The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

ROBERT J. KOTT

Interviewed by: Raymond Ewing
Initial interview date: November 21, 2000

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Petroleum
Human Rights Policy
US visit of Dictator Olusegun Obasanjo
President Carter visit to Nigeria
US commercial interests
US investment in Nigeria
Corruption
US Trade and Development Program
Chinese activity
French economic activity

State Department; FSI; Economic training 1979

Yaoundé, Cameroon; Economic/Commercial Officer 1980-1981
Environment
French influence
Military assistance
Self Help Committee
US commercial interests
Chad evacuation

Lilongwe, Malawi; Deputy Chief of Mission 1981-1984
Environment
The British
Tobacco
US regional objectives
Foreign embassies
Relations
President Hastings Banda
Exiled opposition
Orton and Mrs. Chirwa
US aid
UN voting record
Foreign assistance to Malawi
Self Help Program
Malawi military

State Department; South Africa Desk Officer 1984-1985
Office environment
US Policy

State Department; Personnel- European Assignments 1985-1986
Work environment
Operations

INTERVIEW

[Note: This interview was not edited by Mr. Kott]

Q: This is an Oral History interview with Robert J. Kott. It's the 21st of November 200. This is being conducted under auspices of Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. My name is Raymond Ewing. Bob, I see that you entered the Foreign Service in

1971, but it looks like you perhaps had some prior government or military service before that. But, let me sort of back you up. If you could tell us first a little bit about where you grew up, and how you got interested in the Foreign Service.

KOTT: Fairly easy answer, Ray. Born and raised in New York City, went to school in New York City. Joined the Peace Corps after college, and went to India for two years and that sort of changed my life and gave me some direction as a young pup. From there I went back to graduate school at the University of Oregon to do a Masters program in International Studies focusing mainly on South Asian studies. I took the Foreign Service exam while I was out there, somewhat of a lark because I was really more interested in development work, either with an NGO (non-governmental organization) or USAID (United States Agency for International Development). In fact I had applied to USAID and had been accepted for I think it was their Vietnam refugee relief program, something to that effect as my memory serves me. I continued on at school as I was being processed into the Foreign Service and I got a call one day and they were offering me a position, so left Oregon and joined the Foreign Service.

Q: Where had you gone to undergraduate college?

KOTT: St. John's University in New York City, political science major.

Q: Why don't you say a little bit more about your Peace Corps experience? You were in a village in India?

KOTT: Indeed. Yes. It was eye opening, life-changing one might say. It was basically a general community development program, in those days Peace Corps programs were less focused and more general than they eventually grown into. We were specifically supposed to be working in agricultural development, right out of New York City. Had to learn what a cow and a tree was, before I could to that. But anyway, basically, we were there to be change agents, working with government counterparts in areas that were newly brought under irrigation. The Indian government was irrigating at a furious rate back in those days, in the early stages of the "green revolution," so called. They were introducing the miracle crops: miracle wheat, hybrid corn, hybrid sorghum. I was on the Deccan Plateau in southern India, a sorghum producing area. And they wanted us to help the government efforts to introduce to the farmers the hybrid crops, so as to take better advantage of the newly irrigated fields that were being brought into production, at the great expense to the Indian government of course.

Q: You refer to it as "we." Were there several Peace Corps volunteers working I the same village, doing this kind of work, or were you pretty much by yourself?

KOTT: Both. Generally, we were assigned individually to the village, but the group that I came in with; we were trained as a group and was divided into two areas in the state, so that there might have been 12 of us within a 20 mile radius in one part of the state and 12 of us in another similar situation. As it turned out, I had been assigned to a city, rather

than to a village, and that proved not to be so very productive for a number of reasons, but largely a Peace Corps experience really is one of a village experience, and so after about a year in the city, I wasn't very happy, don't forget I was not being terribly productive there, I moved out to a village where there was another Peace Corps volunteer from my group and a good friend of mine, and worked with him, doing what I earlier described plus other general community development-type projects. He helped start a cooperative through a grant from the CARE (Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere). That proved to be very productive and lasted a number of years and may still be in existence as far as I know. Introducing things as hybrid chicken and that sort of thing, the usual Peace Corps experience. He left earlier and I stayed behind and remained in the village by myself.

Q: India must have had quite an impact on you if you decided to do South Asia graduate work at the University of Oregon. Was it that experience…?

KOTT: Yes, absolutely. India is the kind of place, I think most people would agree, you either hate it or you love it. If you can last more then a week in India, you probably love it and fall in love with it. Upon arrival, my only culture shock that I can remember in my whole life, of course it was my first real overseas experience other than student trips to Europe, after about three days got over culture shock and on we went. India is a way of life, it's an existence, Hinduism, even though it is not a completely Hindu country of course, is so over-compassing, it's not just a religion, it's a way of being. Obviously if you are with and amongst the people and in a rural setting and participate as most Peace Corps volunteers do, speak a little of the local language, it grows on you. To this day, it still is my first love, even though I never got reassigned back there as a Foreign Service officer, I always wanted to but I didn't.

Q: What years were you in India?

KOTT: The end of 1966 until the beginning of 1969. Effectively just over two years, it sounds like four years but it was just over two years.

Q: Because I was in Pakistan in 1965, when there was a war between Pakistan and India, but that war didn't last very long and the next wars did not clear until 1971, which resolved in Bangladesh. So India must have been, it was peaceful time…

KOTT: Yes it was relative peace, it was going through, it was just coming out of a great drought and famine that occurred in the mid '60s. After the fact, I learned in the chartered India aircraft, that took our Peace Corps group and another Peace Corps group to India from JFK in New York, was sitting, in the first class compartment, Mrs. Gandhi, Prime Minister of India of the day, who was returning after visiting Lyndon Johnson in Washington, asking for American wheat. And apocryphally Lyndon grabbed the lady by the sari and said, "If you want my wheat you take my Peace Corps volunteers." That is how we got up to something like 1,400-1,500 Peace Corps volunteers in India when I was there. It was certainly the largest Peace Corps program in the world. Of course I found out

later that Mrs. Lillian Carter was in India as a volunteer, the mother of the would-be President, in Maharashtra state, not terribly far from where I was. I didn't know her at the time, of course. There were huge numbers of volunteers there. We had four Peace Corps administrative offices around the country: New Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta and Bangalore. My group and others were assigned to Bangalore region, that is how big it was.

Q: You told about how you took the Foreign Service exam when you were at the University of Oregon, and would have been more interested if USAID had come with an offer, or some other development organization.

KOTT: They did come with an offer, for their refugee relief program in Vietnam, and because my draft status at the time was 1A, I opted to go with AID. I was being processed for a position with AID in Vietnam, in fact I had even gone for my official passport, dip-passport of the day. While I was still a student at Eugene, in fact it was my first semester in graduate school when I got a letter or a call from AID, they were dropping my application. Happily, we had on our very small staff at the Institute that I was studying at in Eugene an AID senior officer who was on the sabbatical. Ed Merishulo was his name, and I asked him, "Ed, what's this all about, I thought I was being selected into the Foreign Service for AID and not being dismissed so readily?" He said, "Oh, we are having a RIF (Reduction in Force), and of course the first people we are going to RIF are the applicants." It's not even a RIF as far as they are concerned, they are just dropping them. He said, "It had no bearing on your application, obviously you had been selected, but, they were just cutting back."

So, as it turns out, as luck would have it, I was able to convert my 1A draft status into a student deferment on medical grounds, happily nothing terribly severe but just enough to keep me out of the draft and continued on with my studies, took the foreign service test, and in 1971 joined the Foreign Service.

Q: You came to Washington and did the basic training program at the Foreign Service Institute, which we probably don't need to cover because that has been covered many times, but what happened to you then?

KOTT: I got assigned to Indonesia, which I was delighted with, in fact it was a bit of a competition because one or two other classmates in my junior officer class wanted to go there. I suppose because I had been studying not Southeastern Asian studies per se but South Asian studies at graduate school and had been in India and virtually begged to go to that part of the world, they did assign me there. So I felt rather fortunate. It was the standard vice-consul, two-year assignment, preceded by ten weeks of Indonesian language training.

Q: Had you have a foreign language through the Peace Corps or otherwise that at time became handy in Foreign Service?

KOTT: En principe [French: in principle], yes. We were trained in the local language of

the area we were assigned in India, which was a language called Kannada, it's a Dravidian language, spoken probably by 30, 40, 50 million people today, but of really no use outside the Mysore state in India. So I did not have any world language. I had a little smattering of French from high-school, college, but not enough to say I could speak it.

Q: Ten weeks of Indonesian did not get you off language probation either, I would assume.

KOTT: Almost. Not quite, but Indonesian was called a hard language but in fact it is probably the world's easiest language.

Q: The easiest hard language?

KOTT: The easiest hard language. There are virtually no tenses, no conjugation of verbs, my kind of language. After ten weeks, I got a one plus and after I got to post I got a two, which got me off language probation, which is probably the best of all possible ways to get off language probation.

Q: You were assigned to the Embassy in Jakarta, strictly in the consulate, always doing basic officer work?

KOTT: Virtually, yes, under the auspices of a more senior consular officer, I was the vice-consul. Did my time in the trenches. But it was good fun.

Q: Indonesia in those days was not quite the economic dynamo and the political situation hadn't devolved to what it is now.

KOTT: Yes, I got there a few years after the coup in which Suharto replaced Sukarno and was consolidating power. It was certainly in the early days of their economic development program. Oil was coming on stream but it was not the significant factor that it is today. Lot of American investment, lot of American business interest in the country. Again, as I said earlier I was basically strictly doing consular work and only marginally involved in anything else. I was a secretary of the American Men's Association, which was largely a business, almost quasi Chamber of Commerce kind of thing. I did a little bit of political work, in terms of travel I did some consular travel out to interesting places like New Guinea.

That was an interesting trip, in as much as it is a really quite a remote place. Those who have been there know what I am talking about. There are primitive people living up in the highlands, people down in the south, the Asmat people. We met for example probably the last people who saw Michael Rockefeller alive, before he perished, son of governor Nelson Rockefeller, who was down doing some anthropological work in that part of the world. We were taken around by missionaries in mangrove swamps where you would get lost in five minutes if you did not have a guide, places where cannibalism was practiced just two or three years earlier.

Q: What was the political status of New Guinea at that time?

KOTT: As it is today. The western half of the island of New Guinea is part of Indonesia. Irian Barat it is called. The eastern part is Papua. In those days it may have been still a part of Australia and Germany, I am not sure if it was independent.

Q: So you only went in the western part.

KOTT: Yes, it was just a one-week trip out there.

Q: You mentioned missionaries that were visited on that trip. Was the American missionary community overall in Indonesia an important element that you needed to keep in touch with, or not particularly?

KOTT: Well, as I recall, they seemed to be a good number of them throughout the archipelago. Indonesia is a country of thousands of islands, not all of which are populated of course. Indonesia was also the world's largest Muslim country, in terms of numbers of people who professed to be of the Islamic faith. In those days I think the population of Indonesia was about 120 million. Today it's probably more like 200 million. There were a considerable number of both Protestant and Catholic missionaries and in fact in New Guinea interestingly, they, by what historical antecedence I don't know, but they sort of divided the island up, if I can say that, amongst themselves. The highland areas in the central part of the island, and we are talking about the worlds fourth largest island geographically, physically, belonged to the Protestants. They clearly got the better part of the deal because the climate was much better up there than in the low land. The low lands down south in the Asmat area belonged, so-called, to the Catholics, and respectively when we visited both areas our hosts were Protestant missionaries up in the north and center or the Catholics down south.

We flew in a Mission Aviation Fellowship single engine aircraft over the mountain range to get from north to south. As we were flying, my wife was sitting on an old wooden milk crate on the place, they did not have a seat for her, and we were up in the clouds at about 12,000-13,000 feet and I started scratching my left ear and started talking to the pilot, "Do you know where you are?" and he said, "Well, not exactly. I know that there is a big mountain peak to the left, and there is a big one to the right, we can't see them, they are about 10,000, 11,000 feet. But they are the highest mountains between the Himalayas and the Andes."

Q: So that was rather impressive.

KOTT: We landed on a dirt runway and from there we transferred into a sea plane as I recall because in the south in this mangrove swamp the only way to get around is by sea plane or canoe, of course.

Q: And your wife was able to make that trip with you?

KOTT: Yes, it was wonderful, great fun.

Q: Anything else we should cover in connection with your first assignment in Jakarta?

KOTT: No, I think it was pretty uneventful.

Q: Where did you go from there?

KOTT: I decided that I would like to see Africa. Maybe a mistake. In those days, if you remember, you wrote to your counselor a letter stating what your career interests were, preferences, etc, etc. I said I wanted to go to Africa and I wanted to learn French. I had been struggling with French in high school and college, but never really learned it, so I thought I'd like to get some training in French and then go off to an African post to accomplish more than just see Africa and learn a little bit about Africa, but I also thought perhaps I really didn't want to spend what I perceived might be a career of 30-35 years in those days, under the old act, doing strictly consular work. Stamping visas, issuing passports, that sort of thing. Of course, we were coned, I was coned as a consular officer, still not yet tenured after two years in Jakarta, but though I ought to take advantage of trying to get, test my hand in doing something else besides, consular work. Realizing the realities if you will. I knew I could not ask to go to France or some major post and expect to be doing political or economic work, but I thought if I went to a place a little bit out of the way, a small embassy, there I might be able to fit into a position, sort of a Jack-of-all-trades and might split my time. I did not mind doing consular work, I just wanted to try doing something else as well. They wrote back to me and said, "Good, that's great, we'll send you to Zaire." I immediately wrote back a letter and said that was not quite what I had in mind, I was thinking of something small where I could get a more broad brush exposure because I think I'd be pigeon-holed if I went to a place like Zaire.

Q: Which had a very large embassy.

KOTT: Which was a much larger embassy, right. I'd have probably wound up going to the consular section again, which would have defeated the purpose. It would have got me to Africa but I really wanted to get a more diverse experience professionally. Happily, they wrote back to me and said, "Okay. How about Togo?" And I said, "That's great, that's just kind of what I want." Small post, I think it was going to be a basic four State Department Officer post plus a few other agencies. I would get French training and I'd go out there as the Economic/Commercial and Consular Officer. And that sounded fine, sounded like a great junior officer position.

So I went back to Washington. I was supposed to go back just for home leave and French training and be out to post in spring. I walked into the door of my friendly personnel officer and they said, "Kott, Kott, who are you? Yes, fine. The Ambassador decided he really didn't want you at the post until summer, so that means it's going to be eight-ten

months from now, so go on some leave, take a lot of leave, take your home leave, take us much as you want, basically, come back, we'll give you French training and then we'll send you off to some commercial training, we'll figure out something to do with you." And I said, "Wrong. Figure out something to do with me first, and give me the French training at the end." Because if you take the French training now, obviously if this is before the commercial training before I go to post, I am going to lose a lot of that French, and that's going to be self-defeating, both for me as well as for service, and the Embassy. So he said, "Right, we'll figure out something to do. Go on your leave, come back." When I came back a few weeks later, they sent me over to Commerce Department for some training there and bits and pieces and odds and ends and finally wound up going to French training in a February class and did about 16, 17, 18 weeks of French, something like that. Came out with the three and went off to Togo in July of 1974.

Q: Let me ask before you go on with your experience in Lomé, Togo, had you had any particular background with Africa with college or otherwise? You weren't there in the Peace Corps.

KOTT: I took one African political science course, Comparative Political Science in Africa.

Q: So, your interest as you have explained it, was probably merely to have an opportunity to do other kind of work besides consular work and it sounds like you arranged a small post where you would have a variety of responsibilities?

KOTT: Exactly. My intention of course at the time was probably to dip in and quickly emerge from Africa, after two years. As it turns out it did not work that way, but it's all life.

Q: Okay, tell us about Lomé. You were there from '74 to '76. What was the situation in Togo in those days? Tell us a little bit about the post, who was the Ambassador, and what were things like in the mission as well as in the country?

KOTT: It was a very small post. It was headed up by Nancy Rawls, one of the early female ambassadors, a great person.

Q: Of African background experience?

KOTT: African experience. She spoke German from other experiences, she spoke French of course. Deputy Chief of Mission was Jim Curran when I first got there. Jim had some African experience, I think he had been Commercial Attaché in Cape Town. There was an administrative officer and myself. There was also an AID representative and a USIS (United States Information Service) officer.

Q: Was there a political officer or was that done by the Ambassador and the DCM?

KOTT: The Ambassador and the DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission) did the political, I did the economic, the commercial and the consular and anything else that was thrown my way as the junior officer. It was a good learning experience. Long hours. Probably the longest hours I put in in the Foreign Service. I used to go in at 7:30 in the morning come home about 7, 7:30 at night, work almost all day Saturday and frequently half a day Sunday, largely because it was very much of a learning experience on the substantive side for me. The consular work was the same after having the two years of experience under a very qualified supervisor, two supervisors in Indonesia, it was piece of cake. The economic and commercial work, especially the economic was brand new to me. I did not have any kind of economic background, and so that was a lot of OJT (on the job training) and it took a certain amount of effort to learn not only the substance but also the writing. You know, one thinks that all Foreign Service Officers can write. Well, they should be able to write, but not all can write. My boss went to Boston Latin, was rather a taskmaster, and I can say that my first year at post was tough. But I learned to draft and I did not have a problem after that. That is probably why I was spending such long hours, working on my drafting and redrafting and what have you.

I was also, probably the most interesting part of my job, I was the Self Help Officer at post. This is the Ambassador Self Help Fund. We had a fairly large one because we utilized it very effectively, and I inherited that. We had about, in those days, about 100,000 dollars, and an average project was maybe 5,000 dollars, so we had maybe 20 per year of new projects. The reason we were so successful is we used our Peace Corps volunteers. We made sure that virtually every project went to a Peace Corps volunteer to implement. So we had an American on sight in remote places throughout the small country, implementing this project. I am sure our success rate, our completion rate was probably well in the 90 percentile and that is why Washington kept giving us more money. I think we had about the third highest utilization rate in all of Africa and yet we were one of the smallest countries in Africa. That was good. It also enabled me to travel around the country. Obviously, the economic portfolio would not take me up to northern Togo, since virtually all activity, political as well as economic, was centered in Lomé the capital where French, of course, centralized.

Q: And on the coast.

KOTT: And along the very small, 30-mile coast. Very small post. Twelve, fifteen embassies in town. Half of them we did not speak to in those days, Cold War days. Very effective Ambassador, very well accepted. Interestingly, she would meet on Fridays with her counterpart from the German Embassy, who himself was a very pro-American fellow, who received an early Fulbright grant, I think, or some sort of an AID grant to study in the United States as a young student, and had very good feelings about the United States. Anyway, Ambassador Van Hawekompf and Ambassador Rawls would meet at their weekly luncheon and speak German. Could not help but remark that Ambassador Rawls would occasionally find an elderly Togolese, as she traveled around the country and she would speak German to them. Togo having been a German colony up until World War I, called Togoland. It was still in those days, back in the ‘70s, some elderly Togolese, some

veterans from the War, who spoke German.

Q: And there was a German market or butcher-shop or restaurant?

KOTT: Yes, that is right. There was a German restaurant as I recall, and I think there was a little German butcher-shop, a market.

Q: And your Peace Corps background, yourself as a Peace Corps volunteer probably helped you in terms of understanding the volunteers and not trying to abuse their position.

KOTT: Right. I had a very good relationship with them, certainly professionally and in some cases even in a minor way socially. I would have them over at the house for parties or for holidays, the Ambassador did the same by the way. She always had a whole Peace Corps contingent in for Thanksgiving, as I recall, roasted up half a dozen turkeys or whatever… We had an extraordinary high number of Peace Corps volunteers per capita, as I recall, in that country it was about a hundred. Again for a very small country of two million people that was a large number of Peace Corps volunteers.

Q: When you traveled to Self Help projects in northern Togo or elsewhere in the country did you usually go by a vehicle or…?

KOTT: Yes, embassy vehicle with a driver, sure. I think my wife didn't accompany me on one of those trips. Togo is relatively easy to get around, relatively small country. You could be up north to the very far north in about eight or nine hours. Roads were decent. On the political side, the person in power then is the same person in power now, Gnassingbe Eyadema, one of the great dictators of Africa. He was of course an army sergeant, in the French colonial army, and then in the early days of the Togolese army. He is alleged to have perpetrated the first coup by personally assassinating, as the story goes, the first president of Togo, Sylvanus Olympio, I am told that he actually entered the United States Embassy compound which backed against the Sylvanus' residence… Let me back up a bit. The coup plotters, including Eyadema allegedly, entered into Olympio's compound, Olympio jumped over the fence, hid under a US embassy vehicle in the compound, soldiers went around, walked through the gates, busted open the gates, whatever, probably had guns in those days, yanked Olympio from under a car where he was hiding and put a bullet in his head. He didn't take power then. He installed, I don't remember if he was the vice-President at the time, Nicholas Grunitzky, and Grunitzky stayed in power from '63 till '67 when Eyadema lead another coup and took power himself.

Q: And as you said, has been in power ever since.

KOTT: And has been in power ever since. Despite the various efforts, as I've tracked it over the years from afar, at democratizations imposed from abroad, mostly lead by the United States and few of our allies. He's been a great survivor, but a ruthless one. Even

when I was in Togo, in fact I broke the story to the Ambassador because a friend of mine came to my house to tell me that the head of, or if not the head of at least one of the leading generals in the army had been done with, and he was a good friend of ours at the Embassy. It was quite obvious what happened to him. He probably stuck his head a little bit above the political water line and was removed, killed. This was a fairly common occurrence.

Q: Why don't you talk a little bit about U.S. economic/commercial interests at the time, to the extent that we had them, or maybe a little bit about the political relationship, too?

KOTT: The political relationship was good. Clearly, the French were the first amongst equals there. That's probably stretching it, to say "equals." French predominated in that part of the world in a much more significant way than perhaps they do now. It was still very much a part of French West Africa. Even though Togo had not been previously a French colony, per se, effectively it was. It was a UN mandated territory until independence, a trust territory.

Q: After the First World War.

