REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

COUNTRY READER
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ALAN W. LUKENS
Consul
Brazzaville (1960-1961)

Ambassador Alan W. Lukens was born and raised in Philadelphia. He joined the Foreign Service in 1951. His career included positions in Turkey, Martinique, France, Morocco, South Africa, Senegal, and Kenya, and an ambassadorship to the Congo. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1989.

Q: *Then from Paris--from '60 you then go to another assignment.*

LUKENS: I had always wanted to go to Africa, and requested that every time, particularly French Africa, with Personnel. And it happened that the Consul in Brazzaville, who had opened the post after the war, died of a heart attack at the end of '59. So they called me from Washington and asked if I'd like to go there. So I did. It was a little embarrassing, getting out of NATO, because it was supposed to be a longer assignment, but I found a friend in the U.S. delegation that took my place. So we went down there at the beginning of '60, and I was Consul in Brazzaville for the whole area of French Equatorial Africa. We had a Consul there during the war because Brazzaville was on the air route through Brazil to supply the troops in the Middle East. There's a very funny book called The Body Missed the Boat about the supposed murder of the American Consul in Brazzaville in 1945. But just to recall for you, when de Gaulle set up his Free French movement in 1940, French Equatorial Africa was the only area that really stuck with him. There were Vichyites in North Africa and West Africa but in Brazzaville Governor General, Felix Eboué from French Guiana, jumped on board with de Gaulle. So de Gaulle always had a warm feeling for this area and so France had kept it up. But there again, it was very much of a French colony with very little outside exposure. It consisted of Chad, Central African Republic, Congo and Gabon. The capital of the whole region was in Brazzaville and it was a very centralized kind of organization although there was a governor for each of the four areas, the High Commissioner General, was in Brazzaville, and he was very much of a pro-consul for France.

Q: *And, when you were there, the Congo was part of France still?*

LUKENS: It was French Equatorial Africa, it was a colony of France, and you had four different parts of French Equatorial Africa, as I just explained. This was the situation when I got there in early '60. Of course, without belaboring the point, that was the big year of African independence. And de Gaulle by that time had had his referendum throughout French Africa as to whether or not they would like to stay in the French commonwealth. They all voted to, gave the "grande oui," except that Guiana refused and the French backed out of there in a very arrogant way.

Q: *...ungraciously.*

LUKENS: ...so the Independence Ceremonies went on. At the beginning of that year you had the Mali Federation which then broke into Senegal and Mali. You had Togo and Cameroon, which had been German colonies, so they got their independence earlier in the spring of that year. Then, of course, the big event of the year, later, was the independence of Belgian Congo.

Q: *You were sitting right across the river.*

LUKENS: I was right across the river. I was on the delegation to the independence. It was headed by Paley of CBS, and Bob Murphy, and I went over there--and I'll never forget that day. I didn't know that much about internal politics but you had Kasavubu as president and Lumumba as premier. We were all sitting in the stands watching the parade, consisting of goose-stepping African soldiers led by Belgian--mostly Flemish non-coms, who were screaming at them as they

went by in the parade. I said to my wife at that point, "This is not going to last. They won't accept this." And, true enough, about one week later the "Force Publique" rose in mutiny and threw out the Belgian officers and non-coms. That's the beginning of that whole scenario.

Q: *What was the situation in Brazzaville itself while you were there, the political situation, how did you deal with it?*

LUKENS: The political situation there, as France foresaw, the French in Paris, was that they were eventually going to have to give independence to all of their colonies. They stalled as much as they could. There was a difference of opinion between Paris and de Gaulle, who wanted to move quickly, and the colonial administrators who thought that these colonies weren't ready for independence. At the last minute France engaged in a rather useless exercise which was to try to make French Equatorial Africa into one independent country. It had the name of URAC., Union de la Republique de l'Afrique Centrale. This trial balloon never got off the ground, mostly for a very good African reason; that all four African leaders in their respective countries wanted to be head of it. And they all wanted the capital. So it just didn't work. There was too much difference among the areas. The Gabonese, being the smallest and richest, didn't want to spend their future supporting the poorer elements like Chad and Central Africa.

So then you had the independence of Zaire and about the beginning of August with very, very short notice...

Q: *1960.*

LUKENS: 1960, and I'll get into what we did in Zaire earlier. But, at the beginning of August, de Gaulle announced that independence would be given very quickly to the four countries of the Entente, in West Africa (Ivory Coast, Dahomey, Upper Volta--now Burkina Faso, and Niger). And my colleague, sitting there as Consul in Abidjan, Don Norland, had a very similar experience to mine, because he also covered four countries. Well, what happened was that at the beginning of August de Gaulle sent Henri Malraux, who was Minister of Culture, down as the representative to their independence celebrations. But the French attitude was very much that they were not really getting independence, but only reaching their maturity. And in each speech, both in West Africa and in Central Africa, Malraux went through his routine that "you're now twenty-one years old and you've come into your own, and you can have your bank account, but ma and pa are still there, and they're in Paris, and you shouldn't usurp the experience that you gained from your motherland, so to speak." And the French decided that they would keep this a very closed ceremony. It turned out to be in my area, after they'd already been to West Africa, an independence every 48 hours, starting with Chad, Bangui, Brazzaville, and then Libreville. So I cabled all this to Washington, and said, "What are you going to do? We need messages, we need a representative to the independence." Well Washington, being very cautious in those days about offending the French before the Kennedy era, went to the Quai d'Orsay and said, "What do you want us to do?" And they said, "Nothing." Then the British did the same thing, and they told the British, "Nothing, we don't need any foreign representatives, you've got consuls, they're good enough. We don't even care if the consuls come," they said in Paris.

So this all went back and forth with cables, and I was getting nowhere about getting anybody from Washington to make a fuss over the independence celebrations because we only had about ten days notice. So finally it became clear that I would be the representative, and I tried very hard to get a message. I couldn't get very far. That was, of course, during the campaign in August of '60 between Nixon and Kennedy, and nobody was terribly interested in this area. So I drafted a message from President Eisenhower to each future president in the area, cabling them to Washington. They finally came back and said, "Okay." They didn't change anything, and then I translated the message into French so that I could hand each President his at the time of each independence.

Q: *I think it's very interesting because it shows where things ranked at the time. Particularly at the end of one administration, which really hadn't been very interested in Africa. Besides, too, so much effort was put, on our part, in keeping France happy and then later this spread over from the Algerian situation. I mean that was a battle that raged in the halls of the Department of State for a decade, I think, of where Algeria lay, and normally we came down on the French side rather than that of the colonials.*

LUKENS: Although that would change, with Kennedy's position somewhat different. But you're absolutely right. That was one of the reasons, I don't think anybody in Washington cared enough at that point to take on the French as to what kind of ceremony there would be, or who would be our representative.

