorized to concur in the team' s TDY. However, this was subject to the understanding that the team would work in the USAID office and in no way impose on the existing workload of GOM officials. They were currently overwhelmed by priorities set by His Majesty. "Your team and yourselves can prepare any papers and documents that you feel you need for your projects". Even today I recall how grating the Minister's use of the phrase "your projects" rather than "our joint projects" was.

Of course, our reply to Washington recognized AID's enthusiasm over its new orientation and couched the GOM position rather diplomatically, somewhat like "GOM concurs but in view of space and logistic limitations wants team to be located on USAID premises. GOM also points out that series of highest priority assignments, personally set by King, will regrettably impose major limitations on contacts with responsible GOM officials. We appreciate that sector approach team's TDY assistance will greatly help to strengthen our program."

AID/W, particularly its GS officials, were frequently unable to understand how host countries could fail to share Washington's excitement over new developmental insights and were not interested in adopting AID's complicated documentation and regulations. AID/W rarely appreciated that countries with French traditions found it difficult to accommodate a additional system for, e.g., procurement and accounting procedures. AID/W also failed to realize how small many of our assistance programs were compared to those of the French, IBRD and, sometimes, of UN organizations; too small to justify a dual system in the eyes of our hosts.

The Ambassador, in making his Washington rounds while on TDY, had repeatedly discussed at senior State levels and with the AID Administrator and his staff, the GOM's lack of appreciation for our technical assistance program. From his point of view, it did little to advance U.S. objectives in Morocco. He liked the presence of an AID Mission but urged that the program be shaped to meet Moroccan concerns, i.e. visible infrastructure-type undertakings, non-project assistance, large-scale loans. Of course, AID/W's hands were bound.

My first major task in Morocco had been the drawing up of a five year phase-out plan for the aid program. But a year later, no one mentioned this any more. For one, State feared that the Moroccan might interpret termination as a sign of U.S. disengagement and, equally important, the Bureau plainly did not really want to shrink its size, staff and budget. It is now 25 years since I left Morocco and the USAID is still carrying on. I

would guess that it is occasionally mandated to come up with a multi year phase-out plan.

Transferred to USAID/Liberia - 1975-1978

My next assignment was Liberia, a unique country, one of the few in Africa (only Ethiopia comes to mind) that did not have a colonial history. However, the Afro-Americans that settled the country in the last century imposed their own brand of colonialism on the native population. The country was still totally dominated by an urban elite, composed of the descendants of the American colonists whose group had been augmented by marriages with native Liberians. The members of this group belonged to a power triumvirate of the Baptist church, the Freemasons and the True Whig Party. This group was collectively known (and addressed) as "the honorables." Their small size can be gauged by the fact that only 2-3% of the population were native English speakers. Though many people, especially in the cities, spoke Liberian English (an interesting patois), it was their second or third language.

Going back to WW II, the U.S. had important naval, airport and communications installations in Liberia. Concurrently, the country was one of the first recipients of official U.S. assistance in the post-war period. Up to that time and continuing, Liberia was a favorite for missionary activities. These included major contributions to the health and education systems, including the country's best university. Elite families, frequently with dual nationality, customarily sent their children to American universities. Many of them married Americans and their children carried both passports. The U.S. dollar was/is Liberia's official currency which further strengthens its ties with the U.S..

At the time of my arrival, our aid program in Liberia had been in existence for close to 30 years without showing commensurate results. This was largely due to collusion, corruption and venality of the officials and staff entrepreneurs involved. The GOL rarely lived up to its obligations under project agreements; there was generally a shortfall in their monetary and staff contributions. Recurrent expenses were not institutionalized in the budget so that projects ended shortly after U.S. support phased out.

In 1978 we reactivated the Washington Booker Vocational School project for the 4th or 5th time. Every time, upon project expiration, the GOL had failed to maintain the buildings; teachers went unpaid and started up workshops, stealing machinery, tools and materials that had been supplied by the project.

A similar case was the JFK hospital that resulted from a request by the late President Tubman (the current president was his son-in-law) during a call on the White House. The AID-funded construction of the mammoth plant was started without adequate planning for staffing, recurrent expenses, etc. The GOL was finally able to obtain physicians from SIDA, the Scandinavian donor coalition. They had left by the time I arrived and the hospital was understaffed and broke. The sole exception was the famous 4th floor that was reserved for treatment of the "honorables" and was perfectly equipped and staffed.