KOTT: Yes. And then a League of Nations trust territory and then it became I think under the UN mandate but governed by the French effectively, on behalf of the UN. But it was not technically a colony as Senegal was or Ivory Coast was. So the French held sway for what it's worth. Togo's primary interest to anybody was probably its phosphate production, fishing, little bit of tourism. I am probably forgetting one or two other minor economic….

Q: And the U.S. exported turkey tails…?

KOTT: Turkey tails, U.S. largest export to Togo was turkey tails as well as used clothing. The used clothing that Americans give away to Salvation Army and Goodwill.

Q: And they come in bails.

KOTT: That's right, they get processed, they are cleaned, processed, packed up and sent in bulk. If you would go down to the market, in much of West Africa, probably much of Africa and would see garments that looked in relatively good shape but they were obviously used, but they were cleaned and what have you, and they were for sale in the market place.

Q: In terms of phosphate, was the United States involved mining that, or as a market…?

KOTT: No, we were not involved in the mining, it was a French Togolese operation as I recall. Togo was one of the three major phosphate producers in the world; Morocco, and I think Australia is the probably largest if I am not mistaken. And phosphates, like oil and other primary commodities, like bananas, the price goes up and down. When the price is

good, I think when I first came to Togo, my first year, the prices were good. Togo was sort of flourishing in comparative terms, and then the price of phosphates dropped and then of course the economy turned south.

Our interest, our economic interest was very limited. We were trying to make a dent, but of course as a young junior officer I was trying to open up some new markets for American products, but it was sort of like a moron who's banging his head against the wall every day. The joke goes, "Why do you bang your head against the wall?" "Because it feels so good when I stop." I felt like that in terms of dealing with, trying to penetrate this French stronghold, or stranglehold on the market there. Because all of the products were French. There was one supermarket that opened up, with a grant from USAID. And so he stocked American products. It was sort of novel. He became a good friend of ours of course, and of the Embassy's, an entrepreneur, Togolese entrepreneur, Joe Sedatin was his name. I don't know, he seemed to be making a go of it, but ultimately I don't know what happened, it was still in business when I left. It was fun seeing something like this start up with some American assistance, stocking American products, selling to the expatriate community as well as some Togolese. Again, whether he made an ultimate go of it, I don't know, but we are talking about small potatoes here. Our economic and commercial interests were very small.

We did mostly economic reporting on what was happening in the country. All the trends reports that we had to do. We had entirely too many of them, I think I had to do 12 different trend, economic CERP reports (Comprehensive Economic Reporting Program). Some of them were just a collection of statistics, but others were rather substantive reports, and they took an awful lot of time to do in the small post like that. Happily, I gathered, in subsequent years the Department has seen the errors or the wisdom of cutting back on these things, and small posts like Togo probably don't produce a lot of it any more.

Q: I can record that about 15 years after you were at Lomé when I visited, there certainly was the supermarket, and I think it had some American groceries, American products on the shelves. I don't know if it was the same one, the same ownership or descendent of what was started when you were there.

KOTT: I hope so. There were a number of French supermarkets of course and a few Lebanese supermarkets, and that is where most of us did our shopping because the products were great.

Q: You've mentioned USAID a couple of times, and there was an AID representative as part of the country team and the Embassy. Did that person follow what the World Bank was doing, what the Europeans were doing in terms of development activity, or did you have to do that as a part of your economic portfolio?

KOTT: It probably fell more to me. In fact I remember being tasked with writing the, I think it was the biannual report on the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme),

including one on the Res Rep (Resident Representative), and I produced a rather controversial report that didn't sit very well necessarily in all quarters. It also resulted in my being accused of being a CIA agent at the Embassy. We did not have a CIA agent in those days, by the way, a CIA operative. Somebody came up to me once at the party and said, "Well, we know what you do at the Embassy." And I said, "Yes, I am the economic and commercial officer." And they guffawed and said, "You really represent the CIA and that is obvious." I said, "Why do you say that? What would possibly give you that indication?" "Well, you are the only one who goes out in the street and visits people and asks them questions all over town." Perhaps I was not as diplomatic as I should have been, but in doing some of these reports the only way to get the information, was to go out and interview people and there were no primary resources in terms of books and periodicals and that sort of thing.

Q: And you couldn't rely on anybody's statistics.

KOTT: Well, I made friends in the Ministry and they would handle statistics, such as they were. In terms of whether they were reliable or not; we did have a Bank representative in Togo, I don't know if we had a Fund representative.

Q: World Bank?

KOTT: Yes, of course. But basically I'd gather all the stuff on my own, just by going out in the street and talking to people and visiting offices and ministries, NGOs, other diplomats, what have you. And as I said, I was tasked to do this report, and I still remember it on the UNDP program, answering a series of about dozen questions, at great length I probably produced a 20 single-page aerogramme report, and part of it asked me to assess the performance of the UN Res Rep. I remember the UN Res Rep was a French woman and in retrospect, needless to say, perhaps there was a certain amount of, how shall I say, female professional, both on one hand jealousy or rivalry, rivalry is probably the better word, and on the other hand a certain comradely between the American Ambassador and the French female Res Rep. She was certainly a very strong willed person. As it turns out, not to go to any great amount of detail, she was not universally admired and respected, especially by her staff. As much of what I wrote came from her staff, perhaps it was bit strong and perhaps a bit slanted. I think my Ambassador wound up toning it down little bit before we submitted it to Washington, but it made interesting reading nevertheless.

Q: And the questions that you were addressing and the subjects that you were trying to cover were probably set forth by the Department in a world-wide circular trying to evaluate the UN Development Program throughout the world, and it was of interest to us as one of the major, well, the major contributor, financially, to that program.

KOTT: Absolutely. These were very intrusive, penetrating questions. And they were not questions that were answered in one paragraph. As I said perhaps a dozen questions, probably two single pages per response, if you really were to answer all the facets,

because they were multi-faceted questions.

Q: Why don't you say a few words about Togo's relations at that time, this is the period from '74-'76, with its neighbors and maybe a little bit about how did the American Embassy in Lomé interact, relate to some neighboring Embassies, some of which were very close: Benin, Ghana?

KOTT: Well, we were in a very interesting neighborhood. In fact you might say that Togo was in some ways the little island of stability. Togo fashioned itself, and probably still does as so-called "Switzerland of Africa". No comment on that. We were surrounded by some interesting characters. In Benin, in those days called Dahomey, they had what I used to dub the "Government of the Month Club." I think it was probably the world's leader in the numbers of the "coup de paux," if you could say that, "coup d'état," that had occurred. It had, I guess you might say, settled down in a way, having been taken over in the most recent coup d'état by Hubert Maga Coutoucou who is a self--proclaimed scientific Marxist-Leninist, whatever that meant. This was the rubric of the day, I don't think that Kremlin would have viewed this as any kind of recognizable communism or Marxism-Leninism, but anyway, he became a local henchman. On the other side we had Ghana. I don't recall what was happening exactly there, except the economy was deteriorating terribly under president -- well, it will come back to me. We would occasionally go over to Ghana just to get away from Togo for a day, just for diversity or go to a dentist, or what have you. I used to go to a supermarket, to look around the town and the markets and the crowd. You could see a noticeable deterioration, less and less goods on the shelves, less and less products to buy, people obviously in deeper economic dire straits.

Q: I do have to ask you, you mentioned a dentist – who? You went to an American dentist in Accra?

KOTT: I can't remember.

Q: There was an African-American couple that had come in the '50s at the invitation of Kwame Nkrumah, who were both dentists, both husband and wife, named Robert and Sarah Lee.

KOTT: No, I don't remember that now. I do now remember the name of the president, Acheampong. He had succeeded a number of predecessors who, one coup after another, you know more about that, having lived in Ghana, and he himself of course was later thrown out and I think executed if I'm not mistaken.

Interestingly, Shirley Temple was the U.S. Ambassador in Ghana, and again I think between Nancy Rawls, the woman in one country right next to another country where we had an American Ambassador, there was this sort of American professional rivalry there. I met Ambassador Black, she and her husband traveled over to Togo. In fact I spent reasonable amount of time with Mr. Black who was very charming and engaging

gentleman. I remember our conversation, it was a real treat to me to sit down with him. He was a prominent businessman I believe.

Q: In San Francisco.

KOTT: That's right. I only had a very short occasion to meet Ambassador Black, who was of course known to all of us as Shirley Temple. I think she did a very good job in Ghana, at least that is what I am told. The record I think would bear me out on that. There was a lot of snickering in the aisles, in the Foreign Service, that the U.S. was appointing Shirley Temple as an Ambassador, but I think you could prove that she did a pretty good job there. She did I am told in, was it Czechoslovakia and in New York, quite a formidable thing?

Q: She was Chief of Protocol and Ambassador in the Czech Republic in Prague shortly after the end of Cold War. I would say a word about her in Ghana, not that this is my interview, but certainly at the time I was there, 15 years or so after her, she was the one that people most remembered in a positive way, particularly her interest in the culture, in traveling. She was relentless in trying to cover the country and really the American flag flew very proudly in the time that she was there.

KOTT: Indeed, I agree with you.

Q: Let's see is there anything else that we should cover about Togo and Lomé?

KOTT: Yes, just one thing. One of the more interesting days that I had there was when we, my wife and I, were on leave in East Africa, on vacation actually. Nancy Rawls who had experience in Kenya, sort of directed us how to go about doing some tourism, Mt. Kenya and Tanzania. We did that and Seychelles. It was at the time of the OAU (Organization of African Unity)meeting, the annual OAU meeting. I can't remember where it was held. But at any case, maybe even in Kenya that year. General J. Gowon of Nigeria was ousted when he was at the meeting. He was ousted by the general who was lately assassinated, sorry it would come later to me. He needed a place to hide out, park himself for a while, and his good friend Eyadema in Togo said "well why don't you come here, we'll fix you up. You can put your kids in the American school", where my wife was teaching actually, "and decide what you want to do". That was several months later when Gowon pitched up and in fact he was there on October 1 when it was Nigerian National Day and the Nigerian Ambassador was having a National Day reception. And the buzz of the town was would J. Gowon come to the reception, could he show his face, would he dare? Indeed he did. Television cameras, lights on, film rolling and what have you. And J. Gowon was a charming individual who went around to the crowd, introduced himself to everybody, seemed to know everybody's name, came up to my wife who he had no reason to know anything about, introduced himself, she introduced herself and he said "Well, I hear that you are a wonderful teacher at the American school and if I decide to stay in Togo I am going to put my kids in your class. Because I've heard such good things about you." Well, we were about flabbergasted. Obviously, the Nigerian

Ambassador did a good briefing job. He was a terribly charming individual and of course he's a great historic figure, I think he will go down the history for what he's done as Abraham Lincoln of Nigeria, and he is well respected in Nigeria even today. But that was just anecdotal.

Q: You mentioned that your wife taught at the American school and, it's interesting, I guess, that there was an American school, that there was enough American community children to have a school. I am sure children came from other nationalities, not just Nigeria. Do you want to say maybe a little bit about the school but particularly about the American community beyond the small Embassy.

KOTT: It's hardly enough to say even a sentence. There was all of, besides the official community, there were probably about two or three businessmen in all of Togo and a number of missionaries, probably something between 50 and a 100. That was the American community. And most of the missionaries were not around Lomé. They were upcountry. So we really didn't have a lot of interplay with the Americans there. It was sort of back in the old Foreign Services days, isolated outpost, heavily French influenced, the days of the pouch before the CNN and computers. Even our mail came to us by pouch and would take ten days to two weeks, and Time magazine took two months. Kind of isolated, cut off. Rarely did we have telephone calls. No television.

Q: One of the reasons I went to Lomé in the period around 1990/91, I think maybe twice, maybe just once, was to play softball. Was softball an important part of life of Lomé and American community in those days?

KOTT: No, not back when I was there. I don't even recall that we had a softball team. I know that subsequently it had become a part of the WASE (World Organisation for Supported Employment) tournament that is usually held in Dakar.

Q: Yes, and they hosted their own tournament, I can't quite remember what the acronym was, but I think it started with "L", Lomé something Softball Tournament.

KOTT: As far as the school, I have very little memory of it, I call it American school but that may not even been that, it may have been an International school.

Q: But teaching was in English?

KOTT: Yes, teaching was in English and I am certain it was the American curriculum.

Q: Anything else we ought to cover about two years in Togo?

KOTT: No, I don't think so.

Q: Where did you go from there in 1976?

KOTT: In ’76 I returned to Washington. They offered me a position on the Nigerian desk. I though that was pretty good, I liked that. Sort of the old rule of thumb; two out - one back, and this would have been my first one back, and it was a necessary evil. Most, many Foreign Service officers don’t want to come back to Washington, but certainly as a Junior Officer, untenured still, by the way, I knew I really had to, so I thought that was a pretty good job. Nigerian desk was, I believe, three officers, and I would have been the second of the three, specifically to handle the economic and commercial portfolio and other ancillary duty but that would sort of be my portfolio.

Q: This was in the Office of West African Affairs?

KOTT: Exactly. Headed at that time by Tom Smith, who subsequently became Ambassador to both Ghana and then ultimately to Nigeria and unfortunately died prematurely. A great officer, I learned a lot from Tom, probably one of the best mentors and bosses I’ve ever had in Foreign Service. Learning the hard way though. He was very rigorous, disciplined, but fair officer of the old school.

Q: That job probably got you to Nigeria several times?

KOTT: Not really. No. The Department told me to take my own orientation trip as I was leaving Togo on my way home. My wife flew home directly and I went to Nigeria for an orientation trip, which as good fun. But I never again got out to Nigeria. Didn’t do that. I think the other two officers may have had their orientation trips from Washington out there, but I didn’t.

But the job was very heady, because it was in the time of the heyday of the relationship between the Nigeria and the United States. Number one, Nigeria was more often that not in those days United States’ largest supplier of imported crude oil. It was of course in the post OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) formation days, the early days of OPEC, prices were rising, our dependency on imported crude unfortunately was increasing, probably eventually got to about 50% of our total needs.

Jimmy Carter had just been elected president, Andy Young was up at the UN, Dick Moose became the Assistant Secretary for African Affairs. Rather atypically, Africa gained an importance and ascendancy in the limelight if you will in the U.S. foreign policy. From a number of perspectives. Not only the economic perspective, of course, of oil production, but human rights policy was very much in the fore in those days. I know all papers that we ever produced virtually that had any assumptions or importance to them, certainly they were going to the seventh floor. Had to be cleared by two new offices. It was sort of unheard of before. One was the Human Rights Bureau, and the other was UNA, which stood for UN Andy. Andrew Young’s office had to chop off on… those were the two mandatory clearances, no matter what the subject on virtually any paper that went to the seventh floor. But that’s all I could live with that and learn to accommodate.

We were a very busy desk. Nigeria being for obvious reason a very important account, probably the most important account. The largest country in Africa, one which had just come out of its civil war, and was reconciling between old Biafra and federal Nigeria. The oil production, the American interest in Nigeria, its economy booming. A lot of American investment, a lot of American trade, a lot of American interest. All of this resulted in an invitation to the then head of state of Nigeria, and the now head of state of Nigeria once again, Olusegun Obasanjo, military ruler, to come and pay an official visit to the U.S. It was not often that we had an awful lot of Africa waking through the White House, but it was our turn and it was on my watch, and we wound up going of course to the President and the Secretary of State for that meeting, even all three of our desk officers were invited to the White House for the initial ceremony and the greeting of Obasanjo. President Carter then accepted Obasanjo's invitation to pay a return visit to Nigeria and became as I recall the first American President to pay an official or state visit to any black African nation, Sub-Saharan African nation. I guess he did that in '77 and spent several days in Nigeria and the better part of the day in Liberia, to visit President William Tolbert, on his way back to the U.S.

Again, two state visits within a year, one in each direction, the level of interest, the level of political interest, the level of economic and commercial activity, the oil imports, all provided for a very busy account but a very manageable one. A great learning experience, a great way to learn the Department, kept us all busy. There was a high level of interest, certainly by certainly the sixth floor, in terms of the Assistance Secretary, by the seventh floor, in certain quarters and indeed by the Secretary and by the President to a certain degree.

Q: Why don't you talk a little but more about the economic/commercial dimension? Were you primarily dealing with American oil companies, or…?

KOTT: Across the board. Banks, oil companies, manufacturers, not so big bona-fide American businessman who thought they could see a quick buck to be made. I'd get telephone calls at eight o'clock in the morning saying "How do I get in on some of this action out there?" They just wanted to rake the place, get their jellybeans. But seriously, there was a lot of serious interest.

And a lot of things happening that involved the American business community. For example, as I recall, the Nigerians put into effect some legislation for what we called "indigenization" of the economy. That involved personnel. That meant that management and other people had to be Nigerian to the extent possible. They also had laws that affected ownership. And I rather vividly remember that banks had to be majority Nigerian owned by a certain date. And certain American banks, City Bank in fact, had a rather hard-line policy and said, "Hell, no, we won't go. We refuse to become a majority foreign owned in any country. If we do it Nigeria, India will be next, then the Pandora's box is open and pretty soon we will lose majority stake-hold." So they decided to pull out instead. Big mistake, they subsequently rued that decision and went back into Nigeria number of years later. But we would deal with issues like that. The indigenization issue,

the ownership issue.

In fact, I was tasked, as a result of the Obasanjo-Carter meeting at the White House, we formed a joint commission with the Nigeria. I don't remember the exact title of the commission, but in essence it was headed, at least in the first meeting, by the Vice-President and the Nigerian Foreign Minister or what have you. Sorry I'm a bit fuzzy on these details. But I was tasked to write up the economic paper – what are the issues, what is our side concerned with. I remember coming in on a Saturday, Tom said, "Bob, just write them up and here is the format, you know better then anybody else what the issues are." And I remember writing 17 papers on it on Saturday morning and afternoon, and Tom being rather critical of one's drafting, I was shocked to get it back with…, I could still read my own writing through the chicken scratch and the annotations and the amendments that Tom put on it. But anyway, he gave me a good pad on the back and said I did a good job, and anyway, they evolved into a major book, if you will, of issues that were of concern to the American community, especially the American business community. These were almost all economic and commercial issues that we were faced with. Just to give you a typical example, American businessman could not get a multiple entry visa. This was ridiculous. They were coming in and going out of the country within a few weeks and then to be confronted by going over to the Nigerian Embassy with one-week delays on getting visas, My God, how can you do business like this? This is pre-internet days, remember. Issues like that. Trying to get the Nigerians to bow to our request to issue multiple entry visas.

Q: Who was our Ambassador in Lagos at that time?

KOTT: Don Easum. He had been previously Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, but for not very long period of time.

Q: But certainly a very experienced African officer…?

KOTT: Indeed. He'd been Ambassador to what was then Upper Volta, now Burkina Faso. Came back, Henry Kissinger brought him in as the Assistant Secretary I believe to replace David Newsom. He didn't last very long in that position as the Assistant Secretary, I think he ran afoul of Secretary Kissinger, certainly that was above my pay grade, I don't know what the issues were exactly, but then he was shipped out to Nigeria as Ambassador. He was very effective.

Q: And he stayed there during the first years of the Carter administration?

KOTT: Absolutely. Yes, and worked very closely with Andy Young who himself went out there and visited. Worked closely with Assistant Secretary Dick Moose, who was Don Easum's replacement as Assistant Secretary. Was very effective with the Nigerians. He was a good Ambassador. He believed in tennis diplomacy, great tennis player. In fact he tells the story of being run off the tennis courts one day with Andrew Young, at gun point, by the Nigerian military. I guess they were out there playing on Mother's Day or

something that was viewed as being untoward and were alleged to being disrespectful even though they were playing on a private court at the American Chancery, American Embassy residence.

Q: Why don't you talk a little bit more about the human rights element? You mentioned the need to get clearances from the new Bureau of Human Rights. This was at the time when the Human Rights Report was started on each country. Where you involved in drafting that for Nigeria? How difficult were human rights issues for desk officers like you in conducting relations with a country…

KOTT: I can only speak in general ways. To be specific, I don't recall that I was deeply involved in the writing or editing of the human rights report from Nigeria because I think my boss, Pete Chaveas, or the third person on the desk, Seaford Patrick and Ellen Myland during my incumbency, were the human rights officers. As I said, I was doing more economic and commercial work. But clearly it impacted on our interests and our work. Both positively and negatively. I think there was an overall tendency by the Foreign Service bureaucracy to object to having to clear position papers or recommendations with the Human Rights Bureau. But, as Patt Derian and her crowd, as it became obvious that they were enjoying the support of the White House and others, I think there was a grudging acceptance, over time, of the reality that human rights was going to play an increasingly important part in our foreign policy. Especially in places like Africa.

Q: Well, I suppose especially in places like Nigeria, where there was a military government in place, although perhaps enlightened one, with good leaders in an elected position.

KOTT: Right. The fact that Obasanjo was a benevolent dictator, if you will, and that he had been accepted on the state visit to come to the White House and that the President returned the visit, made our work a little bit easier. Human rights were taken into account, but let's face it, one asks the question, "Would we have come to Kuwait's rescue had it not been for oil?" Similarly, how hard do you press on human rights in countries where you have significant interests? We were importing half of our oil from Nigeria in those days… well, that 's not true, we were importing the largest amount of oil that we imported from any one country from Nigeria in those days. It was clearly an important source of American energy needs. This was during the oil crises, when gasoline lines were long and inflation was high and Americans' patience was being tested. I doubt if American public would have cared much about the human rights in Nigeria perhaps as an everyday occurrence.

Q: Why don't you say a few words about a general topic of corruption, inefficiency, fraud? Nigeria certainly had a large reputation in these areas later on, if not at the time when you were involved, I'm not sure.

KOTT: Yes, absolutely. It was a way of life, a common occurrence. Of course I was not in the Embassy, I was back in Washington, so the recipient of the reports of the Embassy.

But it pervaded the relationship, especially the economic and commercial relationship.

Q: To some extent you were the person talking with the American companies who were either interested in getting started in Nigeria or who had run up against problems.