Anyhow, I was the senior Consul there. There weren't very many others. There was a fellow from Taipei, and there was a poor old Portuguese that didn't know what he was doing, and a rather obnoxious German, and a very nice Brit. So I said to them, "Look, if you're all going to be representing your respective countries, we've got to get to these damn independences somehow." So I went to my good friend, General Sizaire, the head of all French troops in Central Africa, and I explained our dilemma. So finally he agreed that we could have a DC-3 to follow around the independences because there was no other possible way to be present, air flights being what they were. The French had two fancy planes; one for Malraux and his bunch of bureaucrats; and the other for the French press, and we followed along with this DC-3. But, contrary to the French attitude about downplaying the consular part of the ceremonies, the countries themselves, the Africans, were very happy to see us. It was quite amusing. In Chad, they had an old 1935 right-hand drive car that somehow had been given to the governor, God knows how, an open car. So I heard about this and I managed to get my hands on that, but there weren't enough cars, so the Brit rode with me, and I had a little American flag that I tied on for the occasion.

So when we got down to Libreville in Gabon, I had to share a room with the Brit, so a little knock at the door came when we got there and this beautiful Gabonese said that she'd be part of our service of protocol. I slipped out the door and said, "Here comes a lady for you," to my British friend. We had a lot of laughs over that. But the independences were very exciting, and they usually ended up with a speech by Malraux at midnight, the flag thing, the parade, and lots of African dancing. But in each case I was able to work in a private visit with the President, and take him the message that I'd written, and bring him greetings from our President, even though Eisenhower was not aware of this. It was quite a time.

Q: *What were our plans? I mean all of a sudden we have these new countries, and what did we plan to do?*

LUKENS: We didn't plan very much and that was the problem. We wanted to do something finally but rather too late to have much effect. We managed to get a--I forget exactly what it was--a hospital vehicle that could run around to the villages, sort of a half-track with an ambulance on top it. But it was better late than never. We didn't really get any kind of aid programs, or help, until the next administration came in. An awful lot was just done verbally trying to show how interested we were.

Q: *How interested were people in the State Department about what was happening in Africa?*

LUKENS: I think there were a few Africanists--the early ones--back in the Department that were very sympathetic that wanted to help but I don't think they could get anything through the White House, even as a kind of gesture. But I think the other problem that confused this at the time, and most everybody working on Central Africa, was totally wound up in the affair in the Belgian Congo, Zaire. Maybe I should discuss that.

Q: *Oh, yes, I want to move to that; but on this independence thing, just so readers can get an impression. Was there any sort of window of opportunity that really would have made any difference, or not, there, that we could have done something that we didn't do? Or did things pretty well play out, probably the way they would have, considering how we were at the time?*

LUKENS: I think with hindsight they probably played out all right at the time. Of course, we were frustrated that we didn't get more, and that we weren't making more of these countries. Perhaps that's localitis. We thought that Washington should do more. I think with hindsight, had we built up their expectations too far, there would have been a disillusionment coming in later on, which, of course, set in later on anyway. So perhaps it was better to go slow.

Q: *And also I assume there was the feeling that this really is going to be French turf for a long time.*

LUKENS: Well, that was it, and that was the kind of rationale that came out of Washington, knowing there was no money and it really wasn't worth...that we had first of all the enormous problem in Zaire. We had historical commitments with Nigeria which was getting its independence the first of October; with Ghana already independent; of course Liberia; and there were enough other places in Africa where we were even then sort of over extended. Everybody felt, "Well, let the French take care of this area. We won't worry about it. The American interests there are very, very limited."

Q: *Did we see in--not Zaire--but in the area that you were representing, did you see at that time a communist/Soviet menace, or not?*

LUKENS: No, there was none at all. Of course you have to remember that the French governors were still in place, French troops were in all the areas. The French governors from one day to the next changed their titles to "French Ambassador," but it didn't change very much. Of course, the

Communist threat came in later, particularly in Brazzaville. At that time there really wasn't any, and the entire commercial network was just totally French; perhaps Lebanese a bit too, and of course the CFA franc still tied them, as it still does, very much to the French financial side of it.

Q: *Now let's turn to...there you are sitting across the river from the Congo, what were you doing, and how did you see this?*

LUKENS: People knew that the old regime and system wouldn't last too long, but I don't think we were all that prepared, and certainly Washington was not. So my first word of impending disaster came on the walkie-talkie that I had with the DCM in Leopoldville, Bob McIlvaine. The walkie-talkie was on my porch--our Consulate was an old Belgian bank and the top floor was the Consul's residence, there was a big balcony and we could only use the walkie-talkie across the river because the phone didn't always work--it didn't work at all in fact. So at 5:00 in the morning I got a call from the Embassy that all hell had broken loose, and the Force Publique had broken out in mutiny, and that the whites basically, including Americans, were all commandeering ferries and coming across to Brazzaville.

So I got dressed and ran down to what was called "Le Beach," where the ferry came in, and waited for it. There weren't all that many Americans who got off at the very beginning, perhaps 30 or 40, including dependents from the Embassy. We moved the official dependents right into our house at the Consulate, the others we housed with the French. The French weren't being very helpful at that point but they finally had to because they got a lot of pressure from Brussels. Most of the people were Belgian. And they turned a couple of schools over to take care of the people, and so on.

Then as the situation got worse, the search for Americans moved out to the bush, and finally there were Americans discovered all over the place, especially missionaries--some of whom had been there for years. They'd gotten lost, nobody knew who they were. But there was a fairly good missionary radio network. So what we finally did, was to set up a command post at the Consulate with the radios tied in with the missionaries. And meantime the Air Force had sent down a couple of helicopters and several other planes, so it was the only time in my life I could say I commanded an air force. We organized missions every day through this network out into the bush in the Belgian Congo to bring back these missionaries.

Then there was a big question about how to get them out of Brazzaville, and whether they should be evacuated, or what. So finally, after a lot of argument, the Department chartered a couple of PanAm planes and took the evacuees to Ghana. And then larger planes came in, finally, but they were mostly filled with Belgians, and all kinds of other people were loaded on them to get back to Europe. It was a very, very wild time. Of course the press came in and so on.

Meanwhile, on the political side, when all hell had broken loose, finally the Embassy over there--and you'd have to ask them exactly what happened.

Q: *These are the ones in Leopoldville?*

LUKENS: Yes. The Embassy thought that something had to be done and the (Belgian) Congolese--I forget which ones, I suppose Kasavubu, not Lumumba--asked for American help. They wanted American troops. At that point the Embassy had no communications except the walkie-talkie to me. So they passed this request to me, and I called the Department, and later on the Department came back and said, "Well look, see if they can ask for the UN. We don't want to come in there with American troops." So this, of course, all took time, and in New York--that's a whole other story.

But finally the Embassy went back to the Congolese and got them to agree to request a UN force. At that point there was another breakdown--I think they must have had some communication, but they didn't at that time because I got the call again from the walkie-talkie saying, "Tell the Department to ask for the UN. We've got the okay from the Congolese." After some tries I managed to get a long distance phone call through, but I got a Mr. Olson in Minnesota first; I've never figured that one out. I don't know how the hell that happened, but finally I got through to Washington and passed the request and that started the whole ball rolling for the UN support.

So the whole business of evacuating people, and getting them out of Brazzaville was complicated--I had terrible fights with the French about getting permits for these American planes to come in. One of the big planes carrying the helicopters was only about 100 miles away and they said they wouldn't let them land.