AID/W simply did not like to face up to the problems of our AID program. The key to

the situation was the simple fact that the Liberian program was to an important extent a U.S. domestic policy problem. I have indicated above some of the affinities between the U.S. and Liberia. To this should be added the feeling by some American circles and officials that criticism of Liberia reflected negatively on Africa and American minorities.

Once, while I was in charge, the Mission received a request for a "frank and concise assessment of our assistance program" (sic, I recall this wording all too well). Our reply started with the sentence "Liberia is corrupt from stem to stern. There are no rewards for faithful work nor sanctions for mal-and misfeasances." Happily, I had taken the precaution of adding at the bottom of the lengthy message "Ambassador (W. Beverly Carter) concurs with this assessment". Within hours, I received a phone call from the Office Director for West Africa expressing the AA/AFR's outrage over the negative tone of the message. I could only point to the request for a "frank" assessment and suggest that she call the Ambassador.

The correctness of our assessment had been buttressed by a personal experience, a few weeks earlier. One evening the (lady) Deputy Minister of Health, whom I knew quite well, came to my residence unannounced. "l was just in the neighborhood and thought I would drop by for a minute". The basic purpose of the visit was to let me know that the Minister was a partner in a firm that had entered a proposal for the construction of rural health facilities. The bids would be opened the following day and the contract let. I pointed out that I was not involved at all in the award phase and allowed that in America "where you spent a number of years, your bid could be considered a conflict of interest". The Minister replied tartly "you Americans always talk of conflicts of interest; in Liberia we speak of fusion of interests", an elegant way of describing local mores.

The USAID had some very good, perceptive people. We knew that the ever-widening gap between have's and have-not's, especially in Monrovia, some day, would lead to disaster as, indeed, it did. Unfortunately, this was the very period when AID had settled on a new priority: "the poorest of the poor" in the rural areas.

We had just proposed two new projects, one that would build and organize decent markets in Monrovia and up-country towns whose present facilities was incredibly unsanitary with rivers of mud running between the stalls during the rainy season and flies and cockroaches feasting on unrefrigerated meat, etc. We showed how fees for stalls would meet recurrent expenses and make this a self-supporting project after the construction period.

The second proposal called for loan financing of some agricultural processing plants in rural areas. These would provide employment/cash incomes for members of subsistence farm families and tie them into the monetary circuits. We pointed out that every society had a component of physically and mentally down-and -outs, analogous to mortally wounded soldiers. This group should be helped by charitable organizations, it would never become self-sufficient. The Mission proposed to address the walking wounded who could be rehabilitated.

A terse message from AID/W rejected the project proposals and expressed great concern about the urban orientation of the first one and the extension of the second beyond the poorest of the poor in the second as agro-industrial entrepreneurs would also benefit from the loans.

If nothing else, this shows that it is by far safer to be wrong at the right time rather than be right at the wrong time. Later developments in Africa and other areas show that revolutions are more apt to start in impoverished cities than in rural areas and that monetizing rural economies is a major key to their development.

I have pointed out earlier how important the involvement of cultural anthropologists can be. Here is another example. In pursuit of its women-in-development mandate, AID/W unilaterally dispatched a lady nutritionist who was to design a project providing better diets for pregnant women in rural areas. She wrote a learned treatise showing that greater consumption of eggs by the target group would provide the needed protein source. She did this rather in isolation, consulting text books rather than local missionaries or at least some village elders. They all would have explained that in the local tribal area the number one "no, no", a absolute taboo during pregnancy, was the ingestion of eggs. In the local belief, children whose mothers had eaten eggs, would invariably be born malformed. Cultural values can only be modified through lengthy, broad-based educational processes. Single issue "parachutists" from Washington are rarely the solution regardless of their best intentions.

Liberia was a fascinating but frustrating experience. It was a perfect setting for a Joseph Conrad or Graham Greene novel. It is nothing short of tragic that the U.S. failed to use its influence and the millions of aid dollars to move the country toward a more open political system, attenuation of tribal tensions and a narrowing (rather than widening) of the gap between urban and rural populations and rich and poor in the cities. While AID abetted this "know-see-hear no evil" approach to Liberian realities, it only carried out higher policy.
When I read about the civil war, the massacres and return to primeval times in Liberia, I ask myself with a certain sense of guilt how our policy could have been so shortsighted. Knowing that so many people whom I knew have perished in the bloody upheavals of the past years, is depressing. Hopefully, some of the Mission's loyal employees and some of the people in whom we had invested for a better future for Liberia have survived and can contribute to the reconstruction.