KOTT: Absolutely. They knew we couldn't do much about it. We would make demarches where it was appropriate. It's not something that American diplomats are comfortable with and perhaps it's not even appropriate for them to confront, in terms of the classic meddling in the internal affairs kind of thing. Where it affects our interest, I suppose the Ambassador and others were able to raise the topic gingerly, but you cant go in and slam your fist on the table and say "Look, your Minister of Transportation is corrupt. Our American businessmen tell us that…" Well, they'll just turn that around pretty fast as you know and you'll walk away with your tail between your legs. But it was a deterrence to some companies I think, they just did not want to put up with that. The level of American investment in Nigeria and the level of American interest in Nigeria would have been much more significant probably had it not been for the pervasiveness of corruption and the difficulty of doing business in Nigeria. Because of both the legalities of the day, as well as the subterfuges, the corruption, the nepotism, all of these disincentives to doing business. The companies that could afford to hire the people, to wait out the game, companies with significant resources behind them, the big banks, the big insurance companies, the big oil companies; they could circumvent it, in one way or another. The smaller guy, the entrepreneur who saw an opportunity out in Nigeria and would like to avail himself of it, and could have perhaps benefited the Nigerian economy in the process because he would have had to take a partner for example, all American companies had to have a local partner by legislation, those are the people who would be dissuaded once they found out what the situation on the ground was. That was pretty bad.

Q: Because U.S. has legislation now in effect about corrupt practices and not giving bribes and so forth. I don't remember exactly when that was enacted.

KOTT: I think that came in in the '70s, but I don't remember the year exactly, The Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. And I would say, and I hope that I am not being naïve here, but I think that American companies overseas, while there may be exceptions and we all know of some of them, God knows they have been on the front pages of the newspapers over the years, by and large, American companies I think operated pretty much above board. The same can't be said of many of our allies in Europe who one would say perhaps are more realistic but were not constrained in those days at least, they are perhaps more constrained today by UN conventions and what have you, but were not constrained in those days by things such as the American Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. They went in and put the money on the table. I remember the economic officers in Indonesia, at the Embassy, telling me that the going price of getting a contract in Indonesia was 25%. Up-front, on the table, at the first meeting when you went in to see the Minister. Apocryphal as that might be, a billion dollar contract, that was 250 million dollars for the Minister and the people that he had to divide that amongst. Up-front, unabashed, no secrets. Obviously American companies couldn't get away with that so we

had to have other arrows in our quiver.

Q: Why don't you say just a word if you will about your relations as the Economic/Commercial Officer for Nigeria in the African Bureau with the Economic and Business Bureau (EB) and perhaps with other agencies. Did you spend a lot of your time in the interagency framework arena or…?

KOTT: Yes, very much so. Especially with the new entity in AID, Nigeria being an OPEC country of a certain per capita gross national product level, was ineligible to receive direct USAID. However, someone came up with the bright idea of selling the American technology and expertise if you will through the mechanism of the USAID, and they called it the Trade and Development Program. Perhaps not the same Trade and Development Program in which ultimately it has evolved into, but in the early stages it was a very innovative and exciting program. And indeed, we had many successes with Nigerians. One in particular was a Nigerian decision to move their capital over a period of 10, 15 years from Lagos to a new city. A new Brasilia if you will, or new Canberra, called Abuja. This was, I am talking 25 years ago, this was well before any physical construction, this is when it was just a pipe dream. We brought out the U.S. Capitol Planning Commission. We had the Nigerians come and study under Jim Rouse who was the founder of Reston, Virginia and Columbia, Maryland, planned communities, how we went about doing planned communities. We had the Army Corps of Engineers go out there to look at the various aspects of water in the region that they were looking at to create this new city of Abuja, etc, etc. Nigerians paid for these services under the auspices of the Trade and Development Program. So what it did was it enabled us to provide, through an official channel, a level of technology, whether it came through the private sector or the U.S. Government as in the Corps of Engineers, but we were reimbursed for it and hence we could not turn down the Nigerians. It was a mechanism for allowing this transfer, and it was a wonderful brainstorm, I think, on someone's part. And I worked very closely with that office in AID, as the Economic Officer on the desk. As far as the other interagency, yes, the usual sort of thing; the monetary affairs, trade, this that and the other thing. I am sorry my memory is fading a little bit, this is well over 20 years ago. But, the interagency process, meetings -- in State Department you are always going to meetings -- but the Trade and Development Program was the thing that stuck out most in my mind as being not only something that kept me very busy but certainly it was a success. It was a great vehicle.

Q: How about the general subject of civil aviation? Was that an issue that you worked on much?

KOTT: Not as much in those days at it has subsequently become for both security reasons as well as safety reasons.

Q: There was an American carrier that went to Nigeria?

KOTT: Yes, Pan American, the old Pan Am. I think people were more concerned about

traffic in Lagos and getting to the airport then they were about once they got to the airport, about security. Nigeria was infamous for what they call the "go slows". Lagos became just a chocked city, to the point where I guess they were one of the first cities that started the program of alternate day driving, where if your license plate ended with an even number or an odd number… Of course, Nigerian being the entrepreneurial folk that they are, they all decided to go out and buy an extra set of plates if not a second car so it made the situation worse as it ultimately resulted. But the airport which wasn't a terribly far distance by way of the crow from downtown Lagos, as I recall, sometimes took two and three and four hours. I know people that missed airplane flights when they left home four hours in advance because of the traffic. That was really the concern, I don't think it was the airport civil aviation. Although we all know it had subsequently become an issue.

Q: Anything else we ought to cover to your assignment to Nigeria?

KOTT: No. It was a great training for the first tour in Washington. I had great mentors there, great bosses. Super people to work with, the leadership was wonderful, the interest level was high on part of the Secretary, certainly the Andy Young's influence, Dick Moose, the Assistant Secretary, the deputies, Frank Wisner, Jim Bishop, people like that, all African hands, if you will, experienced. Things worked well. I think that the U.S. policy was well served, reasonably well formulated and accurate, as good as it ever got, so to speak, in my life time.

Q: It probably, the profile, the priority given to Africa was as high as it has ever been.

KOTT: Probably the highest it's ever been, I'd suspect. In a positive sense. It was pre-democratization. The human right business was just started. Clearly, maybe a little premature, but maybe there was at least an inkling that there was going to be an end to the Cold War some day and that those governments who professed to be Marxist or Leninist or Communist, what have you, as Andy Young used to say, "Communism doesn't appeal to Africans."

Q: You mentioned in Lomé there were several Embassies that you didn't have contact with. You just mentioned kind of the Cold War context in terms of Nigeria. Why don't you just say a few word about how important that aspect was, maybe both in Togo and in your work on Nigeria?

KOTT: And indeed for all of Africa. I mean it was a Cold War battleground. Wining the hearts and minds, so to speak, of these newly independent countries. Let's face it, most of these countries when I was there in my first posting in Africa, they were only ten years old in terms of independence. So that was relatively new. They were still feeling their way around, they were very susceptible to influence, economic influence, aid influence especially, military assistance, what have you. And there was a bidding war going on between, not solely between the Soviets and the U.S. but the Chinese as well. The Chinese were bringing in the new dogma, a different type of development. They were building cultural palaces and sports stadiums. If you go around Africa you will see the

remnants of these edifices. The U.S. was placing its emphasis both on economic development and of course the pendulum swung there from the large infrastructure type projects like we did the Akosombo Dam as you know we did in Ghana.

During the Carter administration certainly it shifted to the basic human needs philosophy, which was really trying to help the little guy pull himself up. Whether that was ultimately successful or not, that's another story. But the emphasis shifted. At the same time we were also very heavily engaged throughout the continent in supplying the arms and armaments. Something that Africans could ill-afford, but wanted. Tribalism was rampant. Ethnic rivalries, strife between the neighbors. It was far from a harmonious place. Politics were tough. The leaders were largely ruthless for the most part. There were probably less than, maybe one or two countries that had a semblance of open elections. Gambia perhaps, Botswana perhaps, Senegal had some elections but one party staked largely in those days. It was a pretty tough neighborhood.

Q: Very specifically, how about Togo in terms of arms sales and were you competing with Chinese, East German, Soviet projects?

KOTT: I don't remember that we sold any arms to Togolese. In fact our relationship with Togolese was a little bit different. Largely stemming from the history that I talk about earlier, from the assassination of Olympio. President Kennedy, when that happened, that was the first bloody overthrow in post-independence Africa in 1963, President Kennedy cut off U.S. assistance to Togo at the time. It was subsequently re-established of course, but I believe that there was an arms sales ban on Togo, probably resulting from the Eyadema's takeover and killing of Olympio.

Q: And how about Nigeria then, when you were at the desk? That was not an issue that you dealt with as the economic desk officer?

KOTT: I don't, I'm sorry my memory… I don't know if we were selling arms to the Nigerians then or not. Like I said we were not giving them aid, we were selling them aid because of their OPEC status and oil wealth.

Q: Did you spend a lot of time thinking about what the Soviets were doing in Nigeria or the Chinese or any of the East European countries?

KOTT: Not from an economic point of view. Probably from a political point of view but that was not my portfolio. There was a lot of Eastern European economic influence. A lot of Soviet satellite countries, Bulgarians I remember, engaged in commercial enterprises, construction for example. There was a construction boom going on, because of the economy, the oil wealth, Everybody knows the stories about cement in Lagos harbor, how they would, there was all kinds of corrupt schemes to get paybacks and make money quickly by importing cement and it was going nowhere except to the bottom of the harbor. There were whole ships that were just demolished and sunk blocking up Lagos harbor with cement rotting in the hulls. A lot of it was Eastern European involvement and

a lot of it was from all over the world, Chinese, what have you. No, I don't think we were worried about the economic competition. I think the economic competition was clearly the British, the French. The French were very significant economic forces. They had a Peugeot plant, for example, they were making cars in Nigeria. I think to this day they still have a significant influence in Nigeria.

Q: Anything else about his period from '76 till whenever you left – when did you leave?

KOTT: I left the desk I early '79 to go to six months of economic training at FSI (Foreign Service Institute). I did mid-level economic training course. I had applied for a change of cone as a result of my two years on the Nigerian desk at the Department, for sure now I decided that consular work was not something that I wanted to stay in on a full time basis. Even though I did not dislike it, I just did not want to devote the majority of my time to it. So I asked for a cone switch. Under the parameters of the day and PRI, they found me eligible to do that but mandated that I take the economic training course at FSI for six months. So reluctantly I went into that.

Q: You were also able to use, I suppose, your economic work in Lomé as evidence that you worked in the field.

KOTT: Right.

Q: I don't know if you ever said how much your time in Lomé was economic/commercial as opposed to consular? Was it sort of 50:50?

KOTT: I would say a third consular, a third economic/commercial and a third Self Help and other things.

Q: So you did the six-month economic course, which I think has also been well covered in these interviews. Where did you go from there?

KOTT: I went to Cameroon. That wasn't my first choice, but sitting over at FSI, sort of out of the loop, we all know what that means in terms of the next assignment, I certainly was not the apple in anybody's eye at the time, being a bit removed. So an assignment was hard to come by. I almost lucked out. One day on a Friday afternoon I came over from FSI, went back to AF (Bureau of African Affairs) and was visiting around with some friends and ran into Bill Swing, who was the Deputy Office Director at AFC (Office of Central African Affairs) at the time.

Q: Central Africa.

KOTT: That's right. I said, "Bill, hi. I must be the last guy to have heard that you have been assigned as the new Ambassador to the Republic of the Congo." Not Zaire, but Congo Brazzaville. We have not had an ambassador there for a number of years. This was one of those pseudo-Marxist states that we had very bad relations with, we haven't had an

ambassador there in something like 13, 14 years, only a Chargé d'Affairs. Bill said, "Well, Bob, you know I have been looking for a DCM. Would you like to be considered?" This was out of the blue, I was just walking out of the Department, and I am looking for a job, by the way, and I said, "Bill, I'm flattered, in fact I'm flabbergasted". I didn't know Bill all that well, we have not worked together, we have worked next to each other, AFW (Office of Western African Affairs), where I have been working on the Nigeria desk and AFC, where he was the deputy still. "Of course, I would be delighted." And he said, "There is one glitch, in terms of the positions. I am taking the existing position, which is the Charge position, and I'll encumber that as ambassador. That means we will have to get a new position created for you to be DCM. And that may take a while." To make a long story short, it took something like 10 months, I couldn't sit around doing nothing so I took what was available, which was the economic/commercial position in Yaoundé, Cameroon. Subsequently Al Rienda went to be Bill's DCM and the rest is history. That would have been a wonderful career move for me had it happened. Unfortunately, the stars were not lined up right.

Q: The timing was just a little bit off.

KOTT: The timing was off. The timing is everything in life. Anyway, I went to Yaoundé, Cameroon. Probably my least favorite posting in my Foreign Service career. Not that I detested it or disliked it, but it was not something that I was thrilled with. Yaoundé was a tough place. Cameroon was a tough place. Not a particularly friendly place. I found Yaoundé to be filled with awfully officious people and being a mere Second Secretary I think I was at the time, it was kind of a hard place to do business. On the commercial side it was virtually impossible to do business for two reasons: number one the commercial center was Douala and not Yaoundé, and secondly the French influence, of course. Very similar to Togo, both historically having been a mandated territory and ultimately, of course, ruled by the French during colonial period as a mandate. And their overall influence vis-à-vis ours. I think it was probably politically a bit more interesting, but I wasn't on the political side of things. My first ambassador there was Mabel Smythe, a political appointee, famous perhaps from academic circles as part of Smythe and Smythe. Her husband and she wrote a book, I think called "Nigeria". They were both academics. He unfortunately died, probably mid-life, mid point of his life, what would have been a normal life. But she went out there as a widow and was appointed by President Carter. She was there the first year I was there and was then succeeded by Ambassador Hume Horan on his first ambassadorial post.

Q: Who apparently is doing an oral history interview, judging by some notes left in front of me left by another interviewer.

KOTT: The other aspect of my job there, besides economic/commercial. About a month after I got there… the DCM, Peter Lord was on leave when I first got there. When he got back I guess at our first meeting he said, "Well I understand you are an expert in military assistance and that you've been trained in this." I said "What? This is the first I've ever heard of it. What are you talking about?" He said, "You are going to be our military

assistance guy because we don't have any defense people here." To which I could only scratch my head and say, "Where do I start?" That was quite a challenge. They sent me up to Stuttgart, for two-week wonder course on what it means and how to effectively deal with the military. Eye opening, because I had to learn a new vocabulary from the Foreign Service vocabulary, a whole new way of doing business, etc, etc. I stumbled through that during my first year. It was interesting. We were selling a significant amount, by African standards, of equipment to the Cameroonese. Mostly C-130s and the spare parts for C-130s. Wreckers, which are vehicles that take tanks out of pits and tow them away and things like that. I remember that quite in particular. It enabled me to have some fairly high-level meetings. I used to see the commander in chief of the Cameroon Armed Forces, on that kind of business. So it was interesting. I didn't always know what I was doing, because, again, I didn't know much about the military, it was my first exposure to the military.

Q: Was there a Defense Attaché that covered Cameroon, resident somewhere else?

KOTT: Well, if there was I never saw him. But happily for me, unhappily for Chad, you may recall what happened in Chad and the ongoing civil war and the most recent iteration in 1980 resulted in our evacuation of our Embassy in Chad where we did have a Defense Attaché and we made him an offer. Ambassador, I guess it would have been Ambassador Smythe who was perhaps still at post, asked this fellow if he would like to come and park himself in Yaoundé at least until he could get back into Chad if not in fact have the Pentagon establish a billet in Yaoundé, which in fact they did. And this fellow encumbered it. So he became a Defense Attaché over the period of few weeks or months so I unloaded my burden of military assistance program to him.

Q: But in the meantime you had quite a bit to do with EUCOM (US European Command)?

KOTT: Yes, mostly by telegram in those day, happily. Simple to have time to fudge my answers to these esoteric issues and questions.

Q: Did you also coordinate the Self Help program as you had in Lomé?

KOTT: I was on the committee but the Vice Consul was the Self Help officer. So that was not a part of my direct portfolio. But I was on the Self Help Committee, so we would decide what projects we'd fund and that sort of thing. Most of my time was on the economic portfolio and commercial in as much as you would travel to Douala about once in every six or seven weeks. First that's where all the American oil companies were based, because they were doing off-shore productions. Nascent, small production, but growing. As well as where the commercial interest was for the country of Cameroon as the largest city in Cameroon.

Q: Douala is the larger than…?

KOTT: Yes, much larger. That's where the international airport was at the time. You had to enter the country at the sea-port, through Douala and then take a shuttle to Yaoundé. Yaoundé was rather isolated up in the mountains. Better climate, but really a government town. Not a terribly interesting place.

Q: There is American or International school there?

KOTT: I think it was on the American Club grounds. I guess there it really was an American school.

Q: Almost an Embassy school.

KOTT: Almost an Embassy school, at least originally. I was not involved, the DCM was of course on the board. We had very small children at the time.

Q: Today is December 5, 2000. Last time we were talking about your Assignment from 1979 to – '81 in Yaoundé, Cameroon as economic officer, you did commercial work as well. I think you talked in general about your assignments there and the difficulties of doing a lot of work in the capital where the commercial business center was 500 miles or whatever away on the coast where at the time we had a Consulate. Why don't you talk just a little bit more about your experience in Cameroon and particularly to what extent did you travel to Douala and do some of your work there.

KOTT: Yes, it was a little bit frustrating, because of the physical separation of the powers, if you will, Yaoundé being, Yaoundé being the political capital and Douala being the commercial capital. I would try to go down there about every six or eight weeks. We did have a Consulate down there that I could rely on to support my visits. There was a Cameroon Chamber of Commerce centered in Douala that I worked with fairly closely. We occasionally had some successes. We had a Trade Investment Mission come out, lead by the then Ambassador to the UN, Andy Young, which included the head of the OPEC and the head of the Ex-Im Bank (Export-Import Bank). They made attempts to make some breakthroughs in Cameroon. I think they were probably in the end rather futile, because the French had such a lock on the place at that time that probably the only hope for American breakthroughs in the commercial sector, and I think this held true for many years if not still today, was in the very, very large enterprises where we predominated, such as oil. Or insurance, or banking. There was a Citibank, there was Mobil Oil, there were some other U.S. oil companies exploring and producing oil in Cameroon. It was a nascent producer in those days. But other than that it was tough for little guys trying to penetrate the market. I remember very clearly working with one such man. He was trying to build a small-scale steel mill. He was just strung along by the Cameroon bureaucracy and at every turn was thwarted for one reason or another, it was a very futile effort.

Q: To what extent was USAID present in country? Did we have Peace Corps volunteers?

KOTT: Both. Yes, the AID program to Cameroon as I recall was fairly substantial. I can't

recall the dollar figure but we had a fairly large AID mission. We did have Peace Corps volunteers there throughout the country. And we had a small Self Help program as well. I don't think that it was as effective as the one I described to you in Togo or another countries.

Q: Were you running the Self Help Program?

KOTT: No, I was on the committee, but I wasn't running it. I think the DCM chaired it.

Q: And the AID program I suppose had an economist that you worked with?

KOTT: Yes, although his focus was, as I recall, mostly on the impact of their economic and development projects, whereas I did the straight economic reporting. I would clear them with them of course.

Q: To what extent was the IMF, the World Bank, a strong factor that you were involved with?

KOTT: I don't recall that I was terribly involved with them. I was probably a Second Secretary at the time and… Cameroon I found to be a terribly protocol conscious society. Second Secretary just didn't cut it really. It was hard to get appointments with ranking government figures, even for ambassadors, more so for Second Secretaries. So really, it was a question of just basically doing the reports.

Q: You also were saying that the geography of the country was such that it wasn't easy to get away from the capital.

KOTT: Indeed in those days, and I know that it has changed, I used to like to say, "All roads lead to nowhere." If you left Yaoundé you went deeper in the rainforest. If the rubber trees didn't get you, something else would. It was a very isolated post, Yaoundé. Hard to get around the country. I did make one trip to the north, to the far north, up to the Chad border, with another colleague. It was a week-long trip. We put our car on the train and at the end of the rail line about half way up to the north, we disembarked and got in our car and traveled around. The north is a very different, Sahelian kind of atmosphere, very different than the rainforest where Yaoundé is situated or the coastal region where Douala is. But getting around the country was terrible. Subsequently the IBID has funded a major road that goes from Yaoundé to Douala and now you can do it in about two hours, whereas in my day there was a rudimentary road that would take you eight to nine hours in the dry season, and people would frequently be killed traveling on that road.

Q: Whereas the north was sparsely populated?

KOTT: More so than the coastal region, and like I said very Sahelian in nature. Much more akin to what's now Burkina Faso or Mali, that kind of an ambiance. Heavily Islamic, very different than the people who lived in the forest, the Bantu people of the

forest.

Q: You were able to get around pretty well with your French in the north?

KOTT: Absolutely. French is the lingua franca of most of the country.

Q: How about the English speaking part of the country, because there is such…?

KOTT: Yes, English is a lingua franca, too. In my day; I don't know how it is carved up politically today, but back in the late '70s and early '80s, I think there were seven provinces, two of which were English speaking and five of which were French speaking. Cameroon; interestingly, there is an affinity between Cameroon and Canada and the story goes that that's because alphabetically they sat next to each other at the UN and at some point in time back in history, the Cameroonian Ambassador at the UN and the Canadian Ambassador at the UN became very good friends. And of course they shared some other similarities. Both are officially bilingual nations. Probably two, the only two nations that I can think of that are officially bilingual, French and English. Whereas Canada's population is 80% Anglophile and 20% Francophile, it is the inverse in Cameroon, 80% of the people are living in the area that is officially French speaking. Of course, most of the people don't speak French or English, they speak tribal languages which are many.

Q: What about the influence of the large neighbor? We know that Canada certainly feels the influence and weight of the U.S. to the south. How about Cameroon and Nigeria?

KOTT: Yes, of course. And unfortunately for those two, those latitude countries, unlike we and the Canadians where at least for the past 175 years we have been at peace, we've all heard of the world's longest undefended cliché, that separates or perhaps unites U.S. with Canada more than it separates; unfortunately Nigeria and Cameroon have gone to war, at least border wars, a number of times if I'm not mistaken. Happily not when I was there. When I was there the situation was in fact much worse in the north with the Chadian civil war spilling over into Cameroon. But to answer your question on Nigeria. Yes, I think the Cameroonese since independence felt a certain, that sort of the elephant in the grass syndrome vis-à-vis the Nigerians, always having to look over their shoulder. They perceived a real territorial aggrandizement on the part of the Nigerians especially towards the English speaking provinces of Cameroon.

