

CAPE VERDE

COUNTRY READER TABLE OF CONTENTS

Edward Marks	1977-1980	Ambassador, Cape Verde
Francis Terry McNamara	1989-1992	Ambassador, Cape Verde

EDWARD MARKS Ambassador Cape Verde (1977-1980)

Ambassador Edward Marks was born in Chicago in 1934, and received his BA from the University of Michigan. He served in the US Army from 1956 to 1958. Entering the Foreign Service in 1959, his postings included Nairobi, Nuevo Laredo, Luanda, Lusaka, Brussels, Lubumbashi and Colombo, with ambassadorships to Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on August 12, 1996.

MARKS: As Ambassador to Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde, in the fall of 1977.

Q: How did you get the job?

MARKS: I can give you what I know about it. I was sitting in my office and a guy I knew, Pat Kennedy, came by. He was working then for Dick Moose, Under Secretary for Management. Pat was making up lists of candidates for embassies in Africa. When we came to Guinea-Bissau, I said, "How about me? I have Portuguese and am an Africanist." He said, "Why not?" You may remember that was the time we were looking for what we used to call "baby ambassadors," younger officers at the 0-3 level. I certainly was young enough and junior enough, as a new 0-3. The next thing I know I was offered the job and I said I would be delighted.

Q: Did you have any briefings, training, etc.?

MARKS: Just the standard stuff. Reading in a little bit, working with the desk a little bit, the three-day ambassador's course - which was pretty non-substantive. I had some consultation in the building with the administrative people. That was about it. The assumption must have been that as a professional I didn't need a lot and/or they didn't have much to offer. I think they do more now.

One amusing aspect of the whole business was to confirm in practice what one already knew by observation - ambassadors really are a special class in the Department of State and other related places, and are treated accordingly. Even ambassadors to dinky little places like Guinea-Bissau.

Q: You served in Guinea-Bissau from when to when?

MARKS: Fall of 1977 to July of 1980.

Q: What was the situation in Guinea-Bissau when you went out there?

MARKS: I was the second ambassador there, the first having been Melissa Wells who had only been at post for three or four months before being withdrawn and sent to the U.S. Mission to the UN in New York. The embassy had only been open about a year, following independence in 1975. I was accredited to both Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde, and the intention was to have a resident mission in both with one ambassador going back and forth. The post in Cape Verde had not yet been opened up and the post in Guinea-Bissau was small. Counting myself there were three officers, a communicator and an American secretary, an AID mission officer with three or four technicians - ten or eleven Americans in all.

Later, when we opened up in Cape Verde we had a resident staff of eight or ten Americans plus locally engaged staff.

Guinea-Bissau was a very small, very poor country and conditions were about as difficult as you can imagine. Although the post had been open a year when I arrived, we were just moving into permanent housing. The staff had spent that year living in hotel rooms and I assure you the hotels in Guinea-Bissau were not exactly 3 or 4 star. They were about a half star. It was grim. The Chancery was the bottom floor of the highest building in town, which meant five stories, and we had three floors up above where we were building apartments. They were fairly big apartments (for Bissau) with two bedrooms, two bathrooms, living room, dining room, kitchen and an entry way. They had marble floors and were pretty classy for the local scene.

We arrived by Defense attaché plane from Dakar and were taken to the Ambassador's residence. It was ludicrous, although by Guinea-Bissau standards it wasn't all that bad. But it was really pretty bad. There was no electric power most of the time even though later we installed a small generator. Water was kept in a roof-top reservoir which was filled by the local fire department once a week. The Residence was next to a cemetery and a guy who made coffins, and a pig farm was across the street. It was just grim. We were there about a month when the new apartments above the Chancery became available so I pulled rank and bounced one of the staff and took the top apartment. The administrative officer had one of the other apartments (he was the one I bounced from the top floor apartment) and the communicator and my secretary, a married couple, had the third one. However, it was grim and even this permanent housing would not have met most standards elsewhere in the world.