Q: *Was this the local French commanders who just were being bloody-minded?*

LUKENS: This was the Governor General.

Q: *Did you have the feeling that he was just being nasty or was there another reason?*

LUKENS: He was being nasty, he was being very French, saying it's their territory, and why do American planes have to come in, and that sort of thing. I said, as a very junior consul, I had to go in and say to him, "Look, if the French will not let these planes land, all hell will break loose. It will disrupt our relations, you will look very silly, and I will have to say that you refused to let them in." Well, he backed down. The planes were practically there.

Q: *But I mean this was more, his being bureaucratic, rather than orders from Paris.*

LUKENS: I think this all came so fast that it wasn't cleared from Paris. I'm not sure of that.

Q: *It sounds of that nature.*

LUKENS: There was such a panic, and there were so many people, and they were bringing in the helicopters, we had to get some people out of the bush. I don't think our boys worried about clearances because they figured that NATO planes could go anywhere in the NATO area.

Q: *Was Brazzaville independent at that time?*

LUKENS: No, no. This was before--about the 7th, 8th, 9th of July. Brazzaville independence didn't come until the 15 of August. It would have been very different if that had been the case.

Q: *How did you feel, there, about what was happening in the Belgian Congo? Did you feel this was the sort of thing that could spread, or did you feel the French had a different colonial policy, and also had a better set of troops, or something like that to keep it from spreading?*

LUKENS: There was no question at that point of unrest in the French areas. You have to go back a little bit and remember that in '58 they had set up local parliaments so they had a Prime Minister--they didn't have much power in each place; and a Cabinet, a National Assembly, and all of that. And each Minister had a Frenchman sitting behind him. And you had the French troops, and you had the High Commissioner--the Governor General. So there were certain trappings of independence in place. And the French Africans were very, very disdainful of what had happened in the Belgian Congo. The Belgians were stupid, they didn't train people. The Congolese (Zairois) were particularly nasty to the Flemish because almost all the Belgian civil servants, and all of the military were Flemish. There were only a handful of Walloons, the Francophones. So you had the disdain about the way the Belgians had not prepared their people, and then you also had--which still goes on--a snobbism that the French Africans were much better educated than the Belgian Africans, and that's still true. They feel very superior, even though they are very much fewer in numbers nowadays.

Q: *Were there any other developments there during that time?*

LUKENS: I think you had these two big things going on, the whole development in the Congo, Lumumba, and the UN coming in, leading to the fight in Katanga. And then simultaneously, but really with no connection, you had the independence of the four countries I was covering.

Q: *What happened? All of a sudden you had four countries in your consular district.*

LUKENS: Well, I thought that was the case from the very beginning but after independence I became Chargé d'Affaires and the conversion to the Embassy was rather simple. I carried an "Embassy of the United States" sign across on the ferry from our Embassy in Leopoldville and hung it up and that really was the only change. I had one Vice Consul who disappeared elephant hunting and very quickly retired from the Service after that. And I had a very nice secretary and for a long time that was it.

Q: *In a way I'm surprised, because not only does nature abhor a vacuum, but also, if you've got four countries with ambassadorships dangling out there--this is raw meat to the Foreign Service. Was it again because of the elections?*

LUKENS: No. Then you had a slight awakening during the campaign and Harriman took a trip all over Africa to show the interest of the Democrats. And I had quite a time introducing him around. He didn't know any French, and interpreting for him as he was giving civic lessons to the President of the Congo and the President of the National Assembly who later took over in a coup. This was quite a funny period. And then, what happened from the Republican side was Loy Henderson's farewell trip. He got a Pentagon plane and John Stutesman was with him, and they

came out to all of the new areas--that was in the fall. The routine that he went through was to ask each Chief of State if he wanted an American Embassy...

Q: *...Loy Henderson was the...*

LUKENS: Loy Henderson had decided ahead, of course, that he wanted to have an American Embassy in each place but he went through the motions of asking each president. I'll never forget in the Chad, Tombalbaye, who was since murdered, poor fellow, was president and standing there in his long boubou...

Q: *Boubou being a what?*

LUKENS: That's the long white sack that the Chadians wear. We went in to see the President and I was interpreting. Henderson didn't know any French, and he would say, "Do you want an American Embassy?" And the President would say, "Oui, patron." And then, "Do you want an Ambassador?" "Oui, patron." And then, I'll never forget in Chad, in this same wonderful open car, sitting with Henderson as we drove out along the river, and he said, "Tell them that we want these ten acres for the American Embassy." And the Minister of Defense, who was a 25-year old boy sitting in the front seat, kept saying, "Oui, oui, oui."

The only problem with this little trip of Henderson's was that we had to buy property, or get it in each place. And unfortunately he'd sent a couple of goons out from FBO ahead of time, and these were heavy-handed guys that got in the hands of the French real estate market in each place, and started to line up houses and buildings. So there wasn't any great surprise when I landed there in a special plane with Henderson to ask if they wanted American Embassies, because these FBO clowns had already been trying to buy up property.

Anyway, it developed then that the plan was to have an Ambassador in Brazzaville for the four countries, but have a Chargé and an Admin Officer and a secretary communicator, basically, in each of the other three. The first Ambassador to be named had been Consul General in Frankfurt, Wendell Blancke, and Henderson asked me whether I would like to stay on as his DCM, or be Chargé in one of the other places. So I chose Bangui and Fred Chapin (who has just died, poor fellow), was the one in Chad, and Walter Diamanti went to Libreville, and Leon Dorros, who served as DCM under Blancke in Brazzaville, followed by Hank Von Oss who is retired now, took over.

Q: *One thing I have to add here. Wendell Blancke was my Consul General in Frankfurt and what a delightful person. I mean, to me, one of the nicest people, and most wittiest people I've ever met.*

LUKENS: Yes, he was very funny, and he was just wonderful to us. He came in just before Christmas, and he had a marvelous sense of humor. He had a suitcase full of Christmas decorations, and he played the mouth organ. We were tiny at that point. The American colony for Christmas was my family and the secretary. In fact Blancke was so shocked when he got there, he said, "Where is everybody?" But I took him around in January, when we still had not opened the other posts, to present his letters at each place. And that was very amusing because he'd brought down his morning coat, and top hat, something that had never been seen in Central

Africa. In Chad and Central Africa they refused and said they would be embarrassed to have him dressed that way, as they didn't have any clothes themselves. That made him mad. But when we went to Libreville--they love to dress up there--Leon Mbg was president, so he was able to put on the full regalia.

Q: *How did you set up our post, our Embassy, in...*

LUKENS: Bangui, Central African Republic.

Q: *Could you describe the situation?*

LUKENS: Well, I'd been in there as Chargé and as Consul about three or four times and with Henderson, and then of course with Blancke, and I'd lined up a house, and an office. And basically when I went up there in February of '61 I just opened up a PTT box and we had a one-time pad, and hung up the sign, and that was the Embassy.