Q: When you went to the north, did you feel the chance of the war at that time?

KOTT: No, when I went up there we didn't. Although we knew what was going on and we were cautioned about getting too close to the border. Certainly not crossing over into Chad. But subsequent to our trip the war broke out in full force and in fact the Embassy evacuated with their people coming down to Yaoundé.

Q: The Embassy in Chad?

KOTT: Yes, the American Embassy in N'djamena. I think that was the second evacuation for them. There was an earlier evacuation, prior to my arrival to Cameroon and I think subsequently Embassy N'djamena set up shop basically at Embassy Yaoundé.

Q: Anything else we should talk about in connection with your assignment in Cameroon?

KOTT: No, I don't think so. It was fairly uneventful, Ray, and not my very favorite assignment. But we'll move one because things got brighter after that when I went off to Malawi as DCM.

Q: Okay, so in the summer of 1981 you went to Lilongwe, Malawi as Deputy Chief of Mission?

KOTT: Yes. It was a nice break for me. I was a new 02 officer, what was that – old 05?

Q: 04.

KOTT: 04. Thirty-five, thirty-six years old and was fortunate enough to be selected by the Ambassador designate and the Department, I think in combination, to be his deputy. And I looked forward to that challenge, it was something that I wanted after having served two postings in Africa already and being very much in the mid-mid level. This was a relatively small post, it would be a management challenge. I looked forward to it. It proved to be one of my favorite assignments actually.

Q: Who was the Ambassador, and why don't you talk just little bit more about the composition of the mission, before we talk more about Malawi?

KOTT: Sure. Ambassador designate, John Burroughs, not a career Foreign Service Officer, but a career civil servant, having been largely a personnel list in the United States Navy as a civilian, and then over at the State Department where, it may have been his one and only post at State, was as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Equal Employment Opportunity, EEO. From there he was selected and appointed as Ambassador and confirmed to Lilongwe. John Burroughs is a truly fine gentleman, African American, he arrived at post perhaps two or three weeks before I got there on a direct transfer from Yaoundé and we served effectively three years together because he left the post about a month before I did, three years subsequent. The mission consisted of I believe seven U.S. Government agencies, surprisingly for a small, little outpost like Malawi. About 28 direct-hire Americans, as I recall, and I can't recall the number of national employees.

Lilongwe is a relatively new city carved out of nothing. Africa's Canberra, or Brasilia if you will, on a much smaller scale of course, the capital having been moved from the old British capital of Zomba, not Blantyre, which most people think is the capital of Malawi. Blantyre is the largest city such as it is and is the commercial center. But technically Zomba is the capital and, when I was there, the Parliament still met at Zomba. The President had a residence in Zomba, but of course the President had residences all over

the country, including one that was being build, a rather ornate palace, in Lilongwe, but he chose to live in Blantyre most of the year. That's where Hastings Kamuzu Banda did live even though as I said the Parliament met in Zomba. The administrative and political capital was transferred to Lilongwe and the diplomatic capital as well was Lilongwe.

Q: And the name before it became Malawi?

KOTT: Nyasaland. Under the British. The British influenced it very strongly, just as the French influence is generally considered strong in much of West Africa and Francophone part of the world, similarly the British influence is strong in places like Malawi. But, even during my time there, from '81 –' 84, a declining influence, not as all pervasive influence, as the French influence was in a place like Cameroon. The French didn't want to let go. I think the British saw the handwriting on the wall and the sun was setting.

Q: Were there still substantial number of British nationals in the country?

KOTT: Yes, a reasonable number, but at the sufferance of the Malawian government. Malawian government hired a lot of British ex-pats on contract to serve in all kinds of positions in the government, let alone in the private center, we are just talking about the government for a minute. I recall dealing on a diplomatic basis with one very high-ranking official of the Malawian government, who in fact was a white Brit. I would say he was in a very top tier, he was probably sort of a Deputy Secretary level, in the President's Office, the Office that supported the President. And so it went, down through the government. There was even what they called a Permanent Secretary, which would be like a Deputy Minister, who was British and was there for many years in the Ministry of Works, Public Works. I still remember his name, Roger King. Good friends of ours. And so it went throughout the government, it was pervasive. Hastings Banda was not anti-British, he was anti-colonial. He welcomed the British presence, and as long as he needed those people to perform various aspects of state-craft and governance, he hired them. In the commercial field such as it was, the British predominated. But Malawi is a very small and insignificant country and economy of course.

Q: Are there any farms, British-owned property, land?

KOTT: Absolutely. The major agricultural produce at least from an export point of view in Malawi was of course tobacco. Malawi is a producer of various sorts of tobacco, largely Virginia leaf type tobacco and in fact is one of only three countries that uses the American auction system, if you remember the old Lucky Strike commercial, when you were young fellow, on television. Zimbabwe being the other one and the U.S., of course. Large producer of very good, fine quality tobacco, of course now it's a no-no today, but anyway. Some of the farms were British owned. Now I think, Malawinisation, call it what you will, they had to sell off certain parcels of land to the President and his people, but basically within the realm of the realistic there were many firms that were still owned and operated by English ex-pats. And some Zimbabweans.

Q: And of course, Malawi is a part of the Commonwealth, and so the British High Commissioner and other High Commissioners were presumably present in the country?

KOTT: That's right. Although it was a very small diplomatic corps where I was there, there were only about 12 Embassies.

Q: Resident.

KOTT: That's right. I think there were only two other African embassies, one being their neighbor Zambia, a very important representation for the Malawians of course, since they were once both part of the Federation of what effectively was the old Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Northern Rhodesia would become Zambia, Southern Rhodesia would become Zimbabwe and Nyasaland becoming Malawi. Hastings Banda used to call it the Stupid Federation. The hated Stupid Federation, which is probably how he got his start in politics, by advocating the dissolution of the Federation and the creation of three independent countries, which eventually came to pass.

Q: We'll have you talk some more about your relationship with Hastings and some other of these people, but maybe let me back up just a second. This is the beginning of Reagan administration. Ambassador Burroughs was a nominee of President Reagan. You want to say just a few words about, in terms of U.S. policy toward Malawi, toward southern Africa? Is this an area of much interest in terms of the State Department, or what were the main objectives, goals of the mission at that time?

KOTT: Chet Crockett became the Assistant Secretary for African affairs in the Reagan administration and he annunciated very clearly and pursued very vigorously three basic objectives as I recall. One was helping to end apartheid in South Africa. Second was getting the Russian and Cubans out of Angola, and third was helping to bring peace and end to the civil war in Mozambique. That's what the focus of Chet's incumbency was. Many people in the African Bureau at the time would say that the rest of Africa was up for grabs, and the Deputy Secretaries basically ran the policies in the various other geographic quarters of Africa, having divided it up amongst themselves. And Chet focused almost uniquely on southern Africa. Now, there was something called the Contact Group, as you may recall. Grouping of nations, certainly the Brits and ourselves and others that worked on virtually all of these issues.

Q: Portugal I think was…

KOTT: Yes, I think Portugal, I don't know if the Russians were, I can't remember, but it was a very vigorous and diplomatic grouping that met regularly in various places, in various capitals, in New York, what have you, to work on these problems. The Malawians were not part of that. And were really on the fringes of what was going in the southern Africa with the exception of perhaps Mozambique. Again, Mozambique being one of their neighbors, the civil war certainly had an impact on Malawi in as much as many refugees came across the borders which, Hastings Banda basically turned the blind

eye to and allowed the insurgent forces, the Manamo forces to come across, not to establish military training camps but sort of to take safe haven when being pursued, to allow them to bring across their wounded, to patch them up in local hospitals and clinics, that sort of thing. Whether or not he was giving over the to the rebels is tremendously open question and one that we were very much engaged in monitoring.

The politics of Malawi is something that I ought to address a little bit. You can almost sum it up by saying that the 12 embassies that were represented in Malawi, none of them were communist. No communists were allowed into Malawi. So there was no Russian Embassy, there was no PRC Embassy, but there were the following three embassies: a Taiwanese Embassy, an Israeli Embassy and a South African Embassy, an apartheid South African Embassy. So of 12 embassies, three so called "renegade" counties of the day in many people's views were represented in Malawi. It was the only black African country to have a South African flag flying over a diplomatic mission. I did see a South African flag flying in Lusaka, capital of Zambia. The South Africans had a trade office there. Now, whether they conducted other affairs, out of the trade office, presumably they did. But nominally it was a trade office. But Lilongwe had the only South African Embassy with an accredited ambassador and full staff, and it was one of the very few countries, I can't say the only country in black Africa, because I think, perhaps, and the memory serves me poorly but I think maybe Gabon or the Ivory Coast under Houphouet may have had an Israeli embassy at the time I just don't recall. But certainly no more than two or three African countries had an Israeli Ambassador resident, and Malawi did. Again, Taiwan was not exactly, didn't enjoy a very wide representation in Africa in those days. Most African countries were in those days enamored with the PRC model of development. And PRC held sway. So, Taiwan, again very rare representation in Africa, in those days. It's changed of course now.

Q: Did your Embassy have pretty extensive contact with those Embassies?

KOTT: Absolutely. We had contacts with virtually all of the Embassies, all 12, but some more than the others. The British. The French, they weren't terribly important players. Germans were important because they provided a lot of aid. I think they provided the most amount of aid per capita of any country that was represented. The Zambians were important for obvious reasons, being neighbors. The Mozambicans established I think the week I left so I really can't address that from a diplomatic perspective because they weren't there when I was there. The South Africans were the great friends of the Malawians. When Malawi, prior to my arrival, had a drought and one of the rare years when it could not feed itself, that is something that Banda took pride in, that they were self sufficient in maize to make mealie meal, the basic food substance that people eat. The South Africans flew in corn, just as they flew in petrol. Malawi didn't need a lot of petrol, oil products, but they actually flew it in by plane. Great friends of Malawians.

Q: I assume there was no presence of the ANC (African National Congress) from South Africa, as there was in some other eastern African countries?

KOTT: No, I don't think that Banda would have tolerated any overt presence by the ANC. Certainly there was no official representation, absolutely none. Banda was something of an outcast. He did not go to the OAU meetings. He would send a representative to go. I remember briefing his representatives before the OAU meetings to bring them up to snuff on what the issues were going to be. But, Banda kept to himself and his politics were clearly out of line and out of sync with African politics of the day.

Q: Before we go further, let me ask if Angola or any of the parties to the civil war in Angola were present in Malawi?

KOTT: No. We were not a player. It was a pretty quiet assignment, other than the Mozambique watch. And that was a passive watch. We would just report on any incursions into Malawi, refugees' flows, that sort of thing. Most of our reporting was really domestic. Such as it was. Not terribly important, I don't think that it kept Washington's attention, but it was lot of fun being there.

Q: Was Ambassador Burroughs there most of the time over the three years, were you Chargé quite a bit of the time, to what extent did you have contact yourself with President Hastings Bando, and why don't you talk a little bit more about him as well?

KOTT: Okay. Well, John Burroughs was very much in residence for most of the three years, except when he went on leave, so, no, I didn't act as Chargé for more than two months at any one stretch. It was not a long term Chargé thing, no. But it was fun doing it. Except I remember once when I was Chargé, I was also PAO (Public Affairs Officer), I was Vice Consul, a political officer, which I was normally in any case because we didn't have a political officer, anything except the AID officer. That's what you get a small post, even though it was 28 Americans, sometimes it all devolves to one or two people. John was, as I said, a non-career Foreign Service Ambassador. One who, I thought, was rather wise. He understood that he was neither a Foreign Service Officer nor the Africanist at post, so he looked for counsel and advice from others, including me. We had a very good, close relationship. I fairly enjoyed my professional and social relationship with John Burroughs and his charming wife Audrey Burroughs. John I think after the three years went, well he went back to Washington for a while but then he became the US Consul General in Cape Town. A rather interesting assignment as a black man, with African-American spouse. And ultimately went on to his last post, I believe was in Kampala, Uganda, as Ambassador. So he had an interesting if not brief career with the State Department. Politics of Malawi?

Q: Yes, and to what extent did you meet with Banda and talk little bit more about him?

KOTT: Well I didn't, the Ambassador did, but not all that frequently. Again, Banda was physically separated, having lived in those days in Blantyre where we had a small branch office. A rather unique arrangement. It was not a Consulate, it was called just the Embassy Branch Office in Blantyre and it was staffed by one Foreign Service Officer and one support staff and they issued visas and reported generally on economic and

commercial developments and any kinds of consular matters to the Embassy. We were on a rotating basis to go down and visit with them. I would do it in context of my overall supervisory duties as Deputy Chief of Mission. I would do some commercial work while I was there, little political work, whatever. Every few weeks, once twice a month, once every other month sometimes, whatever. We didn't really see the President. The President really didn't interact with the diplomatic corps as a matter of course. He received credentials and would receive a demarche under extreme circumstances. He had an office in Lilongwe which was called The Office of the President and a Cabinet, staffed by his most senior civil servant and that was effectively the most senior level we dealt with. The Foreign Minister was the President, the Minister of Agriculture was the President, the Minister of Defense was the President, and he was also the Minister of the Public Works I believe. So, he held four portfolios at that time.

Q: Now he was not elected – or was he?

KOTT: Hastings Banda was President for Life. He went by the sobriquet of "HE", "HE" standing for "His Excellency". But when a Malawian addressed the President or the fact of the President in public, a Malawian had to say the following, when addressing the President: "His Excellency, the Life President, Ngwazi Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda". And they had to say it all, just like that, so any time you were making a speech and referring to the president you had to say it, "His Excellency, the Life President, Ngwazi Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda," quite a mouthful. He was an autocrat. Some would say a benevolent dictator. More or less. Unless you head went above the political waterline, in which case it might get lopped off, as it did with a couple of ministers while we were there. But generally, it was not a totalitarian type arrangement. It was an autocratic arrangement, for sure, it was a dictatorship but generally a benevolent one.

People were free to pursue daily life in relatively normal circumstances. You could get a shop, you could worship, he was very proud of that, you could worship in whatever faith you believed. There was not freedom of the press, certainly. The press was heavily censored. As was the radio. I think there was no television. But Banda was on all fashioned man. He used to like to preach the virtues of living Latin and Greek. And indeed he himself spoke Latin, if not Greek. He established Kamuzu Academy, a boarding school in the middle of nowhere, which was modeled on the Etonian model and very select students that were attending this school, which was built and opened while we were there by the way, had to wear blazers and bowlers and ties, as if they were little Etonians. And the students there learned Latin and the classics and Greek.

I remember Chet Crocker, who had persuaded him to make a stop off, this was a lot of doing, to make a very short stop in Malawi, just to acknowledge Banda, to acknowledge our friendly relations. I mean, our relations with Malawi weren't all that important, but at least to acknowledge that we had very good relations with Malawi. Crocker was flying, as I recall from Tanzania, which was one of the members of the Contact Group down to somewhere in southern Africa, either Zimbabwe, Lusaka, or to South Africa itself. And he was in a private chartered plane. So we got him to stop off. The President was in

residence in Kasungu. So, the Ambassador and I drove out there and Chet landed there on this dirt strip and the Ambassador and Chet went off with Chet's aid, Peter Eicher, went off to meet him, and I didn't. Peter Eicher wrote up a telegram to Washington which at least started out rather humorously because it talked about how when Chet walked into the meeting, Banda started speaking in Latin to Chet, and Chet responded in Latin and they went on for about 15 minutes much to the dismay of John Burroughs and to Peter Eicher, because I don't know what he made out of it all, but he wrote a rather humorous telegram beginning something like "Tea with Kamuzu at Kasungu". That I think was the title of the telegram.

Q: How old was Hastings Banda at the time?

KOTT: No one really knows for sure. We estimated I think in the mid '80s that he would have been in his late 80s. Or mid '80s. Mid '80s to late '80s. There was a biography, it was unavailable in Malawi, it was banned in essence. I think it was by Phillip Johnson, British. I read the book, it was a very interesting book. He claimed that Banda was born I think in 1898, 1899. No one really knows for sure. No one kept records in those days. Banda was born in the central part of Malawi, I think probably around Kasungu, I think that's his home town. Legend has it that he walked to South Africa where he got himself an education and eventually made his way to the U.S. where he went to Meharry Medical College and became a medical doctor. Went back, not to Malawi which was Nyasaland then of course, but went to Scotland to further his medical studies and then opened a practice in London where he was for many, many years and where he started getting involved in the independence movement by funding the nationalists who were in country. Banda never having stepped foot in country since the day he left as a young man for South Africa. So he was probably out of the country… let's say he left when he was 16 or 18 years old, let's say that was in 1916 and came back in what 1957, '56, '58, '59, or something like that, just before independence, became the first Prime Minister then a President and then had himself declared Life President of Malawi. So there was no election, that was a long way of telling you there were no elections in Malawi. For president. There were allegedly parliamentary elections, but in my day there was only one party, that was the Malawi Congress Party.

Q: At what extent were opposition figures or people speaking out for change or human rights…?

KOTT: They were all in exile. Banda had exiled a number of them. Some of them were imprisoned, some of them perished at the hands of Banda. One of the most prominent dissidents, so labeled by the Malawi government, was a former minister, back from the early days of independence, in the '60s I think Malawi got independence on July 5th or 6th 1964. This fellow's name was Orton Chirwa, and he was, as I said, a minister in the government, spoke up against some of Banda's policy when I guess Banda was Prime Minister of the day, and in essence I guess had to flee or was banned. Left the country, lived I understand in Tanzania for a while and eventually in Zambia. How active he was as a dissident, I am not sure, but we would hear occasionally of tracks coming into the

country, dissident tracks, denouncing Banda and his one party rule, etc, etc. Well, low and behold, during our watch one Christmas season it was announced that Orton Chirwa had been captured. Apparently he had been lured back into the country under some kind of a promise or scam or whatever, foolishly from his perspective obviously, was apprehended and imprisoned. And over the period of next year, year and a half a case was made against him as a traitor and he was tried not in a modern day civil court but in a tribal traditional court. This went on, and the appeal process went on and in essence it all ended up that Orton Chirwa was sentenced to death with his wife.

As it were, Orton Chirwa had a daughter living in Washington, D.C. and she or some of her friends or cronies or whatever, managed to get their story to the Washington Post. And so the Chirwa story became a minor cause célèbre and for a while front page news, or at least for section news in Washington Post and it caught the attention needless to say of Uncle Sam, particularly the State Department and we all of the sudden started getting inundated with cables asking us to make demarches, coming from Washington of course. Saying that justice had to be done, human rights, etc, etc, fair trials and ultimately that Orton Chirwa should be spared and not hung as he was condemned under the verdict of the court, the tribal court. This played out over the period of time, and it played out actually right up until the end of John Burroughs and my tenure. We made a number of demarches to the Foreign Ministry and other parts of the government, principally the Office of the President and the Cabinet. John Burroughs left for a change of stations, departed post, I became Chargé for my last month there, and I figured, "Well, what the heck, let's have some fun with this. What can they do? Throw me out of the country?" I was going to leave in a month's time anyway. All that would result is that I'd miss my farewell party and the 4th of July reception.

So I went in, as I suspect with some prodding from Washington but perhaps I carried it a little bit further and I went in to see, in fact, the chief civil servant, the Secretary to the President and the Cabinet of the day and I made a demarche, again based on Washington's destructions but stronger than Washington would have it delivered. And I remember saying to my interlocutor that of course we weren't trying to interfere in Malawian affairs, that we respect the right of the government to conduct its business at it saw fit. However, as they knew, there was tremendous concern on the part of the western nations, the Germans, the French, perhaps a bit less, the British, very strongly, and ourselves, and we did by the way, the diplomatic representatives did act in concert on this, but I think I was probably out front and I said quite frankly that they could do what they wanted but if Orton Chirwa got hung, that I could assure him that we, the U.S., would cut all aid immediately to Malawi. And that I could assure him that we would press that case on our allies. And that was significant. Because the Malawian government depended on foreign aid for its existence, quite frankly. It was a very poor country. And as I told you earlier, the Germans were the largest single contributor, and they were in our court on this as well. So it became something of a minor, a little cause célèbre in our little world of diplomacy out there.

But the fact was that about two weeks later I was summoned over to see the Secretary to

the President and the Cabinet. And he said, "I want to tell you something. His Excellency, the Life President Ngwazi Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda, has decided to spare the life of Orton Chirwa and Mrs. Chirwa." And he wanted to tell me that in advance, because I had come in and made this demarche several weeks ago and that he was going to collect the balance of the diplomatic corps the following day to tell them the same thing. But he wanted me to know in advance. I thought that this was a minor coup that I was able to report back to Washington. I am not sure that did Orton Chirwa an awful lot of good because being condemned to a life in prison in a Malawian jail is probably a fate worse then death actually. But in fact he did spare his life and that of his wife actually and I understand he died several years ago, of natural cause, but in prison.

Q: I assume that the State Department, and his daughter was pleased?

KOTT: I didn't get any reaction, I got on a plane and went on home leave.

Q: It was right at the end?

KOTT: Yes, literally, I left probably two weeks later, or a week later.

Q: You mentioned your threat was that we would have to cut off aid. Were we giving a substantial amount of aid? I don't think you talked about that.

KOTT: I think it was something in the order of, at the high point, maybe 25 million dollars, roughly, give or take a couple of million which was in those days, given the size of the country and its relative unimportance for the U.S. if you will, I think John Burroughs and I got, if you want to call this a triumph, I think we were able to effectively double the amount of aid that flowed to Malawi, at least on paper, during the three years that we were there. I think when we first came it was more in the magnitude of 12 million dollars, and we left with magnitude of 25 millions dollars. On the per capita basis that was not an awful lot, there were six million Malawians in those days. And it was used for good purposes. Supporting the agricultural sector, for example.

Q: Was your main argument that it would be well used, that it was needed or was it…?