There was little food available except what we brought in by the West African commissary delivery service organized by the African Bureau. This arrangement ran its own airplane, which would drop by every three or four months. There was practically nothing on the local market except rock oysters, not bad shrimp, and occasionally some vegetables, papaya, and mangos. Sometimes there was rice and peanuts, and once in a while once could get hold of a suckling pig or very small, quite delicious little birds.

The country suffered enormously from water and power shortages and in the three years I was there we spent over half the time without power. Finally we installed our own generator. Remember this was in a West African tropical environment so the lack of power and water was serious.

There wasn't much to do, and there wasn't much to see. The foreign community was very small and the local community was still quite standoffish.

I suppose the worse thing was that it was boring. We could get to beaches only after driving for an hour and a quarter up a miserable road; and the beaches weren't that good. There was very little social life. There were only two tennis courts in town, one of which was taken away by the ruling Party for its use. There were no clubs, only a small foreign community, no cultural life - life was really very limited.

From the day I got there until the day I left, we spent an incredible amount of time on administrative questions, in an effort to keep the Mission functioning while trying to upgrade it. Rent a little bit better house, get generators brought in and installed, obtain a little more space so we could spread out a bit. There was a Washington approved project to build an American embassy compound on land set aside by the Guinea-Bissau Government for the diplomatic corps. The site was located on the road to the airport. The idea was to build a compound with a swimming pool, residences and an office, etc. I spent three incredibly frustrating years negotiating with alternating teams of people from FBO and the architects who never somehow could get together. So, although the project had been approved in principle before I got there and the money approved, I spent three years and it still hadn't even been started when I left. The compound was built a year or so later.

Only a very few journalists and VIPs came through. One journalist, Lamb from the Los Angeles Times, visited for a few days and wrote a little article about the American Embassy with the dirt floor. In fact, although the Chancery was in a relatively modern building we did still have a dirt floor, although we also had gorgeous hardwood paneling separating the little offices. Lamb didn't know what to make of an American Embassy with a dirt floor and where the Ambassador lives four floors - without an elevator - above the "store."

We did eventually manage to rent some additional space next to us, spread out some and lay down a floor. I doubled the floorspace of the Chancery, which allowed us to set up a small USIS display, and we ended up with hardwood floors just like real civilized people.

So, that is a sense of what we did, spending an enormous amount of our time on administrative activities. I remember when I went to a chiefs of mission meeting in the Cameroon. We were sitting around exchanging war stories and I think it was our Ambassador to Nigeria who made the comment that his phone at home hadn't worked for six months. I couldn't resist it and into the silence I said, "Oh, you have a phone?" It was generally accepted that we had the worse conditions in all of Africa. When we were inspected in our third year, the Senior Inspector stated in his report that "It is a very real question as to whether we should ask Americans to live in these conditions to represent the United States of America." We didn't think it was all that bad, but the inspectors did put that statement in their report.

Q: What did your wife do?

MARKS: She just sort of got through the days. She mingled with a few of the other ex-pats and we were away a lot taking longish vacations; she spent time visiting family. Boredom I would say was a problem almost more than anything else. We finally acquired a TV and VCR, which helped a little. I remember the sensation we caused with some showings of "West Side Story." My wife was also ill a lot and was medevaced three or four times. We never really did figure out the cause of her illness. One particularly bad attack occurred when we could not get a USG government plane and the President of Guinea-Bissau lent me his DC-3 to fly her up to Dakar, where the Peace Corps doctor was available for an emergency case.

Bissau was a weird place. One of my best friends was the Portuguese ambassador, Antonio Pinto da Franca, now Portuguese ambassador to Germany. We were very close, both husbands and wives, and we now go often to Portugal to see them. Antonio had an artistic, literary sensitivity and pointed out that Bissau was really a very surrealistic place. We had many little incidents or adventures that are sometimes difficult to explain but were straight out of Lawrence Durrell. Remember the Sauve Qui Peut and Noblesse Oblige stories about Yugoslavia in the early days of the Cold War?