Q: *What was the government like?*

LUKENS: The government was headed by David Dacko who was a young fellow, and his aide de camp was Bokassa who later became the Emperor after he'd deposed Dacko. But at that point they were still quite pro-French, and there were French troops there. It was a pretty basic government. There was no other embassy but the French. The French Ambassador was a kind of wild man who'd been an adventurer, a military guy, a political appointee, and he didn't like the idea at all of having another Embassy there, and he tried to make life a little hard for me. I remember once he challenged me at a dinner party to do a sort of cossack dance with him on the floor to prove your manhood or something. But it was a very nice place. The Ubangi are nice people, interesting. They have diamonds. With a chance the country would open up and pretty soon I got a PAO, we got an Admin Officer--Roger Provencher--came in later. And it began to build up, it was a very nice period.

Q: *Did you see any problems there? American interest was basically marginal at the time.*

LUKENS: We saw plenty of problems in development that you have in every country. American interests were very marginal, and except for taking some diamonds, we had very little going on. But they needed everything under the sun, and they were very open to it. Again, it was perhaps even more basic than Brazzaville, which at least had a port. It was very much French oriented, and that's why they, at the beginning, resented our presence there.

Q: *How about...what was the feeling you were getting from Washington? By this time the Kennedy administration had come in, in January of '61, and they were making--at least Soapy Williams was the first appointment to the State Department.*

LUKENS: ...the honor second to none.

Q: *Yes, there was an awful lot of attention being paid there. Were you getting any reflection of this where you were?*

LUKENS: To a certain extent. And we tried to publicize what we did get, USIS, and so on. It's of general interest that Soapy never got to this area, at least not in my time. But they were fascinated by Kennedy and the beginning of the Peace Corps--of course, that was much later, when that came there too. But the whole new interest...and there were very high expectations, of course, at that point.

Q: *How about...going back, because you were getting reflections from Brazzaville, because later this area turned almost as hostile as any place in Africa towards the United States. Was in that in the offing?*

LUKENS: You have to separate them out a little bit. I don't think Chad was ever hostile. And Bangui the same way. They had their crazy emperor, but they were never anti-American. Gabon has always been pro-American; though they've had other problems. No, but when you go to Brazzaville, the president then was Abbé Youlou, a five-foot excommunicated priest, who walked around in Dior caftans, and was sort of ridiculed as a French puppet. He lasted until their third anniversary of independence, the 15th of August '63, and then he was deposed in a coup, by the way, by the fellow who had been president of the National Assembly. And then there were a succession of coups, and then very quickly a People's Republic was installed and the Russians came in there in a big way.

Q: *This was not in the offing when you were there at that time.*

LUKENS: No, it wasn't. Then, in 1965, they were throwing our people into jail, and the Embassy was closed. We didn't technically break relations, but we backed out and we didn't get back in there until 1979.

SHIRLEY ELIZABETH BARNES
Ford Foundation Administrative Assistant
Congo (1961-1964)

Ambassador Barnes was born in Florida and raised in Florida and New York City. She was educated at City College of New York and at Columbia and Boston Universities. Before entering the Foreign Service in 1984, Ambassador Barnes worked with the Ford Foundation in Africa and was active in African American women's organizations and in the advertising business. In the Foreign Service she served in Strasbourg, Dakar, East Berlin and in the State Department in Washington. In 1998 she was appointed Ambassador to Madagascar, where she served until 2001. Ambassador Barnes was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.

Q: Well, you went to the Congo from when to when?

BARNES: About ‘61 to ‘63 ... ‘61 to ‘64 maybe.

Q: What was the Congo ... when you got there, the Congo as you pointed out, I mean you had ... Kasavubu was you know...

BARNES: Lumumba had just been assassinated.

Q: ... and you know, it was a real mess.

BARNES: Mm-hmm.

Q: Where was it when you got there? What was it like?

BARNES: I was with the Ford Foundation. When I got there, it was rough. There was curfew and all of that. They blew up the bridge so that getting from one part of town to the other took sometimes three to four hours. You had to go in different kinds of directions because there were no more bridges. It was a mess. There was nothing in the supermarkets. Nothing. How do you eat? What are we going to do? Fortunately I had met this black woman here. She had been invited to come out and help to work on a dam that they were building in an old part of the Congo but the offices were right there in what was then Leopoldville not Kinshasa.

She had gone over there to work a year or so before I went over there. So I had met her in the states before she went over there and she was there on the tarmac when I got off of the plane that night. It was a PanAm airplane. Just to show you that there was not that much to do in the Congo when I was there ... We used to go out. We said, come on let's go out and meet the PanAm airplane and see what's going on. That would be our big thing. They came in twice a week and we'd have dinner out there and just lean over the rail and see who was coming off the plane. But anyway she was there on the tarmac when I got in and she was a good friend. She supported me. When I got there they threw me in some apartment that was just awful ... but I was happy. I mean, when I look at having been a GSO [General Services Officer] and what our Foreign Service employees when they go overseas and to see what was available at a place like the Congo, we are so spoiled in the Foreign Service in so many ways.

But at any rate, I got into this little apartment. Next day, sort of, guys were taken around to the office and then ... sort of, there was no such thing as a welcome kit and all that. So, I had to go with this friend and we went out to the supermarket. There were maybe three limp stalks of celery and two carrots on the other side, no meat. The shelves were absolutely bare except for some insecticide spray and then there were like a hundred of them across the shelves. I just was ready to go back home. Of course, it was always, you'd hear about people getting shot. The UN had a very big presence there. They went in the Hotel Royale and if you ever read any of the accounts of the Congo in the '60s the Royale always plays a pivotal role in how many meetings that took place. There were all the different factions. But at any rate, my friend Ivine Reed was very helpful. She was going with a fellow named Chuck Robinson and they were very, very, helpful. They used to have me over for dinner all the time until I found out in kind of intricate ways ... If you found out there was meat in town, you'd literally just drop everything, I don't care if it was the Secretary of State on the phone or anything. You'd just put him on hold, or if it was

the President of the Ford Foundation you'd just say, "there's meat ..." White butchery or butcher shop and you'd just run out, get in your car and drive and the lines would be around the corner.

And then... this is something that has bothered me. I still find it difficult. I feel very, myself, guilty about it. All the Congolese who were nobodies would be standing on line and you'd just walk up and I'd say: "I'm an American." And they'd let you in the shop. Or, of course if you were white, and of course I'm not white, I'd have to let them know, "look, I'm an American too." So, the French developed, mainly the Belgians that were there, they had elected to stay because many of them had run out in the '60s when all the real problems ... But they'd just walk in with their little shopping bag and the women would walk right in and say, you know I want this cut and I want this and they'd set it aside and there was a Belgian butcher. And he'd look at me and I'd say: "I'm an American, I work with the ..." "Oh, alright." So they'd give me my preference. And I really haven't gotten over that yet because the Congolese would be standing in the street, the line, the queue forever and ever. And I just see how morally bankrupt and corrupt people are in that sense. The thing is, people have told me that even in places, in certain areas in Zambia today, even in South Africa, this kind of thing still exists. Not that there is any dearth in terms of meat or whatever, but certain things were ... if you had the right skin color or you'd know ... or you'd happen ... [END TAPE SIDE A, TAPE 2]

Q: What kind of work were you doing?