KOTT: Absolutely well used. Almost a virtual absence of corruption in government. Very unique in Africa. Again, Banda being not only an autocrat but a self proclaimed pious man who was an elder in the Church of Scotland, and was very proud of it. And the Church of Scotland of course was the church that Livingston and the others belonged to, who were in essence the white founders, if I can use that term, of contemporary or at least colonial Malawi, Nyasaland. And Banda having lived in Scotland and then in England, was very British. He was very pro-UK.

Q: Could you also argue that although Malawi was perhaps small in population and small land area, it was in kind of a strategic central position or you didn't really…?

KOTT: I don't think so. That would be a stretch. We said that Malawi was a country that would offer us and our allies support. Their voting record in the United Nations, and I remember there was a yearly State Department report on voting records, the Cold Was voting records of our friends and not such good friends. Malawi always ranked very high. It was 90% of the time with us. He was very proud of that. That counted in those days, and that counted on the aid score and tally sheets as well. So in that sense strategic, not in a geopolitical sense. But certainly on a diplomatic sense. They were good friends. I mean the fact that they would host the Israelis, the white South African government of the day, the Taiwanese, these were our friends in those days. And still are in some cases.

Q: And you certainly, apparently, couldn't really argue that if we were not to give more aid that they would receive assistance from the Soviets or the Chinese?

KOTT: No. It was more quid pro quo. It was reward time. And it wasn't an awful lot of money in the scope of things. We would make the case every year to make sure that the level stayed up, if not to increase it. Washington understood that, number one: Malawi was a friend, and that it was deserving of serious consideration politically. Again, the voting record in the UN, the fact that it supported these "rogue states" that we were friends with, etc, etc. "Rogue states" as defined in Africa of course, in African terms. And that it utilized aid effectively. As I said there was a virtual absence of corruption in Malawi, largely due to personality and the autocratic style as well of Hastings Banda. Ministers were basically honest government civil servants. They didn't dare go on the take because they knew they'd get thrown in prison. And the way they were treated by the government, by Hastings Banda was absolutely cavalier. Chickens today, feathers tomorrow. If Banda, for whatever whimsical reason, wanted to get rid of one of his ministers, he simply dismissed him. Sent the moving truck to the ministers government provided house, took away the keys to the cars, the Mercedes, packed up his effects in the moving truck, put the kids in the front seat and sent the guy back to the village. And that was it. Here today, gone tomorrow. Ministers only earned a salary of something like eight or nine thousand dollars a year. But they would give them perks like a Mercedes and a house. Banda expected everybody in the country to own a plot of land, to grow their own food, to be self sufficient in food and that obtained to ministers. Ministers would leave the capital on the weekends, go back to their villages, do a little politicking I suppose, and also work in their fields, allegedly. But, for the most part, there was no corruption and the aid money was not going into live pockets.

Q: Germany was also a substantial donor for Malawi. Who else was and were the multilateral agencies active, the World Bank?

KOTT: Yes, they were, and they lent to Malawi mostly for infrastructure project. I think the German aid was mostly for infrastructure projects, like roads. And they needed them. There is nothing wrong with that. Ours was I think, we were back in the time of basic human needs, or just coming out of that, Jimmy Carter basic human needs, the AID focus was still probably finding its way around a little bit. I think ours was more I rural production, agriculture, health, maternal shelter, health, family planning, that sort of

thing. Not on infrastructure for the most part. Germans, World Bank, ourselves, South Africans.

Q: Japan?

KOTT: Japan, I can't remember the figure but I suspect it was. I'll tell you something that really is anomalous. Japan had more volunteers from the Japanese volunteer agency, equivalent of our Peace Corps, in Malawi than they had in any other country in Africa. Even though they didn't have a diplomatic representation on the ground. They had over a hundred volunteers. We had I think approximately 70 or 80 on average, Peace Corps volunteers in the country. But Japan had more. Other countries had volunteers as well, but on much less of scale.

Q: Did we have a Self Help Program?

KOTT: Yes, we did. I think a rather effective one. Also one of the highest amounts being dolled out by Washington to an African country. About a 100,000 dollars. Which is peanuts, but it's effective. We didn't need it as much in Malawi as we needed it perhaps in some other places, in terms of whatever little political influence we got out of it. But certainly the Malawian people did. Schools. Small scale agriculture projects, culverts and that sort of thing. Five thousand dollars per project on average.

Q: How big a town, city was Lilongwe?

KOTT: Not very big. As I said, it was a new city. The population of Malawi in those say was six million, it has probably doubled since. Blantyre, the largest city, probably no more than a quarter of a million, probably at most, and Lilongwe, I suspect didn't have more than a hundred thousand. I am guessing, but, it wasn't a very big city. Downtown was two blocks long.

Q: You mentioned the Embassy Branch Office in Blantyre, headed by a Foreign Service Officer. But you would go there pretty often.

KOTT: Yes, and other officers in the Embassy, I would encourage them to get down there, the Economic Officer, to look at the commercial scene.

Q: There was an Economic Officer as such, but you acted as Political Officer?

KOTT: Yes, right. I did the political portfolio except when the Ambassador got involved, which, he pretty much was hands-off. He did more of the representational sort of thing. I did the political, we had an Economic/Commercial Officer, who also did the consular, sort of what I did in Togo. And we had an Administrative Officer. And interestingly, the Administrative Officer, who I helped bring to post, from Cameroon where I worked with him, he was one of the GSOs, not the principal GSO in Yaoundé when I was there at my previous post, Roger Meece, came out to Malawi because I helped persuade him and the

Department to have him sent there. He was our Administrative Officer, and he was a very fine Administrative Officer. Roger now, just recently went back to Malawi as His Excellency, the U.S. Ambassador to Malawi. I was delighted to learn that, we had a dinner for Roger the night before he left. I was unable to make his swearing in because I was traveling myself, but it came full circle.

Q: Well, I've heard he's very capable. I don't know him myself, but I hadn't realized that he had served in country before, and that going back now to Malawi, that obviously is a posting that makes a lot of sense.

KOTT: We had a PAO. We had about four or five person AID shop. We had a Defense Attaché, interestingly, who was very active. Totally unfortunate that the Defense Attaché who was at post for at least two out of the three years that I was in Malawi, Lieutenant Colonel Ken Crabtree, subsequently died in a tragic terrorist act in Namibia, along with Dennis Keogh, Foreign Service Officer. Dennis was the head of the U.S. Liaison Office in Namibia and Ken who had transferred back to Fort Bragg, he was a Special Forces Officer, a very fine officer, loved Africa; the Liaison Offices needed a TDY Military Officer. Ken stuck up his hand in true Ken spirit, and went out there and he and Dennis were doing a tour of the country. This is in the pre-independence days of course when the SWAPO (South West African People's Organization) Forces and others were contending for the power and independence for what ultimately became Namibia, from Southwest Africa. They stopped at a gasoline station to fill up and a limpet mine blew them to bits. We were of course all devastated by loss of both of those fine gentlemen.

Q: Why don't you talk a little bit more about what the Defense Attaché in Lilongwe would do and was he accredited to other countries in the region or just Malawi? Was he primarily reporting on the Malawi military?

KOTT: Yes, he was working with the Malawi military. Seems like he spent most of his time… Ken more so than his successor was a very hands-on kind of guy. He jumped out of planes with the Malawians, he was a very well accepted and integrated into the Malawian military structure. The Malawians had a first rate, small, but well disciplined army. Very starched-shirt, British-khaki kind of army. Great parade formations, snappy salutes, tough Gurkha kind of mentality, wore kind of Gurkha outfit, khaki shorts, starched shirts and Gurkha hats, with the feathers and all that sort of thing. Not terribly well-equipped but well-led. Sandhurst trained officers. Needless to say, they didn't have much of a navy, Malawi being land-locked. They did have a lake, Lake Malawi, which ran in essence the length of the country, so they had a few patrol boats. No air force. So it was really a land army that was not politicized. Truly not politicized, so therefore it did not do police functions. There was a very effective police force in Malawi, which was part of the armed services as I recall, but separate from the Army. The Army was very professionally led and well trained and was basically a land defense force to fight potential invaders if you will. Happily they didn't see a lot of action. I know when the Falklands war broke out, during our stay in Malawi, word was that Hastings Banda was petitioning the Queen to let him send off his Gurkha troops to help his friends the British

against the Argentines. You know, no Third World solidarity there at all, I don't want if you can call Argentina a Third World country, but you know what I mean. The Malawians were certainly the minority, a typical Malawian fashion in Africa. Rooting for the British to win this conflict.

The Defense Attaché, he was mostly concerned with the land forces there. I can't recall if he was accredited elsewhere. I know he took a trip over to Mozambique once or twice, but that may have been on a discrete order from Washington. I am not sure he was accredited there. Clearly he was tracking from afar, as we all were, developments in the Mozambican civil war, but we didn't really go into Mozambique as a matter of course.

Q: Was the Malawi Army at that time used at all abroad in UN peace-keeping functions, or anything like that that you remember?

KOTT: I don't think so. And that was probably reflective of the sort of outcast status that Banda "enjoyed" as an African statesman. He really was not… he was iconoclastic, he was not accepted if you will, he was barely tolerated. Because if his conservative, very pro-Western views.

Q: You mentioned that he would send a delegate or a representative to the OAU. Was Malawi a member of, for example, the non-aligned movement, do you remember?

KOTT: Yes I think it was and it probably still is, and is a member of the OAU but only nominally. They really kept to themselves pretty much.

Q: Can we talk just a bit more about relations with neighbors, I don't think we talked much about Zambia?

KOTT: Well, it was a touchy relationship. Probably the most important in many ways because of familial ties, people in at least the western part of Malawi and the eastern part of Zambia are one and the same tribal groupings, so there was a lot of cross-border movements. Malawians of course wanted to defend against smuggling, and the Zambians, I suspect, were in favor of some smuggling because their economy was rather in tatters, even relative to the Malawian economy. Relations were up and down. Kenneth Kaunda of course was front line, very much front line, a moderate leader, one who, I think, the U.S. basically got along with pretty well, but was certainly more contemporary in his thinking in terms of being a more typical African statesman at the time. More vociferously anti-colonial, more vociferously neutralist, if you will, in great Cold War that was playing itself out in Africa. Banda was not that way at all. He was very much in the pocket of the West, if you will. He was an iconoclast, he fought for himself and made his own decisions. The Zambian Embassy I think was the only black African country to be represented on the ground in Malawi, interestingly. The rest were all from much further afield.

Q: Zimbabwe was not there?

KOTT: No. Zimbabwe had just become independent in 1979 or ’80, and I’d gotten there in ’81, they had not opened an Embassy yet.

Q: And they are not an immediate neighbor of…?

KOTT: Not contiguous, no. You have to go through Zambia to get there.

Q: Okay. How about Tanzania? What sort of relations where there?

KOTT: Dicey at worst. Cordial but not warm at best. Again, Tanzania having harbored, as did Zambia of course, and this was one of the reasons for the nature of the relationship, Malawian dissidents, so called dissidents, opposition figures, what have you. That was probably the sum of the relationship.

Q: The border between Malawi and Tanzania is partially across the lake?

KOTT: Yes, a little bit across the lake and just a very small border.

Q: And a long way from Dar es Salaam and more populated parts of Tanzania.

KOTT: Indeed. And the north of Malawi more underdeveloped than the center and the south. The south being the traditional area of colonial influence and economic activity than the center. And Malawi was divided up into three provinces if you will, the center being the second most important and the north being the least most important in terms of political influence and economic activity and probably the least developed. I only went up to the north once or twice. Very beautiful, by the way, forested areas.

Q: To what extent was there a community of…, effort or occasional meetings of the embassies of the region? Did you get together with the other embassies in Lusaka and…?

KOTT: You mean American Embassies?

Q: American Embassies.

KOTT: I don’t recall that we did. I think we proposed something once to Washington and it sort of got nixed. I think it was an effort to get Malawi more involved in the Contact Group and I think Washington decided they really didn’t need Malawi or want Malawi so it was nixed. No, I don’t remember Burroughs going off, I certainly didn’t to any regional meetings with Ambassadors.

Q: But Assistant Secretary Chet Crocker did come once for a brief visit?

KOTT: Just a few hours, sort of a pro forma, stop. We didn’t get paid any attention.

Q: You didn't get any CODELs (Congressional Delegations)?

KOTT: No. I don't think there was.

Q: The Vice-President didn't come?

KOTT: Certainly not. No Cabinet ministers that I can recall. Maybe one CODEL, I don't even think that we had one CODEL. It was just off the map. In some ways very pleasant.

Q: I have to ask you sort of one question for my own limited… never having been to Malawi and not knowing much about Hastings Banda. But it seems to me that in my time in Ghana I learned that at one point, way in the past, Banda had come and worked in Ghana as a medical doctor for a short period of time. I don't know if that would have been when he was living in the UK or on his way back, before independence?

KOTT: I think it was on his way back. I think it was when he left London, he did go to Ghana for a short period of time.

Q: And I think he was in Kumasi, I believe.

KOTT: That maybe right. That's right, I forgot about that. But it was in the biography, this Phillips short biography. It was a very fascinating life story. The guy just died very recently, a few years ago, probably, I'm going to guess, about 99 years old. He was effectively ultimately removed from power in the early '90s I believe. Democratization, the human rights wave, everything else caught up with him. He outlived his usefulness. And Malawians, they really needed a breath of political fresh air. I wasn't around, of course, in Malawi at the time, but he was forced out of power and there were democratic elections held, and a man who, I knew briefly, who had once been the Secretary General of the Malawi Congress Party, the then one and only party, Bakili Muluzi, who my predecessor Bob Maxim used to deal with quite often, again as head of the Malawi Congress Party and I think Muluzi bought Bob Maxim's car when Bob left, he was very proud of it, it was a big American long Oldsmobile or Pontiac or something, looked like a real boat. I went over and paid an introductory courtesy call on Muluzi, who was a lovely gentleman. But shortly thereafter, he was one of those ministers, and he did have that title, who was removed from power because he ran afoul of the old man.

Q: Did he leave the country?

KOTT: He didn't leave the country but he was exiled to his village and so he became a non-person. When minister was out of favor, left office, I told you the sequence of events before he became a political non-person. But he was elected ultimately president, the first democratically president of Malawi in the '90s and is still the president of Malawi.

Q: In the period that you were there from '81-'84 did you feel that there was sort of an atmosphere of intimidation, of fear?

KOTT: Much less so than what history tells us prevailed in the '60s and '70s when the young pioneers held sway. These were the group of brown-shirted youth that used to go around doing the bidding of Hastings Banda and the Malawi Congress Party. And they were thugs. I've read some of the history books and some of the novels even about the bad old days. Certainly it was much better when we were there. For whatever reasons, I don't know what caused this relaxation, whether it was a combination of economics or political or diplomatic pressures brought on from the outside, or maybe just Hastings Banda aging, mellowing in his old age, whatever. No I didn't feel as though there was really pressure. As I said, if you were politically active, and if you were perceived in any manner to be running afoul of the president's dictate, you were in danger. And in fact, as I alluded to earlier, two senior ministers of government, who were both done away with, who were on our watch in Malawi. I remember one night they were both sitting at my dining table. At either side of me. We had a USIS visiting guest speaker and I was the host for an evening at my house with the speaker and both Minister Matenje, who I believe was the Education Minister, but a very senior political figure in Malawi and the Minister, each of these three regions of the country had a minister, the Minister for the central region's name was Aaron Gadama. I invited them both and they both came to this "stag event" and sat on either side of me. Both rather hefty fellows. I sort of squeezed in between them as they were enjoying their dinner, shall I say, over this talk being given by our professor. A few months later they were both gone. They met with the tragic "road accident." This was the cause célèbre of the diplomatic community and of course of the country. Even Washington paid a little bit of attention to it, as to what happened to these guys. They were allegedly shot. Why? I still to this day don't know. I can surmise that they were either plotting against or either discussing changes at the very least and Banda's secret police found out about it, reported to the President and/or others around the president, and they were done away with.

Q: Was it you impression from the dinner or any other sort of occasion that they were particularly outspoken?

KOTT: No, absolutely not. They were very deferential. We were all taken by surprise. And I will say, I lost a few nights sleep over that, because we felt fairly close to them. We knew them fairly well. We were certainly not in league with whatever they may have been doing, but that showed the sort of ruthlessness of the leadership of the day.

Q: You mentioned toward the end of your time when you were Chargé and intervened on behalf of Chirwa, to spare his life, the dissident who had come back into the country, did you have instructions or did you raise this issue, more in the sense of trying to understand what happened?

KOTT: Yes. We were getting a lot of pressure from Washington to get to the bottom of it, but not a demarche. Because there was no evidence. We couldn't prove that it was a human rights issue. It was a police report, journalistic report, of course in controlled press, controlled police, that there was a tragic road accident. Two ministers and another

parliamentarian were all traveling in this car together and they just ran off the road late at night. People who allegedly saw the bodies said they were riddled with bullets. And tortured. But that's hearsay. There was nothing we could really do.

Q: Anything else we ought to say about your three years in Malawi?

KOTT: It was a great experience for a fairly young officer. Good managerial experience, again seven agencies at post, reasonable number of people to supervise, an Ambassador that delegated a lot of authority to me, did the political work. From a personal point of view, a lovely country to live in at the time, with young family. I could spent reasonable amounts of time with them since there was not a lot of attention paid to Malawi, it wasn't a very important country, so the weekends were pretty free.

Q: The economy was, I think you talked about it before a little bit, but it was stable at the time? There was no inflation?

KOTT: Yes, that was not an issue. And it was relatively self sufficient but it was a minor economy, tobacco and maize.

Q: Pretty poor country.

KOTT: Pretty poor country. But, largely self-sufficient unless a drought came. I think they had a little petroleum crises when we were there because of the Mozambique situation. Their lifeline to the sea went through Mozambique, so of course when the war heated up and affected the Nacala railway, Malawi couldn't get the shipments out or in.

Q: What would they do then?

KOTT: South Africans again, who were very good friends of theirs, would fly in supplies. Truckers would go the long route, instead of going to the ports in Mozambique they would go all the way down to South Africa, to the Cape. So that added a lot of expense. The truckers I think in some cases went to Mozambique ports and they took their lives in their hands that they wouldn't get attacked by the rebels or by the government side I suppose.

Q: But there was one railroad to closest border?

KOTT: I think there were two lines, one was a relatively new line that went from the central part of Malawi to the port of Nacala, in northern Mozambique. And then the other line in southern Malawi that went to Beira ultimately. Then of course there was the rail line over to Zambia. I'm sure the rail line from Zambia went down through Harare and into South Africa. So there were a couple of ways. I may have misspoken about southern Malawian rail line to Beira, maybe that didn't exist, maybe it was just the Nacala line to Mozambique or the alternative was the line through Lusaka and all the way down to South Africa, which added tremendously in terms of both time and cost. And then, of

course, trucks, lorries. So, bring isolated and landlocked like that was unfortunate for Malawians.

Q: But you were isolated and a long way from Washington, which has advantages certainly on occasion. You presumably took R&R (Rest and Recreation) and home leave and were able to get out occasionally. Did you…?

KOTT: It was not a country that you really felt you had to get away from. Unlike many of the countries in West Africa that had this oppressive heat for example, or disease, Malawi is a relatively pleasant, healthy country. Lilongwe was about 3,500 feet up in altitude, so you didn't have the heavy humidity and oppressive heat. In fact it had more often than not a rather pleasant, sunny, crisp kind of, relatively speaking, kind of climate in their winter season being below the Equator in the southern hemisphere which was June, July, August. In mornings you would wake up it would be 40 degrees. Never got below 40 degrees.

Q: Snow ever?

KOTT: No, not in Lilongwe. Forty degrees was the coldest, that was the very bottom that the mercury went to. And it would warm up to 60 or 70 during the day, so it was really pleasant.

Q: And in the hot season, in the warmer season?

KOTT: At most 90 degrees, more humid, a little rainy but it didn't last all that long. And the road network was reasonably good, at least the axis roads, north-south. We had lots of avenues of good, clean outdoor entertainment. Lake Malawi was about 90 minutes away, the closest point from Lilongwe. The Embassy Recreation Association maintained a cottage on Lake Malawi when I was there it was not where it is today, if in fact it is still there, but it was about a three hour drive away. A lovely isolated place on the lake, probably at that time the only body of water on the continent of Africa that you could actually go in and come out of without having caught bilharzia. You could virtually drink water from the lake. There was wonderful fish, both of the eating variety, a tilapia-type fish, which was delicious. Malawi is the source of much of the world's tropical fish in aquariums. Yes, they export them from Malawi. So it was an isolated, pristine almost paradise. The other thing they had was, the Embassy had a physical property on a mountain area near Zomba, a Plateau, that had been developed by the British, back at the turn of the century and that is to say it was forested with the pine, evergreen forest. So there was this vast area, up on the Plateau, right outside of Zomba. We bought, or maybe we built it, but we owned it in any case virtually or had a 99-year lease or something a log cabin, a two-bedroom log cabin that was considered the Ambassador's residence away from Lilongwe when he would have to go to watch Parliament. Needless to say, we all spent at least one weekend a month down there, with these great roaring fires, trout stream not far from the residence, the ability to go horseback riding, hiking, it was lovely. It was just charming. Great place for kids.

Q: And there really weren't neighboring countries that were either easy or attractive to travel to.

KOTT: Yes, there were game parks in Malawi. They weren't as prolific and as interesting perhaps for the most part as they might be in Zambia, but within about a two-hour drive from Lilongwe you could go over to Zambia, in the northern part of Zambia there was a wonderful game park that we visited. You could do a two-day trek down to Zimbabwe, again great game viewing down there. We didn't go up to Tanzania but we could've I suppose. But Malawi had about five national game parks. Again, nothing like Kenya or South Africa, but certainly it was fun.

Q: Anything else we ought to cover before we go on to the next assignment?

KOTT: No.

Q: So in summer of 1984 where did you go?

KOTT: I was doing battle with personnel because I though it was really time to go home. I had two years in Cameroon, three years in Malawi, and perhaps unwisely convinced myself that I should probably go back to the Department for career reasons. In fact the Africa Bureau and Jim Bishop in particular was at the desk, he was not the senior desk officer, but had a personnel portfolio. He wanted me to go off and stay in the field. I guess he thought I've done a decent job in Malawi and he said, "Why don't we send you to Mauritius as DCM?" And I must admit I was flattered and I was tempted. It sounded like a rather idyllic place but I, again for family reasons and somewhat for professional reasons, thought it was time to go home.