FRANCIS TERRY MCNAMARA
Ambassador
Cape Verde (1989-1992)

Ambassador Francis T. McNamara was born in Troy, New York in 1927. He was in the U.S. Navy during World War II and was also stationed in Japan during the Korean War. He received a bachelor's degree from Russell Sage College and a master's degree from McGill University and from Syracuse University. Ambassador McNamara he entered the Foreign Service in 1956. His career included positions in Rhodesia, the Congo, Tanzania, Vietnam, Canada, Lebanon, and ambassadorships to Gabon and Cape Verde. Ambassador McNamara was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1993.

MCNAMARA: My last assignment was as ambassador to Cape Verde. I went in December 1989 and retired in Cape Verde on December 31, 1992. I stayed for another week and came back in January of 1993.

As to how I got the job, well, George Bush won the election, as we all know. A new political team came to the State Department, with Baker as Secretary of State. A new assistant secretary for Africa was appointed, Herman Cohen. And Bartholomew became an under secretary for security affairs. I went to see Cohen, when I heard he was named (I'd known him for many years), and told him that I was interested in getting another embassy in Africa, that I'd go anyplace, and that I spoke Portuguese and French well. He said, "Portuguese?"

And I said, "Yes."

And that interested him, because there weren't very many Africanists who spoke Portuguese. Lots of them speak French, but not too many speak Portuguese. Not only that, but I'd just written a book about France in black Africa and had had more assignments in black Africa than anybody else in the Foreign Service at that point. I'd had seven assignments in black Africa. Still, the competition was keen for embassies, and I hadn't done the kinds of things in the Department that would encourage anybody to go out of his way to do anything for me. I may have been to Beirut, but I hadn't been anybody's personal assistant.

Q: Hadn't been a desk officer.

MCNAMARA: No, I hadn't hung around the African Bureau, doing bureaucratic things, making the right kind of contacts, and doing the sort of internal bureaucratic politics that it takes to ingratiate yourself with people who are in a position to take care of you. I'd avoided service in the State Department as much as I possibly could. I was only there twice: once as a junior officer, with you, and then once as a deputy assistant secretary in public affairs. You don't make an awful lot of contacts and ingratiate yourself, with that amount of experience in the Department. And that's how you usually get to be an ambassador in the Foreign Service.

Anyway, I would have expected that I'd get an embassy in Francophone Africa, given the fact that I had just published a book on the area and had several postings there. But that's okay, I didn't. Rather, Cohen gave me an assignment to Portuguese Africa. Okay, I could speak Portuguese, and that was fine. Bartholomew put in a good word for me. He had just been named an under secretary, and that counted for something. I was fortunate and got an embassy, albeit a very small one.

Q: What was the situation and American interest in Cape Verde at the time you went out there in 1989?

MCNAMARA: The country was governed by a moderate Marxist government. Authoritarian, but not oppressive. There were no political prisoners, for instance, or anything of that sort, but it was authoritarian. They had never had a contested election. The party was put in power by the radical young officers who had mounted a coup d'etat in Portugal. There was never a revolution against the Portuguese colonialism in Cape Verde itself. Whatever fighting was done took place in Guinea-Bissau, where there was a real war. But less than a hundred Cape Verdeans took part in that. In fact, they supplied the political leadership for the movement. The Bissauans were the foot soldiers.

Q: Now Guinea-Bissau was part of Cape Verde?

MCNAMARA: No, they came to independence together, as one country, Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau. But then in 1980, the Bissauans revolted against the Cape Verdean domination of the government. They chucked the Cape Verdeans out and took over control themselves in Guinea-Bissau, without killing anybody. The Cape Verdeans went back to Cape Verde, and they set up an independent country there.

It had been run, up until this point, by the same small clique that had been in Bissau. Probably less than a hundred people from Cape Verde had been in Bissau and participated, in one way or another, in the war. Not all in combat. Some were poets, a few were soldiers. But that's all there were. And these are the guys who came back, took control of the country, and dominated it for those intervening fifteen-odd years.

The country was getting restless, however. Younger generations had grown up since independence in 1975. Things were happening in Eastern Europe: democracy was coming, the Berlin Wall fell, changes came in Russia, the Marxist regimes were beginning to be viewed as bankrupt, politically and intellectually. There was pressure for change taking place, within the ruling party as well as among the population.