Last field assignment in USAID/Niger - 1978-1979

My last field assignment was in Niger which presented a stark contrast to Liberia. It differed from most African countries as it had an austere, honest military government. Its people were typical Sahelians, deeply devout Muslims who formed few personal friendships with foreigners.

The country seemed to have a great future based on its uranium reserves in the North. Proceeds, still small at the time, were placed into a development trust fund. Japanese

interests expected to develop a second mine and planned an investment of $700 million. Annual royalties were projected to reach $ 200 million in a few years. (Alas, the uranium market collapsed).

Our programs were largely targeted at the food supply — the area had recently undergone a devastating drought — and a GON priority: the fixation of nomadic tribes. This was a fascinating project, quite different from our classic concerns. I found it challenging to become involved in the study of the Tuaregs, their way of living, value systems, etc.. We did engage a English anthropologist who was considered the foremost expert on the Tuareg, partly as a check on the information and data that the GON supplied. This was a long-range project and still in the state of preparatory studies when I left.

I participated with Peace Corps volunteers in a short course in the Hausa language, the commercial lingua franca of West and Central Africa, analogue to Swahili in East Africa. However, the military and most GON officials came from another tribe, speaking a totally different language. My studies never got very far but my knowledge of numbers and of a number of assorted phrases got me better deals in the markets.

Niger to me, was the essence of a Sahelian country and of the austerity imposed by Nature. The GON seemed to appreciate American assistance and was very serious about development. My tour was short as I had come on a mid-term transfer. Unfortunately, it also had realized that American T.A. projects continued even if they did not make the full contributions, stipulated in the project agreement. Of course, sudden crises can make it impossible for a host country to live up to its obligations. But, generally, USAIDs preferred to overlook host country defaults and to make up shortfalls rather than terminate a technical assistance projects, once it was underway and discontinuation would have required transfer of technicians, cancellation of procurement orders, etc. and unwelcome budget adjustments. Hopefully , AID is taking a firmer approach now.

Final assignment in AID/W - 1979-1980

My last year before retirement was spent in a variety of short-term assignments in Washington. A particularly interesting detail was in the Office of the Director of Personnel. I served with a small task group that analyzed the draft of the new Foreign Service Act from AID's perspective and negotiated changes, reflecting AID concerns, with State, the lead agency.

Immediately upon retirement in 1979, I was rehired as a FS/L to rewrite AID's promotion precepts and to revise its language requirement and training policies. The proposals for changes in the promotion regulations were accepted with very few changes. Language policy recommendations lingered for years in a gridlock between the personnel and budget offices. I lost track of the outcome.

In subsequent years, I performed numerous consultancies for AID/W and private firms, mainly in Africa.

Some conclusions

Recently, the Frontlines reported that the Administrator has proclaimed a new departure in AID policy: henceforth we will engage only in projects that the host country really desires. Amen! Hopefully, this enlightened approach (I didn't realize that it was new) will specifically include:
a) a prohibition against AID/W and/or USAID pressuring a government to request a development project about which it feels ambiguous. Such projects, even if completed, will almost invariably fail once donor support ends. Project documentation should include an affidavit by the USAID director that i) the project was requested by the host government, ii) that it has a high priority in the country's development plan, iii) the rationale why the country can and will provide the contributions detailed in the agreement and provide any resources that may be required to continue the activity after USAID's phases out support.

b) recognition that the urban elites from whom our counterparts are generally drawn, are frequently insensitive to the needs and values of the rural populations and may not reflect their true priorities.

c) realization that projects cannot be delivered in the form of fit-all-countries molds but must be tailored to reflect each host country's specific requirements and settings.

d) insistence that host countries contribute increasing resources during the life-of project term and institutionalize the activity by agreeing to set up a budget line item for recurrent expenses and amortization of capital goods, concurrent with the end of project support. Only this can assure the survival of a project after AID's support terminates.

e) a basic requirement (allowing for exceptions) that T.A. projects be discontinued or proportionately down-sized when host governments fail to live up to their commitments. Failed or failing projects should not be allowed to become USAID or AID/W ego trips, safe berths for technicians or become Potemkin-type shams to justify appropriation requests.

Strict adherence to these precepts should strengthen AID's T.A. programs greatly and permit them to make more effective contributions over the longer run.

Final reflection

As I look back on my years with the Foreign Assistance Program, I am left, with the rewarding realization that this part of my life was spent constructively. Through my service with America's foreign assistance programs, I had the unique opportunity to participate in what Arnold Toynbee called the twentieth century's greatest achievement: history's first example of systematic assistance by the advanced countries to poorer fellow nations.

End of interview