And so I wanted a good job. Perhaps my ego was way too high thinking, "Gosh DCM, I ought to be golden, good for something." To make a long story short, I was having trouble getting the job I wanted, I was negotiating with personnel, with Africa Bureau and others. Finally I got a call one day, and I held out long enough, from someone in personnel saying, "Well, the South African desk job is opening up, unexpectedly." For a number of reasons that we don't want to get into here. And I could bid on that. I said, "That sounds great." Obviously, an important account with everything that was going on at the time, constructive engagement, apartheid, everything. So I did bid on it. But he said, "However, there is one problem. There is a USIS officer who is also interested in the job and who seems to have caught the eye of Chet Crocker. So the system will probably give you the job if you insist but you ought to know that you might be coming into a situation that might not be all that comfortable." I didn't heed the warning, unfortunately. I am not a very good bureaucrat. I bid the job and got it.

It was not a happy experience. Not necessarily because of Chet, but overall for a whole bunch of other reasons. I didn't flourish there. In fact, I didn't really have much authority, as in most countries especially in African countries the Desk Officer is the authority. The

Assistant Secretary is too busy putting out fires to worry about what's happening in Guinea Bissau or Togo or Malawi. So the Desk Officer for those countries is in effect…, he is effectively the Assistant Secretary for that country. Not the case in South Africa, as you can imagine.

First, there was Chet Crocker, who was the real South Africa Desk Officer, because that was his most important account. Even within the triad of the constructive engagement policy vis-à-vis Mozambique, Angola and South Africa, and what he was attempting to do and ultimately did it successfully. Then there was Frank Wisner, his trusted deputy and I don't think I have to go to much depth to suggest that Frank Wisner was no slouch. So he was the second South African Desk Officer. Then there was one Bob Gelbard who was the Office Director for Southern African Affairs. We all know what's become of Bob, he's had a very successful career, somewhat controversial fellow. Very dynamic, very bright fellow, very aggressive. Bob was the third South Africa Desk Officer. Then there were two deputies in the Office of Southern African Affairs. One of whom who had been the previous incumbent South Africa Desk Officer, so needless to say he became the fourth South Africa Desk Officer. All of whom outranked me. And I was supposed to be the South Africa Desk Officer.

I used to write press briefings in the morning. Every morning, you could be assured that the Press Office wanted guidance. So I'd get a copy of the New York Times at home and Washington Post and read it on the way in on the bus, because there was always a South African story that I knew they would need guidance for. And we did get a lot of fun to read stuff. There were two other officers, one full-time and one part-time officer who was shared with the Botswana Desk Office.

Q: Did you supervise them?

KOTT: Technically I did. But I really didn't have much authority and certainly no power. It was a real come-down from being DCM in Malawi. I didn't enjoy it at all and it was a bad fit for a number of reasons. I made it known soon after my arrival that I really wanted to curtail. It was a tough decision but it was a right decision. I was not fully supportive of the policy or at least the way the policy was being sold. I didn't particularly like the job for a number of reasons. View by the general public at the time I think, at least many quarters of the public, as sort of somehow defending the bad guys. That was the perception. The bad guys bring the white apartheid South African government. It was not a fun job.

As I said, about two months on the job I let it be known that I would like to transfer at an appropriate time. I made it clear that I was not doing this to go public, I wasn't a dissident. I wasn't going to denounce our policy or anything like that. I went up to speak to Frank Wisner about it, to Jim Bishop about it. Jim was very kind, he said, "Would you like to switch jobs with the Zaire Desk Officer? Just do a one-for-one swap. That way you could still have a good job and stay at the Bureau." A number of things were happening and in my though processes I was thinking, "Look, if I'm going to make a break I ought

to make a clean break. I think I need to do something different than Africa for a change." I'd been doing Africa for about nine years. Lomé, West African Affairs, Cameroon, Malawi. I think that totaled about nine years, nothing but Africa. And I thought, perhaps wrongly, but anyway I came to the conclusion, "Thank you Jim, but, no thanks." Good friend, dear friend, Jim Bishop, still is. If I'm going to break, I'm going to break clean. Chet, Frank the others asked me if I'd stay until at least they got a replacement, and I said, "Of course, I'm a Foreign Service Officer, I am not going to abandon you." As it turns out, they really didn't get a replacement until the following summer so I wound up staying on the desk for about 10 months.

Of course, during that time I was speaking to Personnel, and at the right time, from the timing perspective, I guess it may have been around June or something, I got a call from Greg Matson, who was the Chief of the European Division of Personnel, CDA (Office of Career Development and Assignment), and he asked me if I would like to take over the deputy position, or at least interview for it, the deputy position in that shop since that deputy, Richard Dash, was going to move up to replace Greg who was going on to another assignment. Long and the short of it is that's the job I got. So I moved in 1985, very happily to Personnel and became the Deputy Chief of European Division in CDA and then a year later moved up to be the Chief and that's where I met you.

Q: Before we talk about your time at Personnel, is there anything else you would like to say at this point, either about the policy at the time, at '84, '85, relating to South Africa, anything more about those ten months or so? We can easily move on…

KOTT: I would just say that I didn't disagree that much with the policy that Chet had largely devised and was propagating, my problem was more with the way he was selling it. I prefer not to go into too much detail. I respect Chet but I disagree with some of his actions. And I think the way I handled it was to disassociate quietly from those actions.

Q: Did you ever travel with him or others? Did you get heavily involved with Congress or anything like that?

KOTT: No. Never even went out to South Africa. That's not quite true. Sort of a repeat of my Togo-Nigeria Desk situation. On my way from Malawi, they sent me down for a very fast orientation with the Embassy in Pretoria and of course Johannesburg, the consulate was just down the road from there. That's all.

Q: So you were in Personnel first as a Deputy in European Assignments Division, for '85 to '86 and as a Chief for a year, '86 to '87? I think various people have talked about the open assignments and the panels and the process in general, do you have any general reflections? I know we don't want to go into individual assignments or problems.

KOTT: No. I really enjoyed Personnel. I found it eye opening. Clearly it's an inside job and you could have no contact with the world outside the Department. Virtually. Maybe a few other agencies on occasion, but you don't deal with embassies, you don't deal with

the business community, you don't deal with civil society. So, as long as you understand that and are accepting of that, it can be lots of fun. Now as an Assignment Officer, the job was for the four out of five days of the week, largely very technical, unlike one of the Counseling Officers who really dealt with people and their issues and their concerns. However Friday, and perhaps half of another day of the week, when we went to the Panel, it was great fun and a great challenge because it was sort of like an advocacy system. There was built in tension, which I applaud. I think it has changed subsequently. It may have come full circle, but for a while I think we got away from that system, whereby even contending forces were determining, perhaps to a large extent, the fate of our individual officers' assignments and their careers. Ultimately I think it was good, I think it was healthy. That bureaus would battle against the central system, if you will. Of course, we wore two hats, because I worked for Personnel, but I represented a Bureau. It was akin to British legal system where you would go to see your solicitor and then he would pass on the case to a barrister. On Fridays, we became the barristers. And we would make our cases and argue. Generally the European… for all the guffawing and laughing and snickering and barbs that I had to take from my colleagues, because the European Bureau was so powerful in the system and had the money and the positions ad everything, we usually won our case in the long run.

Q: You didn't have any particular European experience? You hadn't worked in European Bureau in Washington or in any…?

KOTT: No. Zero. Serendipity.

Q: Was it hard to establish your credentials?

KOTT: No. I made it clear at the outset that, I think it was even in my work requirements statement that they might put in there that one of my objectives was to restore credibility to the European Division in Personnel. Because of the excesses and the hyperbole used in the past by some of my predecessors, no names mentioned. But I tried to do an honest job. If the European Bureau gave me a case to bring to Panel and, that I didn't truly believe in it or didn't think we could win it without having to resort to chicanery or outright lies, which I wouldn't do, because I did want to restore some semblance of credibility to the European Bureau's case, I would tell the European Bureau upstairs before the meeting that we're not going to win this case, or I was not going to fight it very hard. And they would understand that and would accept it. Very rarely did they disagree with me. We had to make a pro forma case to satisfy the powers that be, the Assistant Secretary, and the Deputy Assistant Secretary, perhaps favoring a particular candidate very strongly so of course we would take the case to court, but sometimes I would even go against my own candidate. To demonstrate credibility. That's usually in very outrageous cases where I would lose overwhelmingly in any case. Triple stretches, the usual European stuff. It was good fun. I enjoyed my association with both Bill Swing and with you.

Q: Yes, it was a good period, certainly from looking back on my Foreign Service

experiences, actually one of the highlights, certainly in terms of Washington assignments.

KOTT: Indeed, yes. Good hours too, for the most part. Maybe not for you but for me. And it helped me get my next job, clearly.

Q: Which was?

KOTT: It was a linked assignment, someone might say one of those sweetheart deals that might only rarely come up in a career. I thought I'd like to, again, sort of break out of Africa a little bit, especially in the field, not having had an assignment in the field outside of Africa other than my very first assignment as a Junior Officer in Indonesia. I wanted the challenge of another managerial position.

Q: Today is February 9, 2001. I think where we broke off last time a few months ago, we have gotten you through the Canadian Defense College and in the summer of 1988 you went to Calgary as Consul General, Consular Officer. Tell us about that assignment, what did it entail, what sort of staff did you have, what were your major preoccupations?

KOTT: It was great fun. Probably the best assignment I ever had. Consul General is probably the most fun job in the Foreign Service, I think, having been a DCM twice I think I have a good basis of comparison. You have all the fun and very few of the problems that you have as being a DCM. Calgary was one of six American Consulates General in Canada at the time, down from probably double that number a few years earlier. Canadians seem to go on a two to one ratio, they seem to have about twice as many Consulates in the U.S. at any one time as we have in Canada. The last time I looked they had 12 in the U.S., we had six in Canada. Of course they pride themselves on knowing an awful lot more about us than we know about them, which is perhaps true at a certain level, but not necessarily at a serious level. Anyway, it was great fun.

I was there for three years, I arrived just after the Calgary Winter Olympics. My predecessor was going to be sure to stay for that, of course, can't blame him. But the spirit of the town was and the good will and the spirit of volunteerism was very much in evidence, and people were just on a real high. So it was a great time to arrive there. The Consulate General was located in an office building on something like the 10th floor and it overlooked Olympic Square where the medal ceremonies were held. So it was very centrally located, right downtown. A very manageable-size city, in those days about 600,000 people, give or take a few. Not a capital of the province. The capital of Alberta province is Edmonton. But Calgary is certainly the commercial and business center, probably the most important city in Canada arguably between Toronto and Vancouver.

The Consulate in Calgary, in those days at least, was responsible for the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan and Manitoba, the three prairie-provinces, if you will, and the Northwest Territories which had subsequently been re-divided up, but in my days it was a very large chunk of snow and very few people. That said, probably that piece of land mass, that consisted of Calgary Consulate, probably would have been, if it had been an

independent nation something like the U.S.' 12th or 15th largest trading partner. An awful lot of trade going back and forth in agricultural products, gas and oil of course, lot of familial ties, lots of Americans living in the consular district. I think more Americans living in that consular district than in any other consular district that is not headed by an Embassy. It was the largest consular district in the world, physically outside of an Embassy. Obviously the one in the former Soviet Union, Moscow, would have had a larger land mass. After that I think it was Calgary, in land mass. In terms of numbers of Americans, if I am not mistaken I think it was probably more Americans in that consular district than anywhere else in the world. But I stand to be corrected on that, if my memory doesn't serve me correctly. But there was an awful lot of Americans. A lot of dual citizens. Happily Canadians for the most part didn't need visas so while the staffing of the Consulate was largely on the consular side and handling that function it wasn't a lot of non-immigrant visa cases, at least not for Canadians. For third country nationals it was, but Canadians by and large didn't need non-immigrant visas.

We had a staff of as I recall six American officers, myself as Consul General, three other American officers, all of whom had consular commissions but at least under my managerial style all had ancillary duties. We divided up the functions amongst them. My deputy did the political work that I chose not to do. One of the other Vice Consuls did the economic reporting such as it was except for petroleum which I reserved for myself and the other Vice Consul did administrative work. In additional there was an American Secretary/Communicator to handle the classified traffic and we had a Foreign Commercial Service Officer there in our suite as well. I think that totaled six Americans. I think we had about 20 local staff. The issues of the day: Calgary, clearly not only the American presence but the energy center of Canada and probably arguably one of the leading, some would say the third most important, energy center in the world. The U.S. imports a lot of crude, a diminishing amount as the resources diminish in Canada, crude oil from Canada, but increasing amounts of natural gas. All the major American firms, the sisters if you will, are represented in Canada, incorporated in Canada of course as Canadian entities. So that was a major part of the portfolio.

On the political side, because of the structure of the Canadian confederation, the provinces have an inordinate amount of power, relative to the power that states in our federation have, in the U.S. vis-à-vis the central government. So reporting on the political developments within the three provinces to which I was accredited, much less so then Northwestern Territories, as that was a separate sort of political entity and not a very important one at the time, was rather significant. Especially given what was happening in Canada at the time. That was, the favorite indoor sport of Canadians is not really hockey, it's constitution making and what have you. The so-called Meech-Lake debate. An accord that was struck at the federal level with the provinces, which was multifaceted, very complex, I won't go into all the details here, it had a lot to do with Quebec and the demands that Quebec was placing on the central government as well as the other provinces, and Alberta being at the other end of the spectrum, although one might say very much in league with Quebec because they both shared this sort of strong sense of provincialism, provincial rights vis-a-vis states rights in this country. Reporting on this

political development over the years as it dragged out, was rather significant. And Ottawa I think was appreciative of that, as was Washington.

Q: Did you report to the Embassy in Ottawa or Washington or both?

KOTT: Both. We were not constrained to send our reports to Ottawa first for approval, if you will. We had a lot of autonomy. In fact that was one of the first questions I asked, of course, before going to Calgary, "Did we have authority to send directly to Washington?" The answer was, "Yes." And we did a fair amount of reporting. It was lot of fun. It was easy to have access, obviously. Very little was highly classified. Very rarely did was send anything higher than confidential. And in fact in those days we were allowed to send confidential dispatches in the Canadian post. There was some agreement between Washington and Ottawa that allowed us to use Canadian post to send what in the old days might have been an airgram to Washington or to Ottawa or circulated around to the Consulates, what have you. We used confidential to protect sources. Perhaps a misuse, but nevertheless, typical of the Foreign Service I suppose. Canadians were good friends and there was more sharing than there was anything else.

Q: Let me ask you a little bit about how you managed to do this job and I guess my question relates to travel. To what extent did you got to Ottawa to the Embassy? Was there much coordination, much meetings that took place?

KOTT: No, not really. It was all done by phone and by fax. We didn't use e-mail in those days. Mostly telephone. We went in the three years that I was in Calgary I think we might have had two meetings of Consuls General in the Embassy. During my first year there '88 to '89, Tim Niles was the Ambassador. He was finishing up three of four years in Canada and really didn't feel as though he had a need to deal with his Consuls General as much. He was succeeded by a political appointee under George Bush, named Ed Ney. A neophyte to diplomacy per se, but I thought a rather effective Ambassador. Certainly one could argue that the Canadian establishment, both political and I think even the bureaucratic at least in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was just as pleased to have a political appointee who they thought, and I think correctly, had access to the President. He had a very good relationship with the Prime Minister of the day, Brian Mulroney, with the Deputy Prime Minister, Don Mazankowski and the ministers in general, as I think the Embassy enjoyed a very good access from what I could see and tell to the establishment in Ottawa. Ed Ney was, again I am viewing this from afar, but I think he was very effective, he had access, he was able to deliver the messages that we needed delivered and keeping the Canadians in tune with Washington desires, and delivering the Canadian message back to Washington. I think he was a very effective Ambassador.

Q: Did he travel out to your Consular District some?

KOTT: He did, at least twice if not three times in two years that we overlapped. And as I said he had his Consuls General come into Ottawa at last once a year. He had very good deputies working for him in Ottawa and properly delegated to them and to his very

effective counselors in the Embassy. I mean, this is a senior Embassy, let's face it. I think virtually all of the sections were headed by senior officers, with Counselor or Minister Counselor title. And we had lots of interplay, it would be on the phone, or faxing back and forth between the Economic Counselor on my petroleum matters, energy matters, with the Political Counselor on subject such as Meech Lake and the political parties and elections and what have you. And we did go through a national election when I was there, and then any a number of provincial elections that we reported on. And our reporting was valued, as was the reporting of all the Consulates.

Q: Who did you report to in the Embassy? Who was considered your supervisor?

KOTT: My supervisor was clearly the DCM. He supervised all the Consuls General. On the day-to-day basis we were free to deal with virtually anybody we felt we had a need to. I was in frequent contact with the petroleum reporting officer for example, with the Political Counselor and with his staff. Good Embassy at the time, well staffed.

Q: How did you manage to cover this big consular district? You said that Calgary is not even the capital of the province even though it may be the most important city in western Canada to Vancouver.

KOTT: By buying tickets in advance and staying over Saturday night. We had very small travel budget. I think it came to something like 1,000 dollars a quarter, and I made a pledge to myself when I got to Calgary that I was going to visit my parish, if you will, at last the other two provinces plus the capital of Alberta in Edmonton, at least once a quarter. And that was tough to carry out on that stringent a budget. Because the distances are vast and if you chose to drive, you waste an awful lot of time, at least if you are going to Saskatchewan and Manitoba, it would be a full day to Winnipeg, a 12-hour day of driving. So I flew, but I did it on the cheap, as I said I bought my tickets in advance, I stayed over on a Saturday night and I was able to minimize the prices. Canadian air fares were kind of high at the time. And I was able to maintain the standard which I set for myself, which was visiting the parish once a quarter. I would go out, I would spend a day or two in Regina, capital of Saskatchewan and usually two working days in Winnipeg, capital of Manitoba. We used to have Consulate in Winnipeg and it was closed a year or so, I am guessing, maybe two years before I got to Calgary. Needless the say that Winnipeggers weren't delighted at that development. So I felt it was a part of my job to sway them and to sooth their feelings, ruffled feathers, that we were maintaining our interest and we did have bona fide interest there, especially commercial interest. So I made sure I visited the right people on every visit.

Q: Don't I recall dimly that a former Consul General in Winnipeg used to go back, maybe still does, and have a 4th of July celebration, P.J. Mullin? Does that ring a bell?

KOTT: It does, it does, vaguely. I don't think I've met Mullin but I think I may have heard that story.

Q: When you would go to say Winnipeg, would somebody there make arrangements for you or would you do it by phone in advance? You didn't have a local delegate?

KOTT: No, very easy to do it because all of these provincial governments have their protocol offices and they take their jobs pretty seriously. And they'll help you to the extent that you want them to help arrange appointments. Basically we had a very informal arrangement. Very hand-in-glove. I would officially notify them that I was coming, from the protocol aspects, but in essence more often then not they would agree that I could make my own appointments, and if I had trouble along the way I could rely on them to try to help me out. Access was very easy. To get to see ministers of the provincial governments and to even see the Premier, and I didn't want to abuse that, necessarily see him on a schedule every three months but when I needed to, there was no problem getting appointments. You could see judicial officials, you could see military authorities, police authorities, and that was all part of any Foreign Service Officer's job, to do that. Winnipeg for example was the home of Canadian Air Force, such as it is. Regina has the home of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. It was necessary to touch base with all of these institutions occasionally, the newspapers, the universities, and that was the job. That was the fun part of the job actually.

Q: So you kept in touch with police, law enforcement and military? As well as all the politicians?

KOTT: Completely. Across the board. Absolutely. On the military side it was more protocol than anything else because, let's face it, that would have been run out of Ottawa, with Defense Attachés. But in terms of dropping in on them, as a matter of protocol and good taste, sure.

Q: And how about Northwest Territories?

KOTT: Went up there once. The budget just didn't allow for it. It was very expensive and very far removed. And given the fact that the population in those days was only about 75,000 in all of the Northwest Territories, with the capital Yellowknife perhaps only having five or ten thousand people you just couldn't really justify it. There was very little to report on at that particular point in time and it could be done from afar.

Q: What about transit, border issues, with the northern tier American states? This would be - what? - North Dakota?

KOTT: North Dakota and to a lesser extent Minnesota. North Dakota with Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and Montana - Saskatchewan and Alberta. Generally very good relations. The Governors of those states and the Premiers of Canadian provinces would meet periodically. I was not invited to attend those meetings. I don't know if there was a history to that or not, we just left it at that. I had personally very good relations with the then Governor, now deceased, sorry to say of Montana, who came up to Calgary. Actually his roots were in Calgary, his family emigrated to Montana number of years ago, so he

was sort of half Canadian, half American, Stan Stevens. And the Governor in fact, after we met once, decided that he wanted to open up a Montana Trade Office in Alberta. We worked very closely with him and in fact we welcomed his representative to set up shop right in the Consulate on a temporary basis, and of course with Washington's and Ottawa's approval. Just to help them out till they got sorted out and got started. So we had a very hand-in-glove relationship with the then Governor and the staff in Montana. As I said before, the amount of the two-way trade, the amount of familial ties, the great number of familial ties were staggering. Largely self regulating, they didn't need governments to get in the way, but occasionally issues came up, as you might imagine, trade irritants, they usually went to Washington and Ottawa for resolution. We would report on them, but we usually didn't wind up doing the negotiating.

Q: And there were I suppose some environmental issues or … I remember something called the Garrison diversion in North Dakota?

KOTT: That actually I think was an active issue much more so prior to my arrival, because I read the file in preparing to go out to Calgary and when I got to Calgary, but I must say, happily it didn't really rear its ugly head very much when I was there. But there were other issues.

Q: In a previous incarnation, in must have been 1981 or 1980, I actually conducted an interview with Canadians and the Department of Interior and the people from North Dakota, to talk about the issues involved. The Canadians were very upset about the plans at that time. They really wanted to make sure that their interests were considered.