Finally, rather than try to resist these pressures, the ruling cabal decided to hold democratic popular elections. I'm sure they never thought that they'd lose power. But the outcome of the election was that an opposition party, which was formed only six months before the elections were held, won an overwhelming majority in the National Assembly. Later, an independent defeated the long serving President.

Q: *The elections were held when?*

MCNAMARA: Nineteen ninety.

Q: *This was when you were there, of course.*

MCNAMARA: Oh, yes, yes. Oh, this all took place while I was there, yes. Fascinating time.

Anyway, this opposition was created and won the election with a majority of something like eighty percent.

Q: *Good heavens.*

MCNAMARA: The president, who was thought to be a revered figure, was also chucked out. Most of the ministers even lost their seats in parliament.

Anyway, the change came, and it was accepted by the ruling party. The opposition took over, and they're in control now.

American interests in Cape Verde are based largely on sentiment. There are large numbers of Cape Verdeans living in the U.S. Indeed, we have had a Cape Verdean colony in Massachusetts and Rhode Island since colonial days.

Q: *It was whaling, wasn't it?*

MCNAMARA: It started with whaling. The Yankee whalers stopped by the Cape Verde Islands on their way to the whaling grounds in the Pacific. They would pick up some extra seamen

there, because they were much cheaper than employing American seamen. As a result, a colony of Cape Verdeans grew up in New England. They came back with the whalers, and they settled down. So, small colonies started in New Bedford and Providence and along the Massachusetts coast.

Q: Cape Cod, I know some people there.

MCNAMARA: Cape Cod, there's a small group. Then more came to work in the cranberry bogs. And then more came to work in the textile factories and in nineteenth century New England. Ultimately, a community of Cape Verdeans grew up that was at least double the population of Cape Verde itself, centered in New England, but now spread all over the United States. And, of course, it's difficult to say who's a Cape Verdean now, because some people are fourth and fifth generation. They have intermarried with other Americans. In fact, the Cape Verdean-Americans constitute the largest African community in the United States that still retains roots in its country of origin. Moreover, the Cape Verdeans vote.

Q: Because it was not associated with slavery.

MCNAMARA: It had nothing to do with slavery. These were regular immigrants who came to the United States. Cape Verde had been a center for the slave trade earlier on, but that's a different question. These were Cape Verdeans who had grown up in Cape Verde and were not taken as slaves, but were free men who came to the United States as immigrants.

Certainly, the sentimental tie is there. And it's not just a sentimental tie, but it's a political tie, because the congressional delegations from New England are very aware of the political potential of the Cape Verdean community. Many of them do vote. And people like Senator Pell from Rhode Island are conscious of the Cape Verdeans and very protective of their interests. In fact, before I went to Cape Verde, I went to see him, and he said to me, "You take care of those Cape Verdeans for me." He gave me my marching orders before I left.

Of course, we have lots of consular activities in Cape Verde. Every Cape Verdean has cousins, brothers, sisters, and sometimes mothers and fathers in the United States. There are loads of Cape Verdeans who live in Cape Verde but are American citizens. The connections are so intimate and so intertwined that the consular business is very big and complex. We have, therefore, a requirement to have a consul in Cape Verde, given all of the consular business that has to be transacted between the two countries.

The presence of so many Cape Verdeans in the U.S. is the principal reason we have an embassy in Praia.

Q: What was life like there?

MCNAMARA: Life was very pleasant, very pleasant indeed. The Cape Verdeans are among the nicest people in the world. They are an island people. Mixed blood. You can see Mendel's Law in operation. In the same family, you can encounter blonde, blue-eyed, Nordic types, and coal-black people. And you would find all of the shades in between. Most people are coffee

colored, but they're every complexion. Some you could easily mistake for Europeans; others are definitely African type. Yet they all live in harmony. There aren't any open racial problems.

Differences, however, do exist between islands. But, of course, there are no tribal differences, because there are no tribes there.

The islands were uninhabited when the Portuguese arrived in the 15th century. They brought colonists from Portugal, and slaves from Africa. The two mixed, creating a Cape Verdean nation.