BARNES: It really was just an administrative job. I was the filter for my boss who was a very dynamic African-American man. Very talented, very quite extremely bright guy named James Theodore Harris, James T. Harris, Ted Harris, he was called. He was charming, he had been a ... Let's see, he wasn't a Rhode's Scholar. I forgot what kind of scholar he was. He was just one of those extraordinary brilliant guys. He had gone to Lafayette College in, around central Philadelphia and he then had gone to Princeton and was someone that the hierarchy in the white establishment obvious had singled him out as a "comer." And as things were going to change, they knew that they were going to have him in places; one of their black guys. You know. He was targeted. He was just extraordinarily talented, he spoke fluent French, he enjoyed being there, he was a *bon vivant.* His wife was just the most wonderful person; Anne Harris.

I worked for him. He had been hired by the Ford Foundation. He would give a monthly report of what was going on, what he'd done to try and set up this school, I would place his calls to New York with the Ford Foundation. I did a lot of the back-stopping with the professors as they were coming in. So I would be working with the people who did this. And that was it. I was just jack-a-bout, a factotum as they called them. That kind of thing. But I knew after a while, I became more than that. The teachers would come and sit down and talk to me. I'd say, "You know, Dr. So-and-so was in today or Madame So-and-so and she had this and that and I think maybe we ought to do this and that and see whether we can help them."

So, it became that and they'd say, "la petite mademoiselle, we talked with her: and we got this!" I also became that kind of a filter. He could care less about what would happen to them. I became, sort of, his guide. I was his DCM in a way. I was there to make sure things ran as smoothly as possible. So that's mainly what I did there. He and his family left to go back and

work for the Ford Foundation at their New York headquarters. But that's mainly what I did, I was Ms. Everything.

Q: Well how did you find, dealing with the Congolese, your dealing with the judicial apparatus? I mean here is a state with the Belgians who had not done their homework? I mean they had not prepared this country to assume national status. How did you find dealings with the authorities there?

BARNES: I didn't have that much to do with them except to write out invitations and help Ted when they were having some kind of *soirée*, some reception or something that they were having–representative things. I did not go in and demarche anybody or, "do this." I knew people on an informal basis within the government structure. I knew what was going on politically. You start building up a group of friends and therefore go–as is Washington or as was Cairo or all the other places–sharing in that community. It is the capital of rumors so you heard all kinds of things and I went and told my boss. People would talk to you, and these were people who were in government who knew what was going on. If you wanted something done on a personal level you got to know these people so you could go into their offices and you didn't even have to give them, as it was called a "matabish" that was the word for slipping something under the table. For me, my fixture, my kind of position there with the government was being social but in being social you got a lot of information. I think, in a way, Ted was right to have a very dynamic, very open, at that point kind of cute little girl there doing all of these things and running out and being sociable. It was a good role model in that the Congolese women were ... I mean I remember when I was in my little Volkswagen Beetle. I had one sent over from Germany. I was driving and the women stopped on the street, they'd never seen a black woman driving a car. So that was already something. By example, it was just amazing for them. One woman just started laughing, because sometimes when you're so, something that's so surprising to you, you laugh because you just can't explain.

Q: Oh yeah.

BARNES: So I looked at her and I said hi and you know, sped away. People used to know who I was, everybody knew my license plate number, that's how small the town was and I remember my license plate was U4226. It was a blue Volkswagen. And they'd say: "Mademoiselle we saw you at the Vis-a-Vis night club the other night" or, "we saw your car." [Laugh] You were at the Vis-a-Vis! And yes, Franco or Kabasele or someone was playing and I just had to be there. The whole thing was, they were very happy to see how I integrated into Congolese society. I respected their customs and morals and I was fascinated more than anything. They'd sit down and tell me what was going on, most of the women and the men about marriage or certain things in their political structure within the village. It was great.

Q: Were women at all sort of the power behind the throne within the structure?

BARNES: I think women had a certain role but they knew not to transgress. People have always told me that Madam Mobutu was a very, very powerful woman inside the house. But I think there were certain kinds of barriers that she didn't go over. She wasn't going to sit there and tell him how to run his government. The women had strong, strong control and power in the

domestic part of their life. That would spill over because if you have an unhappy household and everybody's on your case, finally it's going to get to you. I don't care who you are. So keep the little wifey happy or whatever and mainly not the wife so much as the wife's family and that was the important thing that the women knew enough to know that. If they were orphans you had a rough time.

You had to have family. So it was the family that was on the case of the men and the women were able to control through their families. You know, village people would come up and they'd sit around the house and live there and all of that so she had enough people around on her side to make sure that she had a lot of control over the domestic issues. Of course, most of these guys had their little sweetie pies on the side. If you said, I just want to be faithful to my wife, it was, "are you kidding?" So, it was almost a social kind of pressure put on these guys and especially once you've started going up the ladder of success by the time you were a minister if you didn't have at least four or five concubines something was wrong with you. But the women had a lot of control and I think the women in a way they didn't mind their husbands had their girlfriends on the sides, concubines; they'd always call them "*cousin* [French]."

You'd never have a sit down dinner because you don't know who these people are going to walk in with. So these little *cousins*, these cousins that they'd come in with, I think a lot of the wives almost got used to it. I think after a while it was good because you had something else to hang over his head you know, so it became, "give me another 100,000 francs because I know that's what you're giving to her. I want 200,000." It became almost, "oh, man, my wife got after me today because my little *cousin* she found some way or another that I'm giving her 100,000." I think these women were conspiratory. [Laughter] They told each other what was going on. But at any rate it was quiet for me. I loved it. I had some of my dearest friends and still we are friends and that was from my Congo days. And the ones that I still see, one in particular, she was with USIS [United States Information Service] at that time. And she said: "Shirley do you remember we'd be waiving people off at the airport including on the plane and how many of them think we'd all be crying when we leave the Congo, nobody wanted to leave where we are, it was such a great time." I think it was a combination of youth, the thrill and excitement of being there on the edge of danger. I guess maybe there are a group of people maybe in Baghdad today who will make life-long friends, you know the reporters or people who are there with some of the agencies–development agencies–and these crisis oriented places. I think you'll find people who band together and they become really good friends in these kinds of "eye of the hurricane" situations.

Q: Did you get involved in any events while you were there? Close fighting?

BARNES: The first time I was there was from like '62 to '65 and when I was there during that time everything was just in chaos. It was right after the death of Lumumba and Cyrille Adoula became the Prime Minister and Joseph Kasavubu was the President. The UN troops were there and they were trying to get Tshombe out of Katanga and the secession that was going on there. That went on and it was back and forth and back and forth.

There were a group of meetings and all of that. Finally Tshombe decided to come and have negotiations. They installed Tshombe in a house that was right across the street from the house

that I was living in. So I could lean out my bedroom window and see who's coming up. He finally became Prime Minister. I was still working for the Ford Foundation. He set up residence in this beautiful villa that was right across the street from where I lived. Supplicants that would come here starting I'd say five o'clock in the morning and they'd stand there and some of them had walked and others had come up in their cars and we could see who was coming in and out and I could tell, "guess who was at Tshombe's house last night?"