KOTT: The whole relationship is filled with so many clichés, you know, the elephant and the grass and the mouse, the worlds' longest undefended cliché as I like to call it. The Canadians are very sensitive to being trampled upon and their sovereignty, protection of their sovereignty and their cultural identity especially is important to them. Let's face it, they are bombarded by the American media. Whether is the four or five major TV networks, the printed media, Time magazine what have you. In many ways without any disparagement to the Canadians, they can be viewed upon almost as an appendage to American culture. But of course they reject that, and rightly so. They have their own very deep rooted culture. Canada is first of all a bi-lingual country, officially, one of two in the world, the other one, I think we talked about before, I served in, Cameroon. With traditions that stretch back to France and to the United Kingdom, and the loyalist tradition, I mean the Queen of England, when she comes to Canada is the Queen of Canada. So their loyalty is to Her Majesty and not to Uncle Sam. And they are very persnickety about that. They like Americans, generally, but they don't want to be Americans. Don't ever suggest that they should be the 51st state of something like that, because it's just never going to happen. Canada's Canada, and after you are there a few weeks, a few months, you understand that it is not America, even though you can easily fall into that trap of thinking it is. Because everything around is so American-ish, if you will, the cars they drive, the media, the TV, what have you.

Q: You were there before and after NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement)?

KOTT: It was happening when I was in Kingston, the debate was very heavy when I was in Kingston, in Canadian Defense College and I can't remember chronologically if it had been put into affect before I got to Calgary, I think it did. And a part of our job, certainly in the public dimension of the job, the speechifying, what have you, the little bit that I did, was trying to sell that thing in terms of… not in terms of *de facto*, *de jure* passage in the legislature, that was done, but just setting it in terms of public relations effort, to try to convince Canadians that it was in their interest as much as it was in our interest to have freer trade. Happily in the western part of Canada I didn't have much of a struggle. The Westerners were very much pro-free trade, the saw the benefits. It was really the center-Canadians, the Ontario crowd for the most part, and eastern, the Atlantic Canadians, who were more anti-NAFTA than the West.

Q: To what extent were Canadians thinking in terms of the hemisphere, in terms of Mexico, as well as Central and South American in economic trade terms and political terms. It seems to me that has changed over the last couple of decades?

KOTT: Of course, NAFTA has been expanded to Mexico so now it's a tri-partied agreement. In those days when I was in Calgary it was not, it was a basic bi-lateral agreement. I think, again, the Westerns, I'm going out on a limb in saying this, I think being a little more worldly, maybe perhaps having a more global view at least in the area of trade and economic and finance, I think they, especially the energy producers, had more foresight than the people of the center of Canada. I think they did see the benefits of potential energy sales, especially natural gas, right down through the 48 and into Mexico and Central and Latin America. There was talk, as you might remember, of Chile being one of the first members of whatever might follow the bilateral NAFTA agreement. Of course, I think history has addressed all of that. I think there was at least a nascent understanding that NAFTA had a greater potential than simply the bilateral potential that came to fruition.

Q: To what extent, you mentioned that you did give some speeches and tried to argue in favor of the benefits for both countries of NAFTA, freer trade. To what extent did you sort of have to do public events or was it… did you go to hockey games, or…?

KOTT: Yes, there is a lot of fun to the job. To answer your questions, there wasn't an awful lot of speechifying. Occasionally I'd be asked to speak to a group. I remember once sharing a platform with, I guess he was the Canadian Ambassador in Washington, still, Alan Gottlieb, who was here for year. Famous. If anybody's heard of Alan Gottlieb, probably it's because if his wife who had the famous slapping incident in Washington. But we won't talk about that. He was a brilliant observer of America. We shared a platform at a conference one day and when I got up after him, unfortunately, I had to follow Alan, I said it was sort of humbling to be in the same room with this great observer of the American seem. Sort of modern day De Tocqueville. And that brought down the house, everybody liked that, especially Alan Gottlieb. He had quite a big ego.

But he was, he was quite a good observer. Anyway, that was probably the most significant public speaking event that I had. Others were more like speaking to the petroleum groups or what have you. Not an awful lot of that. There was a lot of the representational part of the job. As much as you wanted to make of it, actually. We did a lot, both in Calgary and as I traveled around in the parish we'd have various events. One thing we did happily, we promoted American wines. There was an American Wine Society and we were able to import wine duty free, as long as it was used at these functions, for state purpose. That was a fun part of the job. The travel, the representational events, the invitations, the dinners… Good fun being the CG (Consul General).

Q: Hockey, baseball…?

KOTT. Yes, I was in Calgary when the Calgary Flames won the Stanley Cup and went to a couple of the games as a guest. In those days you could accept those sorts of things.

Q: Of course Calgary Flames are no longer in Calgary – isn't it now the Atlanta team?

KOTT: No, they came from Atlanta. They were the Atlanta Flames.

Q: There is another team in Atlanta now, a new team?

KOTT: Probably. Calgary had the Stampede football team, Canadian league, Calgary Flames in hockey. They had a AAA baseball team called the Cannons I believe, in the Pacific Coast league. There was no shortage of sporting events to attend and there was a fairly lively, not too extensive but fairly lively, pick-and-choose cultural scene. They had a cultural center right downtown, very nice one, very modern, that contained several theaters as well as a symphony hall. I remember seeing opera there, ballet, mostly touring companies, of course, coming through. I can't remember if they had resident companies. They had a resident theater company. If you were interested in that as I was, there was enough opportunity to keep you busy. If you were fanatic about it, no, but if you were just dabbling in it, high culture, there was enough. Great city, great people.

Q: And the Consulate General in Calgary is still open?

KOTT: It is. In fact I was back there in different capacity visiting Calgary a year and a half ago, and I met the then Consul General and I think the staff has perhaps been diminished by one officer, perhaps two, perhaps the Commercial Office may no longer be there, I am not sure. But the State presence has been reduced by at least one. I think they lost the immigrant visa function. We used to issue immigrant visas from Calgary and I think we've lost that function.

Q: To nationals of other countries, not of Canada in particular?

KOTT: Well, Canadians…

Q: Those who wanted to immigrate?

KOTT: Yes, yes, right. Both.

Q: Anything else you want to say about your time in Calgary?

KOTT: No, it was great fun. I thought of extending. I didn't think it would be a good career move at the time. I had my window open. I opened it when I got to Calgary, so I would have had three efficiency reports coming out of Calgary. I didn't think it was a promotable job, quite frankly. I was wrong, because I no sooner got back to Washington and I fact was promoted to Senior Service. Had I known that, of course, I would have extended a year in Calgary.

Q: Because your promotion was on the basis of your service in Calgary?

KOTT: Clearly.

Q: What did you do when you came back to Washington in 1991?

KOTT: Well, that was a trying period of my life, personally as well as professionally, but emanating from the professional side, the problems. Because, as I was preparing to leave Calgary and bidding on going assignments, again my calculation was that if I was going to get promoted into the Senior Service, I thought I really ought to go back to Africa and back to DCM-ing if you will. So I was bidding on DCM jobs. I think I was paneled at the last panel of the cycle for DCMs in December of '90, for the '91 cycle, and was assigned to Mogadishu, as Jim Bishop's DCM. I think Jim wanted me and persuaded the personnel system to accept me. I understand I was the favorite candidate of two other Ambassadors in Africa, but for whatever reasons the system didn't assign me to those countries. In any case, we all sort of know what happened in Somalia subsequently. My last six months in Calgary were spent not knowing really where I was going. I sort of packed my household effects and personal belongings for three potential destinations. A limited shipment in case I was going to Mogadishu, because it would have been obvious I would have been going by myself had we reopened the Embassy.

Q: We had already by that time evacuated, closed down the Embassy?

KOTT: I had no sooner gotten my assignment in December when Jim Bishop had to evacuate the embassy by helicopter on January 1st and January 2nd of 1991, I believe. So from January until I left Calgary on July 5th or 6th I really didn't know where I was going to be going. I was packed for Washington, I was packed for Mogadishu and I was packed for a possibility of going to Nairobi because there was some talk of putting me out there as the Mogadishu watch, as the Somalia watch, living there. To make a long story short, I wound up going back to Washington. It became clear to me very quickly, as in about three hours after getting to Washington, as opposed to the six months before being away

from Washington, that I wasn't going anywhere. People were bailing out, breaking their assignments, and eventually I said, "I think we ought to make some decisions here." Exactly at that time promotion news came out, I found out I got promoted into Senior Service, one thing lead to another, broke the assignment, the system decided that everyone was free to break their assignments because of the uncertainty of the situation.

Q: Related to Somalia?

KOTT: To Somalia, yes. In fact, Jim Bishop made a conscious decision that he was not going to go back himself even if we have reopened the post, as Ambassador. I sort of perched in the East African Office of the State Department and in fact was asked to lead a small group out to Somalia, not on a diplomatic, peace-keeping effort but really just a look-see. To see what the condition was on the ground and whether we could open our Embassy in some manner. So I took a group of mostly security, DS (Diplomatic Security) people, and we went into Mogadishu for about three or four days as I recall. Did a survey and we made a recommendation that it would be possible. It was a lull in the fighting at that time. The real civil war had sort of not yet broken out. We made a recommendation that we could probably salvage the remnants of the old Embassy, where I think USAID was headquartered, but that the new Embassy which had just opened and we'd spent something like 180 million dollars to build this compound was so totally trashed that it was really not worth even considering. Anyway, we made our recommendation, we put some figures on it, knowing that it would cost a few million dollars to do this. But it all became rather mute when the civil war really flared up again and it was obvious we weren't going back in the near term.

Q: Was it difficult to get in and out on this mission? There were commercial flights?

KOTT: No, we flew commercially to Kenya from Washington and then we chartered an aircraft, the Embassy in Nairobi helped us charter an aircraft. We met with all sides, I might add. The purported president of the day Ali Mardi and his government, his Foreign Minister, the former Prime Minister, the deposed president. We met with the chief war-lord, Aidid. That is to say, the father of the current Aidid, who was the major protagonist of the day. They all wanted us back. All sides wanted the American presence. Basically the message I conveyed, because I really didn't have any instructions to go much further, was, "If you guys make peace, we'll be back. If you can ensure our security we'll be back, but look at what you have just done to our Embassy, much less what you are doing to your country." We weren't really in a position to go beyond that. But it was interesting that from all quarters, at least their statements were, that they really wanted an American presence. They really didn't… I think they've lost their faith in the Italians who were by and large the principal diplomatic players and major influences theretofore. And I think they were really looking to us to broker the peace out there.

Q: Were the Italians still there, still open and functional?

KOTT: I did meet the Italian Ambassador. I guess the Italian embassy was fairly reduced

in size, but based on what I was being told by others, and I didn't have an awful lot of expertise at the time. I think he was fairly discredited, at least in certain quarters. He was not seen as being neutral. The Italian agenda was pretty well known at the time.

Q: Taken sides.

KOTT: Yes, so I think he had outlived his usefulness quite frankly, and that's probably why they wanted us back.

Q: Were other embassies there too or not much?

KOTT: I don't recall. The French may have been there, the Brits may have been there, I don't recall. I distinctly remember meetings with the Italians, but I don't recall meeting with the others. They may have at least temporarily pulled out, like we did.

Q: This is not apropos of Somalia and the time, let me just back up to something, a case in Calgary. I assumed that the American Consul General was the only American representative there. Where there others?

KOTT: In Calgary? Yes and no. As it was said by my colleagues in the Consulate Corps in Calgary, "You are the only professional Consul General. The rest were all honorary Consuls." And we did have a group of a dozen or so honorary consuls. I was de facto the Dean.

Q: Because you were the professional?

KOTT: Right. So they made me the Dean. And I took that fairly seriously because they wanted me to, and so we had a monthly meetings of the Consular Corps, a luncheon. Speakers, I made sure that we had a speaker. Chief of police, or a newspaper personality, or someone to come and speak to us each month. I think they appreciated that. I'd have a yearly party at my house for them, they were appreciative. The other Consuls were in Edmonton, in capital. I think there were about five or six professional Consuls based in Edmonton. Japanese, French, British, Germans, Dutch, one or two others.

Q: You felt it was the correct location, from the point of view of the U.S. to be in Calgary, as opposed to Edmonton.

KOTT: Absolutely. I felt that way. And I don't know of any American that didn't feel that way. The Albertans of course, at least the Edmontonians and the government of Alberta based in Edmonton didn't necessarily feel that way, but it was a new issue. We had abandoned our Consulate in Edmonton scores of years earlier and opened up in Calgary for obvious reason. The American presence, the energy center, the commercial centers were all in Calgary. And it's clearly a much more important and lively city. In every other way except provincial government. No, we were in the right place.

Q: Okay, let's go back to Somalia again. This mission that you took, you've sketched your purpose and the results of it. The fact that it was overtaken by on-going civil war.

KOTT: Exactly.

Q: This would have taken place when, about eight or nine months after the evacuation? It was sort of the end of '91.

KOTT: Exactly. I think it was the end of October. That's right it would have been at least 10 months after evacuation.

Q: And after you came back from that mission, you went around and talked to various people about what you found…?

KOTT: Yes, we wrote up a report. I'm sure it found its way into the circular file (waste basket) somewhere. As you said, events overtook it and it was clear that the whole political dimension had changed. I went my merry way and did a little lobbying and looked at the vacancy list for the next cycle if you will, the '92 cycle, and saw that there were three African DCM-ships coming up at the senior level and they were the Ivory Coast, Senegal and Sudan. I went off and met with Ambassador to be, Don Petterson, who was going to Sudan, who I think really preferred to have a Arabic speaker if he could find one willing to go there. And that was fine by me because that would have been clearly my third choice. And then Ambassador Hume Horan, who was I think, acting as the President of AFSA that year, was going to Ivory Coast, and Katherine Shirley was the sitting Ambassador in Dakar, Senegal. I went over to see my good friend Hume Horan and he ultimately asked me to be his Deputy, but Katherine Shirley came back because President Diouf, the then president of Senegal, was paying a visit to his friend George Bush and Katherine Shirley of course was in town. Almost by happenstance, on the spur of the moment, I got a 10-minute meeting. I guess she liked what she saw because she asked me to go to be her Deputy in Senegal.

So I was faced with a very difficult choice. Two post, two very interesting places, two good Ambassadors, I did a lot of soul searching. I asked an awful lot of people who I respected, Jeff Davidow, Bob Houdek, who were both deputies in AF Bureau at the time, virtually to a person, everyone recommended that I accept Dakar, Senegal. Not withstanding the personalities. This was not based on who the Ambassadors were likely to be, this was simply based on the everyday life in those posts, the mission, the history, that sort of thing. I felt very badly going to see Hume Horan and turning him down. And some days in retrospect I wonder if made the right decision. Hume and I had been very close friend over the years, I told you earlier I worked for him in Cameroon on his first Ambassadorial assignment. And we just hit it off very well. I'm sure I would have really enjoyed working for him, because I had a lot of respect for him, in the Ivory Coast. In any case, I went to Senegal.

I spent the balance of that year, that is to say between November and going out to post in

August of ’92, in the IG (Office of the Inspector General). Happily, I made a few calls and they were looking for someone as an Economic Officer to serve on a team so I went over I met with Ambassador Dick Howland who was heading up one of the five inspection teams of the day. I became the number three person on the team. We were a little top heavy. Ambassador Howland, and Ralph Jones, who was his deputy, who was a Senior Officer, MC (Minister Counselor) actually, and me as newly minted OC (Counselor), and about four other officers on the team. It was a great experience. Great preparation for being a DCM and a lot of fun. I really enjoyed it.

We went out on two inspection tours during that seven or eight month period. In January we went to Bangladesh and Pakistan where there are… not only is there an Embassy but there are three Consulates. Then back to Washington to write up our findings and to prepare for second inspection, which was to Malta and Italy. And that was very pleasant, needless to say. Spring in Italy. It was great experience. I enjoyed it very much. Ambassador Howland gave me a lot of leeway. In fact based on what he saw during first two weeks in Bangladesh, when we went then to Pakistan he asked me to write the inspection report. Which I must say was easier than writing up my travel voucher. It was good fun. I seemed to have a natural, a little flair for inspecting, I enjoyed it very much. I enjoyed especially the aspect of working with the junior officers.

Q: So, you finished your inspection detail in summer of ’92 and you went to Dakar, Senegal as Deputy Chief of Mission, with Ambassador Katherine Shirley?

KOTT: Right. I should back up a little bit. When I was in Rome I got a phone call. Actually I think I may have been in Milan, inspecting Milan. I got a phone call from Washington saying that Ambassador Shirley had made a decision to retire early from the Foreign Service. I subsequently learned that she was married to Jock Shirley, former Ambassador in Tanzania and Counselor at the U.S. Information Service. He had retired and was living in their home in Connecticut, I believe, and Katherine was out in Senegal for I guess a year, year and a half by herself, and I think she just felt lonely. And she didn’t like being away from her husband and family. So she decided that, I don’t know if I should say this, but at turning 50 years old, and therefore eligible to receive pension and retire, she was going to do that. And decided in May to turn in her papers, affective in September and she was leaving post in early September, I think it may have been September 1st. So I got to post on something like the 8th or 9th of August and we only had three weeks of overlap and she was going to leave.

Now, even before I left Washington for Senegal I knew the Ambassador that had been nominated, and that was Mark Johnson who was serving as the Executive Assistant to the Undersecretary for Management at the time. So I’d met with Mark and I got a fairly good inkling of his thinking and timing, etc, etc., and I expected to be Chargé for perhaps a month or two, until Mark got out there. Well, the political process in Washington moved rather slowly and I think Mark may have started his hearings or was about to start his hearings when in fact the Senate went out and went into recess. Or adjourned I guess. Because it was an election year, and it was a presidential election year, Mark had not been

appointed by President Bush. Wound up sort of holding the bag sometime in October, sweated out the election, Governor Clinton was elected President. I don't know what Mark was thinking, but I sort of held my breath because I knew I was going to be in for a long haul as Chargé. As it turns out, Mark was reappointed eventually, by President Clinton, and wound up coming to post in mid-June of 1993. So I wound up being Chargé d'Affaires for about nine and a half months, almost ten months, between Katherine Shirley's departure on or about September 1st until June 17th the following year.

Q: Why don't we talk about that period first and then later about what it was like to be DCM? What was the state of U.S. relations with Senegal in that period, what were the relations, what was the kind of thing you were talking about, what sort of embassy, was it a large embassy?

KOTT: First of all, the state of relations were excellent. Not because of anything I had done but historically we've had a very close relationship with Senegal. Senegal was always held up, rightly or wrongly, as being one of the more model democracies of Africa. I think it's a stretch to apply that term to Senegal, at least as we define democracy. But in the African context it was a relatively civil society and relative democracy. There were elections. Always, interestingly won by the same party that was in power since independence. But, basically free press and elections, citizens weren't harassed, and that sort of thing. More or less respect for human rights. Relative again, to so many African countries it was pretty open and free.

Q: And stable?

KOTT: And stable. I think fairly minimal U.S. interests. Senegal is really a pretty poor country. We didn't have an awful lot of trade. Our interest there was largely, as I recall, its strategic position. They had a very good port. Its political influence, having been the capital of French West Africa. Certainly growing American influence there, as I observed it.

Q: AID program?

KOTT: Yes, large AID program although one that was diminishing when I was there. I think it had gone from a high of something like, a few years before I got there it may have been 35, 45 million dollars a year. Maybe at one time it was even a lot higher than that. But it was down to about 20 million dollars when I was there.

Q: You mentioned a good port and therefore of some strategic interest to us. Did our Navy, did we make use of that much, or just potential?

KOTT: Very rarely. Yes, more in the potential. I think we had one ship visit during a year, at least during my time there. But the French of course scaled us in Senegal, I think they have their second or third, probably their third largest land military force in Dakar, probably after Libreville and Djibouti. So they saw it, I suspect with greater strategic

value than we did; they had a naval base there, they had an air base there. And they actually did have a few fighter aircraft based there.

Q: Were we in dialogue with Senegalese about other situations in the region?

KOTT: Very much so. What I inherited, getting there, I told you that President Abdou Diouf was in Washington visiting his friend President George Bush I. And basically what that was all about, we wanted, we, the U.S. government, wanted a greater Francophone presence in the civil war that was taking place in Liberia. The Anglophone militaries had dominated that situation, the Nigerians in particular, the Guineans, as you know, and perhaps some others, and for whatever reasons Washington wanted at least some counterbalance in a Francophone force. And President Bush asked President Diouf to send Senegalese troops down there. Diouf readily agreed as long as we agreed to pick up the tab. Because Senegal could hardly afford that. So I think that total amount of money that this wound up costing the American taxpayer might have been about 15 million dollars spread over several years. Mostly in terms of transport, equipment, clothing, food, whatever it takes to put an army in the field. We had some training going on with the Senegalese as well under IMET (International Military Education and Training) and other programs. But I don't think that was directly related to the agreement to send their troops down to Liberia.

In any case, to make a long story short, it was very, very busy 10 months for me. One of the major issues was just that. The presence of the Senegalese troops and our support for them, in Liberia. And when, I think six or eight of them were allegedly massacred in cold blood, allegedly by Taylor's people in Liberia, Diouf and his government were enraged and decided to pull the plug and asked us to bring their troops back home. In fact that happened during the visit of Deputy Assistant Secretary of the day, Lenny Robinson who was in Dakar. I think it was in December of '92, and we went to see President Diouf. Diouf had his Prime Minister Habib Thiam sitting in the room and he had his Foreign Minister and he had his Chief of Staff of the military, General Seck, who subsequently became Ambassador to the U.S. and is still here. And I think to the surprise of even Habib Thiam and the Foreign Minister and the General, he said, "I would like to ask you something, Mr. Robinson, I would like to ask you to bring our troops home." And we said, "Yes sir, we understand." We knew this was coming, we just didn't know when the shoe was going to drop. And he said, "I'd like it done in a month." I think we were able to meet that deadline, save for a day or two. We had convoys of C-130s coming through Dakar airport. Happily I had defense people on the ground, in terms of both my Defense Attaché as well as our military assistance fellow who was really the key mover there, he was a great guy. And we were able to meet their timetable. As I said, maybe we were a day short.

Q: Were we talking to Senegal about other situations, other than Liberia? Did Senegal participate in any UN forces?