Q: *When you were there, what was your prime concerns?*

MCNAMARA: My prime concern, first, was the elections, of course, and the advent of popular democracy.

Then, after the elections, assisting the Cape Verdeans in a movement towards liberal economics, the privatization of the economy.

Of course, aid, because Cape Verde is completely dependent on foreign aid. Foreign aid and remittances from overseas Cape Verdeans are the two big sources of income for Cape Verde.

They have long droughts, and the country is extremely poor as a result. Agriculture is a very uncertain thing. And they have little else. There are no known mineral resources. It's a very poor country. That's, of course, one of the reasons why so many have migrated.

Anyway, I was focused, number one, on assuring that the aid program continued and was well focused, and, number two, on assisting the Cape Verdeans with their plans to privatize the economy.

To do this, I suggested to the minister of finance that the key would be getting the World Bank involved. I said, "A way of doing that is for us to do some preliminary studies, which we can finance through our USAID program. These then can be used by people in the World Bank to bring on a World Bank program. But they can't finance the preliminary studies." I worked out a strategy for them, and the minister seized it like a drowning man takes a life buoy.

Q: *This was the president?*

MCNAMARA: No, the finance minister. He's the sort of economic czar. He's an economist and the prime minister's brother.

Q: *This was the new regime?*

MCNAMARA: This was the new regime, yes.

Under the old regime, I was focused mainly on the elections, the path towards democracy. A new regime, this was really pretty exciting. Now they had a chance to really change what was going on, have a systemic change.

Anyway, the finance minister seized my suggestion like a man who is drowning and grabs a life buoy.

And that's what happened. We did preliminary studies for them which were used to encourage the entry of the World Bank. The World Bank came in, in a big way.

The World Bank needed a successful model in Africa, and so they seized on Cape Verde as a place where they had good perspectives. Cape Verde was a democracy by this time. There was virtually no corruption in the government. People were keen on privatization and liberalizing the economy, and were willing to accept the Bank's suggestions. They had promising human resources, with fairly sophisticated responsible people at the top of the government. The Bank has been very generous in their aid. And not only that, but they've mobilized other donors. So a whole program has been worked out for the modernization and liberalization of the economy, with aid from a variety of donors.

Q: Where is this aid going to go? What are they going to end up with?

MCNAMARA: Hopefully, they'll wind up with a self-sustaining economy. Obviously, this is not certain, given their lack of resources, but it's certainly worth a try. If it happens, it'll be based on fisheries, tourism, secondary industry, and maybe a free port.

The secondary industry is perhaps the chanciest. This would be in conjunction with a free port, of course.

But they've already gotten some textile mills coming in from China. The Cape Verdeans, under the Lomé Treaty, have access to the European Common Market at preferential levels of tariff. They also have access to the American market, under some regulation or other. The Chinese, of course, don't have this, and so some Chinese textile people came from Hong Kong and mainland China and set up textile factories. They don't make the textiles there. They cut and sew them together, do the fabrication of garments, and then export them. That's something that's happened within the last year, since I've been gone. It was in the mill before that, but it's now actually happened. Hopefully, they'll get some more of these small industries to come in.

I started a coast guard to protect their fisheries, because other people were coming in to exploit their fishing resources, legally and illegally. The Cape Verdeans needed to protect them and to exploit them themselves. So, with the help of the U.S. Coast Guard, I got a little coast guard started. We got a boat, through the Biodiversity Fund. It's a USAID fund that was set up for biodiversity, but I justified a patrol boat out of it. So, anyway, they've got a coast guard started.

They have some people interested in setting up a fishing industry there, so, hopefully, that'll go, too.

As for tourism, it's the best windsurfing in the world there. A lot of people come just for the windsurfing. And if it becomes better known, hopefully more people will come. It's great sailing; there's always a good wind. You don't have a lot of heavy storms, but you always have a good, brisk wind, so it's very good for sailing.

Q: Going back to the election. What were your relations with the Marxist government? They were surprised by the results of the election. How were you seeing it as they went into it?