Q: Yeah.

BARNES: So those kinds of things were mainly what happened. There were no real overpowering incidents. We had a lot of curfew so you had to be in your house or some place off of the roads because there was always another outbreak of something happening. You couldn't go anywhere. So you started going crazy saying, we're just going to have a party and stay at somebody's house all night. So we'd have these curfew parties and at some of them I said, "I can't stay there all night, I've got to go home." That was sometimes menacing because here I was by myself in the dark riding around and these guys would come and they'd stick the submachine gun right in your car. You just said, "I hope this thing doesn't go off." I'd say, "I'm an American, here's my passport." They'd say, "Oh, yes, you're DeWhite." You can see how you get to be known, "okay, go ahead." I just look back now and say, boy, it's good to be young and adventurous and stupid. I wouldn't do that today but at that point those were the kind of things that happened.

But for me there were no big incidents there at that time. I married someone from the Congo and I went back to live there and I was there for another, say, two years and I was working for USIS then on a local contract. So I stayed there for two years but the marriage didn't last. When we were there as a couple there were a lot of things that – [now this] was during a transition period too, another transition. That's when Mobutu took power. It was rough at first but again things settled in for us and we had a good time. Again all we did was party. It was for me an exciting time.

Q: Did you have much contact with the embassy while you were there?

BARNES: No. That's not true ... yes I did. In fact, we were sort of the "in" couple and so we were invited to all of the dinner parties and all of the chic affairs.

Q: I'm talking about before you came back married.

BARNES: Before that when I was there with the Ford Foundation, yeah, I had some contact because you'd get invited to a lot of things. They have Americans over, the American Embassy people would have you over for something, the missionaries, there were some missionaries there and they had things. I see this around the world: you never met any of the oil executives. They had their own compound. They lived a separate life apart from the embassy apart from everybody. There was the oil company, they didn't socialize with anybody. But for us yeah we knew the AID people, I knew the people at the embassy, some of the secretaries because it was very hierarchal. I didn't go to the Deputy Chief of Mission Mac Godley's house for dinner very

often but on other levels people from USIS would have you over. So I knew a lot of people, a lot of people from the embassy.

HARLAN CLEVELAND
Assistant Secretary for International Organizations
Washington DC (1961-1965)

Ambassador Cleveland was born in New York City and raised in the United States and Switzerland. He was educated at Princeton and Oxford Universities. During World War II he served on the Board of Economic Warfare, after which he held a number of senior positions dealing with Italian economic recovery, US and UNRRA assistance programs in China and Taiwan and NATO issues. He also served as Assistant Secretary of State for International Organizations and as US Ambassador to NATO.

Q: You were in IO from '61 to ‘65. We had talked about the Bay of Pigs. What about the period just before that?

CLEVELAND: The big crisis was the Congo.

Q: How did the Congo work?

CLEVELAND: The Congo had just become independent from Belgium the year before. The Russians and Chinese and others were moving in to see what advantage they could take. The country was split between factions, one in the north around Stanleyville as it was called, headed by Patrice Lumumba. One in the center which was the national government headed in this period by a fellow named Abdullah. One on the south which was the mining area, Katanga, where Belgian mining interests were still very much involved and where a fellow named Tshombe.

Q: Moise Tshombe in Elizabethville.

CLEVELAND: In Elizabethville. So rather early on the UN with U.S. support decided we have got to try to keep the country together and put in a peace keeping force to calm down the rioting, and so on. Ralph Bunche went there several times. He was kind of in charge for the UN in operations. When Kennedy came in it was already set. The first things I did had to do with coordinating the reaction to the Congo because it involved two different geographic regions, Europe and Africa. It also involved a sizable military operation under the UN in which we were contributing not forces but most of the logistical support.

Q: How about the Belgians? Were they giving us trouble in the UN?

CLEVELAND: Well, not in the UN so much. Some Belgians, not really the government, the mining interests, were supporting Tshombe financially. He had raised a gendarmerie called the Katanga police. They had a sizable force there. A good part of the first part of that year was

taken up with UN forces chasing the Katanga gendarmerie around. We had to handle it in the Security Council. Most of the Security Council had decided during the Eisenhower administration there was no way anybody could get it turned off unless we agreed. We didn't want it turned off. The president got very clear in his mind during one of our first briefings that if the UN was not there, and its presence was obviously buffaloing the Russians and also the Chinese were pushing in there, that if the UN wasn't there, we'd have to be there with some force ourselves. I know that each time we had a meeting in the oval office about that, about the Congo, he would turn to me and say, "I remember, Harlan, you said if they weren't in there, we'd have to be in there ourselves. Is that still right?" I said, "Yes, that is still right." It was a consistent threat despite the fact that we had some vigorous opposition from the House particularly led by Thomas Dodd, the father of the present senator, who seemed to be very much on the side of the Belgian mining interests. Anyway, we did support the government there. I went over and developed the first economic aid program for the Congo during the year and did a lot on the Hill about supplying the Congo, so it was a big thing in my life that year. The thing I remember about it particularly was the first meeting on that subject that I convened contained four former governors of American states: Adlai Stevenson of Illinois, Averell Harriman of New York, Chester Bowles of Connecticut, and "Soapy" Mennen Williams of Michigan. I felt a little bit out of my class. I was a much younger person than any of them, but I was in a position where I had to coordinate things, so I did.

Q: Well, one of the crucial decisions of this early time was getting the Irish and Swedish troops, who were terribly ineffective, out of Katanga and putting in a solid Indian brigade, I guess it was. Where was that decision made?

CLEVELAND: That was mostly in process before we arrived on the scene. During that first year, 1961, I formulated a principle of peacemaking which was if you want to make peace, get peacemakers from as far away as possible. The only troops that were kind of making local politics, and not being very helpful, were the Ghanaians. Otherwise, we had troops from India, Malaysia, and I believe Finland and Canada. So the problem about the Swedes and the Irish was before my time.

Q: I'm not sure, but they were, well some Irish got eaten as a matter of fact. They just weren't, the Irish had never really fought, and they just weren't trained to deal with that.

CLEVELAND: I think of the Irish as being tough fighters.

Q: Well, they might have been, but I mean there was still a matter of leadership, and all that.

CLEVELAND: The leadership of the Indian Gurkhas was really magnificent. I spent a little time with the brigadier who was in charge of that brigade. He explained to me that they really had to understand that they were soldiers without enemies and that even if provoked, they should be careful not to storm right away. There was one incident I watched very closely of these Indian troops being attacked by a group of women throwing things at them. They just stood there and didn't even shoot into the air. That was real leadership. I wrote about that in a book called <u>The Allegations of Power</u> in the middle of that decade.

Q: Who was the Secretary General during most of this time?