KOTT: Yes, they did. In Cyprus for example, they were one of the major African

contingents in Cyprus. My memory is not serving me well, but Senegal has a tradition of participation in peacekeeping. And that was one of the reasons why we had such a good relations with the Senegalese, of course, we could count on them for things like that. As long as way pay the tab, or somebody paid the tab.

Q: How about Peace Corps?

KOTT. Peace Corps, yes. But let me just tell you why else it was such a busy period. It was also election time. President Diouf was standing for reelection in February. And then there were going to be legislative elections I think in May of '93. We had the Liberia situation, we had the election reporting and Washington had a lot of concern about that because there was the issue of transparency, we wanted the Senegalese to conduct transparent election, at least procedurally. Of course probably hoping that Diouf would win, since we were such good friends and had such good relations with him. But we didn't want to be perceived as sort of tinkering or insuring that. That was the job of the French. We devoted a lot of resources, as I recall it, at least a million dollars that we coughed up from our AID program, we moved to election transparency and monitoring and providing ballot boxes and voting booths and all kinds of schemes. Not always to the pleasure of certain quarters of the Senegalese government. They didn't want too much transparency, at least… you know, publicly they couldn't say that, but I remember the Interior Minister of the day being not a very pleasant sort of fellow, when we had the ceremony handing over the ballot boxes, with myself and the AID director and the press were there, I remember he made a big stink out of how he couldn't fold up his ballot and get it into slot, because the slot was cut to take the ballot vertically when in fact he though it should go in horizontally. And the slot wasn't big enough. And I was about to punch him in the nose, because all these boxes were built locally of course, through quite an expenditure. Happily our aid director was a bit more diplomatic and he said, "No problem Mr. Minister, we'll cut new holes in the ballot boxes for you."

As it turns out, on election day, we went out, especially the AID director, the Political Officer and myself, and a few others, doing a little unofficial election monitoring and to see how the equipment was being used. We went by a high school and we found that most of it was still stashed in the high school godown. It wasn't being used at all. Very little of it in any case. I remember writing a diplomatic note protesting that after the fact. They said, "Don't worry, we just didn't have the means to get them, the ballot boxes, delivered out into the country side. We'll use them for the legislative elections in a few months time."

So that was busy. The Liberia situation was busy. I was new to the post. My French was rusty. It was a large mission. We had about 400 employees, including I think there were a total of about 90 American slots. They were not all encumbered, but there were a good 70 or 80 Americans at post. Three hundred odd Foreign Service National employees. It was a managerial challenge. Four or five agencies. Again, the newness. Learning my way around town. The diplomatic corps was an active diplomatic corps. There were 50, 60 Ambassadors represented there. Dealing with the French was probably more difficult than

dealing with the Senegalese, that's for sure. In fact the Senegalese were very easy to deal with, I had very good relations, with the Foreign Ministry in particular, but across the board. Access was fairly easy for the Americans because we were major aid donors and because we were good friends with the Senegalese. And I think the Senegalese quite frankly wanted to balance the French relationship.

Q: Did this 10-month Chargé period involve much travel or did you pretty much have to stay, the shop was running?

KOTT: I had to stay. The one weekend I went away on personal leave down to the beach, was just post election period and there was an assassination of a judge. Which presumably was politically motivated but I had to get my car to get back home. It was a minor crises, Washington was concerned of course, what was going on. So, yes, I had to stick fairly close… In fact I didn't really learn Dakar in those 10 months. I used to go between my office in the Embassy down the corniche, which was about a three or four mile stretch, worked long hours. Of course there were a lot of social aspects to the job too, because being Chargé I couldn't say, "No", so there were the usual rounds of cocktails and dinners. It was a very tiring, very fatiguing time. I was very happy when the Ambassador finally arrived to post.

Q: Well, you were very happy when he arrived, on the other hand the situation that you were in, being Chargé for 10 months, having briefly served with the Ambassador who had chosen you as the deputy and then another Ambassador coming who had in fact endorsed your assignment but didn't initially chose you, that's not an easy situation. For either of you. How did that play out?

KOTT: I don't know. We got off to a very good start I think. I made sure that Ambassador Johnson was first of all well briefed from afar, number one.

Q: Before he came?

KOTT: Yes. He'd call me once in awhile and asked me to supply him with reports, telegrams, what have you, especially when he was preparing for his hearings. I think he valued the Embassy's input as much as, if not more then, he was valuing the input that he was getting in the Department. Certainly the briefing book or the book that I had orchestrated and prepared for him from the Mission, that covered the issues, the functions of the mission and even the diplomatic corps, served him well. He got off to a good start. He was a very fast read. He certainly had enough time to prepare for his arrival, since he initially knew he was going to be Ambassador back in October the previous year. He himself, assuming he was eventually going to get there, had seven or nine months to prepare for it. He is a bright fellow and as I said was a quick read, a quick study.

I made it very clear from the outset that I fully intend to take the back seat. That although I'd been in the forefront, viewed as the American representative in Senegal, that I was not the Ambassador, that he was the Ambassador and that I would be a deputy and do what

he wanted. Presumably, doing the in-house managing while he became the outside man. And he seemed to agree with that quite readily and became very active in terms of interlocuting with Senegalese government. Established quickly a good relationship with President Diouf. He used to visit with President Diouf about every six, eight weeks, for a very long, one-on-one session, which we would prepare him for of course, by doing up again a briefing book of issues that we wanted him to address with the President. These things usually took place about five o'clock in the afternoon and he'd be over there for 90 minutes, two hours. Next day write up his reports to Washington. He retained that tradition that his predecessors had, I'm sure, established, going back for many years. Again, the relationship has always been pretty close.

Q: When you were Chargé did you meet with the president one-on-one or just when there were visitors like Larry Robertson?

KOTT: I asked George Moose, who was the Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, and who was the Ambassador in Dakar prior to Katherine Shirley, if he wanted me to on my own go in and try to see the President every so often. He said, 'No". He didn't think that was appropriate. Of course, we didn't know how long I was going to be Chargé, I think perhaps in hindsight, had we known that I was going to be in charge for nine months I probably would have tried to establish a closer relationship with both the Foreign Minister and the President. Happily, at the level just below in the Presidency and in the Ministry, I had very good access. The Secretaries of Cabinet, the Counselors at the Presidency. If I needed to go over for any reason, I could. And since I wasn't an Ambassador and since George Moose decided that's the way he wanted to play it, that's the way we did it. I did see him occasionally. My first quasi-official visitor to post, I think two or three weeks after becoming Chargé and only six after being at post, was Jimmy Carter, former President Carter. Who was there not on a state-to-state visit but through the Carter Center and his peace-keeping efforts in Liberia and his habitat efforts and his health initiatives. We went over to see President Diouf together and others, Prime Minister Thiam. For reasons like that I would go see the President, but generally not.

Q: Now, as DCM, the things changed a lot for you or…?

KOTT: I suppose. I didn't find it tremendously difficult because I convinced myself in advance I knew I'd have to play a different role. I remember the then Finance Minister, a rather outspoken and lively character. When I paid a call on him one day he said, "You know Kott, life's going to change for you. It's going to be difficult. Everyone looks on you here as the American Ambassador, you are on TV all the time, making speeches, giving aid…"

Q: Shaking hands.

KOTT: Shaking hands, smiling. He said, "You are going to have to fade in the background, and you are not going to like that." And I said, "Mr. Minister, I am very aware of that and I thank you for your advice but I have already reconciled myself to it."

No it wasn't too bad of a transition. We still were able to… Happily at least on the social level, with the diplomats, the Ambassadorial friends that I made and who had accepted me as an equal, if you will, were good enough to maintain that relationship. So socially we didn't suffer. On the work side, there was enough to do in the Embassy to keep me busy and the Ambassador gave me, as long as I kept him informed, he gave me a pretty free hand to manage the Embassy. We kept him informed, not that he necessarily needed us to keep him informed, but, on a pro forma basis we kept him informed so that he could do his thing with the government of Senegal. Which is what he was good at.

Q: You were there until summer of '95, you were there together with him for two years or so?

KOTT: Two years. We had a very good professional relationship.

Q: Was he there at post most of the time, after finally getting there?

KOTT: Yes, absolutely. I think summer vacation in '94, for a month, I took over the post and then in '95 actually I think we both left, he on vacation and me on the permanent change of station about the same time. And another fellow took over the Embassy for a month or so. Professionally, we saw eye to eye. Mark launched an initiative, which I executed for him, which was a downsizing effort. We didn't really get much thanks out of Washington for saving them six million dollars a year, but we did. We cut something like 14 or 16 American positions from the Mission, which if you do your sums and calculate how much it costs to support an American and a family overseas, in Africa, we calculated that per annum savings was some fantastic figure, six, seven, eight million dollars a year. Something like that. Washington just sort of hummed at that. This took us a year. We used to meet weekly with staff, we made them justify their positions, both in writing as well as with the head of the agency orally. We negotiated this and there really wasn't much blood-letting either. It was a country team effort. I was very proud of it, actually. I think the Ambassador should have been, since it was his idea. But, it was sort of met with ho-hum in Washington, "that's your job", "that's what you're paid for" kind of thing.

Q: And you probably weren't under a lot of pressure from Washington to cut x percentage, or x number of positions?

KOTT: No, we really weren't.

Q: It was sort of a free good that you were presenting?

KOTT: Yes, Senegal, it's the favorite of the African Bureau, for all the reasons that we talked about before, the history of good relations, relative democracy…

Q: You did have a lot of American visitors there?

KOTT: Not CODELs. I don't even remember if we had one CODEL all the time I was

there. We did, I remember the National Security Advisor came out. As the last stop on a six nation African tour, with his gaggle. Tony Lake was there. We used to get EUCOM people down, I know I think one of my first visitors was a four-star out of EUCOM. And then I know we had a three-star and a two-star over the years. So, a lot of military visitors. State Department, George Moose came out once when I was Chargé, the DASs (Deputy Assistant Secretaries) used to come through fairly regularly. I'd say we'd see a DAS every three of four months. State Department DAS. Besides that, we weren't overly burdened. The bureaucratic visitors, of course, the AID characters and the military characters coming through, but that was work-a-day.

Q: How were Senegal's relations with its immediate neighbors in that period? Was that a problem? Mauritania?

KOTT: Mauritania was somewhat strained. Border issues, refugee issues, ideological issues. Senegal you know is a Muslim country nominally, 94% of population, but very secular in practice. Of course Mauritania is I think the Islamic Republic of Mauritania. Senegalese were wary of the spread of what I call political Islam. And we would keep an eye on that, too. That was certainly one of the briefs that we had, especially the station.

Q: Was there much evidence of that?

KOTT: Yes, there was some of it. The Iranians had an Embassy in Senegal, in Dakar that the Senegalese kept a close watch on, the French, DGSE (Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure – Directorate-General for External Security) probably as well, and certainly we. We knew that they were trying to make the inroads, spreading the gospel of fundamentalist Islam, through intermediary organizations. Funding Islamic groups, charitable institutions so-called, mosques, that sort of thing. Senegal when we were there was holding the presidency of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. So there would be periodic gatherings of the Islamic nations, from the heads of state level on down, in Dakar. Saudis were represented but they were of course very conservative, but very moderate at the same time.

Q: This was not too long after the Gulf War. Did Senegal…?

KOTT: Senegal participated. They were the first African nation to sign up on the Allies side and sent off quite a large contingent, the numbers escape me, but they also sustained not in action directly, but they sustained the largest number of losses, other than Iraqis of course. Because one of their airplanes went down. I think it was a C-130 if I'm not mistaken with 90 or 100 young men on it.

Q: On their way to or from…?

KOTT: Yes. Exactly. So on a per capita basis they took the largest number of loses. They benefited after the end of hostilities, I guess there was some provision in American law for the supply of equipment. Perhaps it was equipment that was used in the Gulf, to those

who participated with us. Senegal got some of the largest…, I'm not saying that that's what motivated them to sign on board, I think they felt a certain closeness to the U.S. and when President Bush and Secretary Baker asked them to participate they did. I think it was pretty typical of the relationship. It's a good relationship.

And the other neighbors, in a nutshell, let me just think, relationship with Mali was pretty good. Minor irritants along the border, cattle rustling, that sort of thing. Gambia – generally improving. When I was there, actually I was Chargé during the summer, there was a coup d'état in Gambia. Kind of stupid how it all happened. I don't think it started out as a coup d'état, I think it started out as certain faction of the military down there, protesting their treatment by the civilian government, President Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara. There was an American naval vessel in Banjul port, that had just left Senegal a day or two earlier. I've told you we had one ship visit a year. I had seen it off on its merry way to Banjul and lo and behold, a few days later it was back in Dakar with the ex-President of Gambia on board.

The American Ambassador, Andrew Winter, and the Captain of the Navy ship were visiting with the Vice President of Gambia, as a courtesy, protocol visit, when this band of Gambian soldiers came marching down the streets firing a few rounds. The Vice President went into the President's office next door and they huddled for a few minutes I'm told and the nest thing I know is the President and the Vice President asked if they could go on board the ship and take refuge. They thought a coup d'état was happening and they didn't want to get caught in it. I guess the captain asked the Ambassador and the Ambassador looked back at the captain. Anyway, the decision was made, rightly or wrongly, and everybody got on board the ship, including the American Ambassador. I don't think that Washington was too happy about that.

To make a long story short, I had a long weekend at the Embassy intermediating between Gambia and Washington, because they were out of radio contact and we were passing all the messages, and it was all-nighter for a couple of nights. George Moose said to us that he wanted the Senegalese to accept President Jawara at least temporarily, to give him political asylum. The Senegalese weren't very happy with that message. It was a weekend, the Foreign Minister was out in his village, although I was able to get in contact with him. I was dealing with the military, I was dealing with the Presidency, I was dealing with the Foreign Ministry, I was dealing with any Senegalese of any responsible position that I could get a hold of over the weekend. Ultimately we were persuasive, we won the day, President Diouf relented and allowed President Jawara to take at least temporary refuge in Senegal. The U.S. Navy ship steamed back into port, on Sunday afternoon five or six o'clock and the Administrative Officer and myself as Chargé went down. We greeted the Gambian delegation. The Senegalese housed them, it was an interesting time.

The relations were always a bit iffy with the Gambians. But, they are kissing cousins, one and the same people. One of the problems is that Gambia separates the three quarters of Senegal which is north of Gambia and the one quarter of Senegal, the land mass that is south of Gambia, which is called the Casamans. There has been an insurrection ebbing

and flowing in the Casamans for many, many years, which unfortunately takes lives on both sides. That is to say Senegalese military side as well as the insurgent side.

Q: Did you ever visit that area?

KOTT: Yes, once I took a trip down through Gambia into the Casamans. It's a beautiful area. Didn't see any activity. This was a real guerilla operation, on and off again, and it ebbed and flowed, depending on the state of negotiation, which was always ongoing. Complicated situation which I understand is still not resolved fully.

Guinea Bissau – again, up and down. When I was there relations were okay with Guinea Bissau. Subsequently there was a coup d'état in Guinea Bissau and Senegalese went in to support one side and actually did not acquit themselves very well. This was all after my departure. Lost a number of their personnel down there.

Q: I think I asked you at one point about Peace Corps?

KOTT: Yes. We had a large Peace Corps contingent, I think close to a hundred. We also had a Peace Corps regional training center. Not far from Dakar. The Embassy was invited, the Ambassador or the Chargé would be invited out there occasionally, to speak to the trainees.

Q: Trainees would be going to other countries…?

KOTT: To other Francophone countries. Both Senegal as well as Guinea and Mali I think. It was really just a training center. These young recruits would pass through there for a few months, learn French, other skills, go off to their assignments. But yes, the Peace Corps was well entrenched, and accepted in Senegal. We supported them, we even had a sort of a host family program. I don't remember the exact name of it, but it was sort of Adopt a Peace Corps Volunteer. And I had two.

Q: On sort of a continuing basis?

KOTT: Yes. When the kids, I mean young people, would come into town, if they wanted to they could bunk in with us, take meal with us. The relationship was individual and it depended on the family and the volunteer. Some would just like to come over for a hot meal and maybe a bath, others would like to stay with their families. It was kind of a nice relationship, to be able to have the volunteers in, maybe for the holidays, you'd have them in for Thanksgiving dinner, or Christmas dinner.

Q: Anything else we should talk about, DCM in Dakar, '92 – '95?

KOTT: No, I can't think of anything significant. We covered most of the major issues I think.

Q: From there, where did you go?

KOTT: Well, that's another story. That's when things start turning south in my career. I must say, I don't know how much Personnel you want to hear, but I thought by this time that I was ready to perhaps get my own post. Perhaps my ego got in a way, I don't know. It didn't happen. So I went back to Washington, really unassigned, effectively. Thinking that once I get there I'd do a little bit of lobbying, it worked the time before when I though I was going to Somalia and I didn't and lobbied for another job and got Senegal. So I thought, based on precedents, I ought to be able to rustle up something half-way decent. I was offered a couple of office directorships in EB (Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs), which didn't interest me at all. Again, in hind-sight, perhaps I should have taken that, maybe I was being too fussy, but I just didn't, they didn't appeal to me quite frankly. And I also to be honest with you preferred to serve overseas than in the Department, but that shouldn't come as a surprise.

In any case, I got back there and after a few weeks rustled up a job as Dick Bogosian's deputy. He headed up something called the Rwanda-Burundi Task Force, or something like that. In fact he was the point man on the post-genocide situation in Rwanda and the on-going civil war in Burundi, as our chief negotiator, if you will. And I became his deputy. It really wasn't much of the job, I don't want to say too much at this point, there wasn't much substance to it. And it was a short tour. It was considered a short tour so it wasn't going to be more than a year.

Towards the end of that year, I decided there was an opportunity in another agency, actually CIA, for at least one, possibly two-year stint out there, to work with Ambassador Montgomery in an office that works on intelligence sharing with other governments. So I accepted, it was an interagency office, State Department having, of course being in the intelligence community through INR, State Department having one slot in that office along with other intelligence agencies. So I went out there for a few years and that's where I retired from.

Q: In this short tour Rwanda-Burundi, you didn't travel out to the region?

KOTT: No.

Q: That was just in Washington.

KOTT: Yes. I might say that probably my major duty was as the interface especially when Ambassador Bogosian wasn't available to do it but increasingly turned it more over to me, interface with the NGO community. Which I must say was very influential in Washington under the Administration of the day. With Tim Wirth heading up the G, the Global Bureau and Tony Lake over at the White House, both of these people were very highly influenced by the NGO community, non-governmental organization community. As Dick Bogosian once said to me, "We ignore them at our own peril." They had the ear of Administration. There were certain NGOs that if they called up the White House,

they'd get a call back from the President or Tony Lake.

Q: This was a period after the genocide but before the things have really spread in Congo, Zaire…?

KOTT: Yes. Right. The refugee Hutus from Rwanda, of course that's the genesis of so much of the problems that we are still experiencing in Congo, had spilled over into Congo of course. There were still many concerns. One was the concern o the part of the Tutsi led and dominated Rwandan government, post-genocide, their concerns about the armed Hutu militias that were basing, largely but not exclusively, out of the Congo. And the cross border raids, which were actually real. There were Rwandans being killed by this so-called Hutu militia. There was the issue of justice and judicial proceedings in Rwanda itself.

Q: Had the tribunal been established, the special tribunal?

KOTT: Not yet. We were working in providing aid and personnel to the Rwandans, working with the UN to get something launched. The entire elite, structure of the Rwandan government was decimated. The judges were killed. There were no judges. There were no police. There were no investigating magistrates, there was nothing. I guess there was the Arusha Tribunal was started up, now that I think back on it.

Q: But it hadn't gone very far?

KOTT: Not at all. They certainly hadn't any major trials at that point. They'd captured a few people and there were a few being held, four or five major alleged perpetrators. Some of whom were later convicted. And then the Burundi situation of course. There was a coup d'état. Actually Pierre Buyoya was in my office one day, asking for money to go back to Burundi. Not as the new head of state. He had already been president, he was on a sabbatical at Yale. He came down to visit with us and after the meeting with Dick Bogosian he came into my office and said, "I have a little problem, my payments aren't coming through." It was a bureaucratic issue. I knew Foltz, professor Foltz was up in Yale so I gave Bill a call and I said "Bill, Pierre Buyoya is in my office, or was in my office a few minutes ago and was asking me for help." And I explained it all to Bill and Bill helped me get in touch with the right people and get it all straightened out. So I sort of take indirect credit for Pierre Buyoya now being president once again of Burundi. Because of the money we were able to get him he went back and staged a come-back, through another coup. So he was the once and future president. And he's still there. Burundi is still of course undergoing a lower level but intense civil war situation, which is still ongoing, Hutu and Tutsi. Tragic situation. Anyway, it was not a fun year.

Q: Anything else we should say about either that short tour or the time at detail to CIA?

KOTT: No, I don't think it would be too appropriate to say too much about the tour at CIA at this point. It was, I can't say it was rewarding. It was somewhat eye opening. More

from a bureaucratic point of view than substantive. It makes one coming from the State Department appreciate how well we do with so little, if you take my point. Coming from a building where the joke used to be that we were so broke that the Ambassador in London was burning the Benjamin Franklin furniture to keep warm in the winter. Bit of hyperbole of course. But we all know what the budget situation has been and how it has deteriorated over the years at State. And when you are used to that and you come face to face with this behemoth juggernaut called the CIA, and their resources. I remember, part of my time out there they were talking about a one billion dollar cut in the intelligence budget, so down from whatever 30 billion, it was eventually admitted that was the budget, down to 29 billion, people were gnashing their teeth and flailing themselves, and all we State Department people could do was laugh. The redundancy is just tremendous out there. Any issue, any country, doesn't have one analyst, it has 10, falling all over themselves. I don't know how they keep busy. That's on the DI (Directorate of Intelligence) side of the house. The DO (Directorate of Operations) side is another matter and I didn't get, I had some dealings with them but I didn't get involved very heavily, I was not covert out there, I was overt.

Q: I think we are just about finished with this tape and thank you Bob and we'll stop here.

KOTT: Thank you, it was very enjoyable Ray. Thank you very much.

End of interview