MCNAMARA: I was convinced that they were going to lose. I predicted they were going to lose the election, six months before the election was held. Oftentimes, politicians delude themselves (and not just Cape Verde politicians). Also, political leaders that have been in uncontested power for long periods oftentimes surround themselves with sycophants. They hear and are told only things they want to hear. They hear selectively, and, of course, also, they choose to surround themselves with people who are only going to tell them what they want to hear.

My relations with the old government's leaders were very good. I had close relations with the president, who also came and saw Bush several times. He's really a fine old man. He wanted to introduce genuine democracy in the country.

The prime minister was more of a dedicated Marxist. His name is Pedro Pires, a very bright guy. My relations with him were good; they were amicable. He knew that he had to deal with the world as it is, and that America was the only great power at this point, and that he needed our aid and also our goodwill. He also realized that America was by far the most popular foreign country in Cape Verde, because of all the connections, and that it was very important for him, politically, to be seen to have good relations with the American ambassador. So he used to take me around with him sometimes on some of his trips.

Q: How about the relations with the Portuguese there?

MCNAMARA: There was a good deal of ambivalence towards the Portuguese, especially by the former government, led by people who had actually fought against the Portuguese.

The new government, however, was much less ambivalent, much more welcoming of the Portuguese, much closer to the Portuguese.

I'm sure, in my own mind, that, at the time of independence, if they'd actually had a free election, a majority of the Cape Verdeans might well have voted to stay with Portugal as a quasi-independent province, as, for instance, Madeira or the Azores are. But they weren't given that choice. The young officers who controlled things in Portugal at that time decided, at the insistence of these Cape Verdeans who were involved in the war and the settlement of the war in Guinea-Bissau, that Cape Verde should be granted independence. The small band of former freedom fighters came over from Guinea-Bissau and were given control by the radical young officers who were in charge in Portugal.

Well, anyway, I saw the elections clearly going to be won by the opposition.

My relations remained amicable with the previous government right through the elections and right up to the day I left. I went to see the former prime minister, who was then leader of the opposition (one of the last people I saw), and said goodbye to him. It was sort of a sad occasion, because he was still in trauma from the loss of the election. I also paid a call on the former president. He's retired now and is viewed as a sort of grand old man in Africa, and floats around Africa and gives words of wisdom and advice to others. I saw him not long before I left, too. Some of the previous ministers are still among my best friends there. In fact, there's one here now, the previous minister of education. I got a grant for him to study here on a Humphrey scholarship. He's on it now. He just came to see me about a week ago here in Washington. He's at the University of Minnesota. He will go back, and some day he may well be president or prime minister. Probably will be.

Q: *Well, is there anything else?*

MCNAMARA: As for the quality of life in Cape Verde, we had one of the smallest, most modest residences in the Foreign Service. A nice little Portuguese colonial house. Certainly nothing very grand or ostentatious. Very small, with a very small living room. It was very difficult to entertain.

When we had 4th of July parties, we used to invite four and five hundred people, because the American connection is a big thing for the Cape Verdeans. Our relations are very important to them. Also, my wife is a great cook. So we would take all the furniture out of the first floor of the house and open it, from the front gate to the back yard. Neither the front yard nor the back yard were more than postage stamps, but nonetheless, we'd just take all the furniture out and have a cocktail and then a big dinner, because they expected dinner. When you have a cocktail, it means dinner. And my wife would work for about a month producing enough food for about four-five hundred people. They'd come in and they'd clean the whole place up. It would be just as if we had invited vacuum cleaners.

Another interesting feature of service in Praia was the embassy's 32-foot motor-sailer. We went sailing all the time.

The diplomatic community was very small, only seven missions, plus a group of UN international-organization representatives. So there wasn't a great diplomatic life. But I got to know a lot of Cape Verdeans, and they would invite me to Cape Verdean cookouts and things up in the mountains or in their houses.

They loved music, and they'd always play music and sing. You'd sit around for hours drinking "Grog" (rum) and listening to great Cape Verdean music.