CLEVELAND: Well, Dag Hammarskjöld was when we first came in. I got to know him quite well, actually after three months. Then he went on an inspection mission to the Congo, and his plane crashed and he was killed. So, we had to subsequently deal with the problem of the selection of a new Secretary General. That was another dramatic period in my life. It was just at the beginning of the General Assembly session itself in the fall of '61. I was up consulting with the mission about various things we were supposed to do. We had already had a caucus with the President and Arthur Schlesinger and myself on the "Honey Fitz" which was his motorboat.

HENDRICK VAN OSS
Deputy Chief of Mission
Brazzaville (1962-1964)

Hendrik Van Oss was born in 1917 in Pennsylvania and graduated from Princeton University. He joined the Department of State in 1942 and the Foreign Service in 1945. His career included positions in China, Vietnam, Malaysia, Austria, Uganda, Mozambique, New Zealand, the Congo, and Washington, DC. Mr. Van Oss was interviewed by Lillian Mullins in 1991.

Q: This is an oral interview with Hendrik Van Oss. It is October 3, 1991. Mr. Van Oss will be speaking to us today about his tour as DCM in Brazzaville which began in September, 1962. Mr. Van Oss.

VAN OSS: As you may recall from previous tapes, I left Uganda in mid-September, 1962, flew across the continent and arrived eventually in Brazzaville on the 26th of September. The contrast between East and West Africa is something that I think I might talk a little bit about.

East Africa was always one of my favorites. I enjoyed it immensely, it was a beautiful part of the world...green, relatively salubrious climate, not too hot, especially not in Kampala, mountains, lovely scenery, etc. Plus the very important fact that everybody spoke English out there.

Brazzaville was in what used to be the middle Congo, or part of the French Equatorial African empire, if you want to call it that, where they all speak French. My French was very, very rusty. I hadn't spoken it since Saigon (1950). While I could read it quite easily, I found it difficult to express myself fluently and the sound barrier was very difficult to overcome.

Also the contrast in the general climate was marked. In West Africa the climate is very hot and humid. Most of the land is flat with brownish hills in the far distance but not nearly as striking as the landscape in East Africa. So West Africa from that standpoint in my mind couldn't hold a candle to the East.

From the standpoint of politics, however, I think the West could hold its own and probably was every bit as interesting, if not more so, than East Africa. In Congo/Brazzaville, the leader in 1962

was a semi-defrocked priest named Abbe Fulbert Youlou, who had been eased out of the priesthood by reason of excessive drinking and probably also a bit of womanizing. In any event he had become the leader of one of the main parties in that part of the world and after the French granted the countries of Equatorial Africa their independence he eventually consolidated his power and defeated his nearest rivals. He was firmly in control of the Congo when I arrived there.

My ambassador was Wendell Blancke and I must say a few words about him because he was one of the great characters of the Foreign Service. He was a rather short, portly man who looked very much like Robert Benchley...a little mustache and a jovial twinkle in his eye. He was well educated and very bright. He had been a commercial artist so his interests ran into art, music, poetry. He was, of course, also interested in politics. He was a good administrator and great for the morale of the post. In fact I have never served under an ambassador who had more concern over the well-being and general happiness of his staff. He was very amusing, had a good sense of humor, was a great punster and cartoonist. At conferences, he never paid much attention to the substance of what was going on, but he paid a great deal of attention to the actual words uttered and whenever a word roused a thought in his mind, he would draw a quick cartoon. Some of his drawings were published in the Foreign Affairs Journal. He was noted throughout the Service for his wit.

He also was an accomplished doggerel poet and one of his most famous poems was the "Ballad of the Butt", an epic on the role of the cigarette in Germany right after World War II. I have a copy of that. When one of the staff would leave post, Wendell always composed a long poem making nice gentle fun of him; something the person could take with him or her as a memento. So I had great affection for him and enjoyed working under him.

As an ambassador he was effective in many unusual ways. He translated "Le Congolese", the national anthem of the Congo into English, wrote it out on parchment of some sort and presented it to the Congolese government. He carried a replica of the U.S. Seal on a wooden plaque and hung it in the Embassy. Those were the sorts of thing he liked to do.

He was, however, and this was perhaps his one weak point, very nervous. When he would stand around he was always shuffling his feet and in constant motion. When he had to go over to the Congolese Foreign Office he would almost have a crisis of nerves anticipating the visit, worrying about how he would express himself exactly and what he would say. Such concern was unnecessary because he was perfectly fluent in French and certainly knew how to express himself well. Although he was not all that articulate, he was a very good draftsman.

He had been Consul General in Frankfurt and his background was mostly in German areas, although he had also served in Hanoi at the time I was in Saigon in 1950. So I had known him a long time. He was a old friend. He did his best to make up to me for the fact that I had left my beloved Uganda and had arrived in this "unknown" territory.

I think my period in Congo/Brazzaville can be divided into two parts. The first part was the first eight months or so between the time we arrived in late September and the time we left to go on home leave. Then there was a coup d'etat and I came back from home leave to find a new government in place. The second part is what happened to us after that time.

In the Abbe Fulbert Youlou period, frankly, I didn't have enough to do. I wasn't bored exactly, but I certainly was not working my head off the way I had in Kampala. I was busy trying to learn French. I had a series of French teachers. Most of them were young ladies who didn't know anything about teaching, but that was all right, I listened and tried to talk.

There wasn't much of substance to report under Abbe Youlou. Much of our time was taken up with protocol. Every time Youlou left the country the whole diplomatic corps, or at least the top officers, would have to go out en masse to the airport to see him off. The ambassadors would line up in order of seniority based on length of time at post with their deputies standing next to them. Then the worthy Abbe would arrive in his limousine and he would gravely walk past the ambassadors shaking hands with every one of them as if he were about to depart for years of exile or something like that. And then when he returned the same thing would happen.

Q: That was at the request of the government?

VAN OSS: Oh, yes. It was mandated.

Q: Had you seen that in any other country?

VAN OSS: I was not aware of it, no. Once in a while we used to go out to meet somebody in the home government if there was a reason to do so, but in the Congo every time the president made a move he wanted his diplomatic corps to dance attendance, and we did. He was always impeccably dressed in a cassock. He had many cassocks of many colors and it was one of our little games to wager which color he would use for this or that occasion. His cassocks were green, red, maroon, white, etc.

I might also mention that whenever we had to go over to the Foreign Office or to see the president, we would be received in the morning and would be presented with glasses of champagne. The president would join us in drinking champagne. This was not always conducive to an efficient way of getting across whatever message we had to deliver or receiving whatever he had to impart. But really there was nothing worth mentioning about the first period that I can think of at the moment except for atmospherics.

I might go into that a little bit. Brazzaville is right across the Congo (now Zaire) River from Leopoldville (now Kinshasa), about a twenty minute ferry ride. When I arrived in September, the Belgian Congo across the river, which had been in turmoil, if you recall, from about 1960 on, was beginning to settle down a little bit. The main worry was whether Katanga was going to secede or not. Eventually there was, I think in December, a meeting of the Pan African Freedom Movement for East, Central and South Africa at which all of the leaders of the newly independent African countries assembled and at which we, the American government, tried to get African support for whatever action we were planning to take through the UN to keep Katanga from seceding.

Q: Katanga was where most of the copper was.