The traditional music is the morna, sad songs of farewell as people were migrating. These are a migrant people. Being of Irish origins, I understand this, because the Irish did the same thing. These were very sentimental songs that they would be singing on the eve of departure. In the 19th century, obviously, and even early 20th century, leaving was for good. They probably were

never coming back. These songs were sung as people were going off, perhaps forever. They were very sad, but very sentimental and very warm. Sad and warm.

Well, they also have more modern music. They have something called the funana, which is a song and a dance. The dance was outlawed by the Portuguese when they were there, because they said it was virtual copulation to music. And it is. I mean, it's really, really close. There's an awful lot of gyrating.

Q: You're moving your hands up and down.

MCNAMARA: It's not so much hands, it's bodies. It's a body massage. Anyway, it's now, of course, widely accepted, and anybody who tried to stop it would have a revolution on his hands.

Anyway, there's just great music and great fun.

For instance, a pal of mine, who had a big, extended family, would have a cookout every Sunday at a house in the mountains. You arrived at about one o'clock in the afternoon. It would go on, if you stayed, until maybe one o'clock that night. Loads of food, lots to drink, and lots of music and dancing. He was pretty well-to-do; he had a building contract business. His brother became a minister in the new government--the minister of public works. Both of them had university degrees from the United States, Northeastern University, in Boston. So they'd put on these great parties. And people would come, all kinds of people. They just sort of dropped in and dropped out. It was just great fun.

Q: After a career of sitting around in Beirut and Vietnam and Elisabethville, you deserved it.

MCNAMARA: Oh, yes, it was really a nice place to have a twilight tour. My relations with Cape Verdeans are still strong and warm.

The minister of finance was just here for the IMF meeting, and he called me up and asked me to come to a lunch with him. We had lunch together. He asked me for my advice on this and that. They're worried that the USAID mission might be withdrawn and that aid could eventually be cut. In any case, he's worried about the symbolism of the American USAID mission going, and its effect on other countries' aid, not just ours. Ours, in terms of the amount of the finance, isn't all that great. I asked him if he'd been to see anybody in Congress, and he said, yes, he'd gone to see a couple of congressmen. I asked him if he'd seen any senators, and he said, no, he hadn't, his embassy didn't suggest it. And I said, "Well, it's very important. Has anybody done anything about mobilizing the community, getting them to write letters and call congressmen?"

And he said, "No, I was told that it wasn't the right time."

I said, "Look, in American politics, there's no wrong time. You always want to keep those lines with congressmen open. You can't have too much influence. It's not possible. You want to remind them that they've got a lot of votes who are Cape Verdeans. So anything that comes up with Cape Verde, they're interested in it. And they have a direct interest, because they've got guys who vote for them, or don't vote for them, on that basis. This is the way it works in

American politics. It's not just the Jewish population in this country that mobilizes in support of Israel. The Greeks have done it over Cyprus. The Greeks really mobilized an awful lot of action with Congress. And congressmen paid attention."

He asked, "Well, what can you do for us?"

I said, "I'll go and see the four senators, because you do not have time to do it, and the ambassador hasn't done it."

He asked me if I would do it, and so I saw Pell, who is the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee and the senator from Rhode Island. Pell, before I went to Cape Verde, had told me to take care of those Cape Verdeans. So I reminded him of all that, and told him it was his turn to take care of those Cape Verdeans. He said he would. And I wrote a letter for him to send to the AID administrator. I saw Kerry, from Massachusetts, and Chaffee, the other senator from Rhode Island, and Senator Ted Kennedy. I saw their staff; I didn't see them. And one staffer on the Foreign Relations Committee is trying to get me in to see Simons, who is the chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa.

So I've done all that for them, and I told him, "Now you've got to mobilize." I called him the other day to tell him what I had done, and warn him that staffers told me, "Look, we never hear from the Cape Verdeans. We know there are Cape Verdeans in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. They never write to us; they never say anything. Jesus Christ, you've got to get these guys to make their presence known and write to these congressmen." One girl in Kennedy's office said, "Look, if a congressman gets four or five hundred postcards, calls, letters, anything, he'll do flips. This will really get action." So, anyway, I told the minister this, and he said he'd work on it right away, tomorrow.

But, anyway, it was a fun place.

End of reader