VAN OSS: Yes and a man by the name of Tshombe was in charge of that province. He wanted Katanga to secede from the ex-Belgian Congo. He had close allies within Belgium. Katanga was the richest part of the Belgian Congo.

In any event, this conference took place and I was seconded to attend because I knew some of the leaders from East Africa. It was a very successful conference and the Africans supported our efforts to keep the Belgian Congo, or what is now Zaire, from splitting apart.

While the Belgian Congo had been in turmoil, it was settling down, but there still wasn't much in their stores. Our Leopoldville colleagues considered Congo/Brazzaville to be the "big PX". They used to come over weekly to get supplies from Brazzaville. And there weren't all that many supplies in Brazzaville, if I recall correctly, but they were more easily available than over in Leopoldville.

We had quite a bit of toing and froing. Ed Gullion, under whom I had served in Saigon, was our Ambassador in Leopoldville. He used to come over to see us and would invite us over to see him, etc. We had a system of what we called "squawk boxes" or two-way radios in the houses of the main officers in Brazzaville and Leopoldville. The idea was that if there was an emergency we would be able to communicate directly with each other. Of course it was a little embarrassing because these things were kept on all the time. I remember we had our small children with us in Brazzaville and our radio was in our bedroom. One time our nine year old second son was pestering our seven year old daughter and she was doing her usual screaming, "Stop it! Stop it!" at the top of her lungs. Finally somebody from across the river in Leopoldville said, "For God's sake, tell them to stop it and leave us in peace."

Also we had several demonstrations at one time or another over on our side during which we kept in touch with Leopoldville by squawk box. We had a system of codes. The "quarter deck," I think was my place; the "bridge," was the Ambassador's residence, etc. I remember one of these demonstrations started at the crack of dawn, about 5 AM. I was up at that time and duly reported over the radio: "Quarter Deck calling Bridge, crowd is assembling in Poto Poto (the African section of Brazzaville) and beginning to move towards the city," etc., feeling very much like a correspondent right on the scene of some great occurrence. Later, Ed Gullion's wife from across the river said to me, "For goodness sake, Hank, can't you get these things started a little bit later? Every time you report something at 5 AM you wake us up and then nothing happens." So we had to be a little careful how we used this modern mechanism.

The radios were all above board and everybody knew we had them. It was not a secret communication by any means, but we tried to mask who was talking by using these silly code names.

In any event, nothing much happened really from the time we arrived in September to the time we were sent home on leave in April. It was a long leave because I was seconded to the counterinsurgency course that all officers had to take at that time over at the Foreign Service Institute. This was one of Bobby Kennedy's pet projects. He felt that we should all know about revolutions, counter-revolutions and that sort of thing. And it was a useful course, I guess.

In the meantime there was a coup d'etat in Brazzaville (in August, I believe) and I had to cut what was left of my leave short, and hurry back. What happened was that there had been some sort of a labor dispute. A crowd of several hundred people had gathered outside the presidential palace. To make a long story short, Abbe Fulbert Youlou on seeing the demonstrators lost his nerve and resigned on the spot. A man named Massamba-Debat, took his place. The event was an eye opener to me because it made me realize that any person or group that could get together several hundred armed people all with one aim in mind could really take over almost any one of the governments in this part of the world. This is perhaps an exaggeration, but it certainly happened that way in Congo/Brazzaville.

Massamba-Debat had been a rather liberal minister in the Youlou cabinet. He seemed quite friendly to the United States. We were not overly concerned by the course of events because none of us were really great admirers of Youlou. However, it quickly became quite clear that there were forces behind the scenes quite a bit more significant and more malevolent then had appeared to be the case when the takeover first happened. And, indeed, as things developed over the next year or so it turned out that this little country was becoming really the first truly Marxist government in Africa. Behind the scenes there was what they called a National Revolutionary Council, which was composed of a dozen or so Marxists who were very clever. They kept their heads down for a long time. It was not apparent from the beginning what was taking place. It was only gradually noticeable that officials were no longer as friendly to us as they had been before. We thought at first it was because we didn't recognize the new government right away. (It took close to five or six months before we formally recognized it.) That may have started the ball rolling down hill so far as we were concerned, although I think the dynamics of the situation were such that we would have been in essentially the same position no matter what we might have done from the beginning.

To get back to my return after leave, I left the U.S. on a plane which also carried a Congolese named Charles David Ganao, who turned out to be the newly appointed Foreign Minister in the new government that had just been established. I am not sure I made it clear that the revolution happened while I was on leave and I returned as soon as I was able to secure air passage but didn't actually arrive in Brazzaville until several days afterwards...mid-August or August 20, something like that. The coup, as I recall, took place on August 15. Charles David Ganao was a young man who had been a friend of our USIS librarian who had recommended him for a Leader Grant, which accounted for his being in the United States. I was introduced to him on the plane. He and I chatted. I remember him saying with a very serious expression, "Oh, this is a very difficult position I am going back to." He obviously was very apprehensive as to what he was getting into. He had just been a minor official up to that point, but apparently he was known favorably by the people who had instigated the coup.

Another thing of interest is that while Ganao was in America he had formed a relationship with the daughter of an American taxi driver and, indeed, later on while he was in office brought her over to Brazzaville, installed her in his apartment and eventually married her. He was a young man then, certainly not over 40 and probably in his mid-30s. And seemed a very nice chap. I was quite taken with him on the plane. But that didn't last very long as you shall see.

It is hard to go back and remember just how and why things went to pieces, but they did. When Wendell Blancke left...transferred to the Department where he was to serve as an inspector...in December, I was very upset at the fact that nobody from the Foreign Office or any part of the Congolese government came to see him off. Indeed, one of their ministers was out at the airport meeting somebody else and I said to him, "Our Ambassador is leaving, wouldn't you like to say goodby to him?" He pulled back immediately, visibly shaken, and said, "Well, no, no, that is up to someone in the Foreign Office. That is not in my bailiwick." I said, "It seems very strange after all the friends Ambassador Blancke has made here and after translating your national anthem, etc. that nobody should be here to say goodby to him." Then I turned on my heel and left. A few minutes later somebody scurried up, a functionary named Bernard Kolelas who had filled the role of protocol officer in the Foreign Office and who happened to be in the airport at the time. He realized that probably somebody should say goodby on behalf of the Congolese government, so he went into the plane and shook Wendell's hand, thus making his departure a little less stark.

But things kept getting worse. Up to this time a Chinese Ambassador from Taiwan had been assigned to Brazzaville, a scholarly diplomat named Sampson C. Shen, a very good friend and nice chap. Soon after the revolution, representatives from Czechoslovakia, Ghana, and other less friendly parts of the world appeared in Brazzaville. The Ghanaian Ambassador was particularly obnoxious. He was anti-American and took great joy in baiting us. Sampson Shen, of course, was in a very vulnerable position because the Government of France had eventually recognized Communist China. Here was Brazzaville with a Nationalist Chinese Ambassador still in place. So the handwriting was on the wall. I remember spending many hours with Ambassador Shen, (this was after Ambassador Blancke had left and I was Chargé) trying to figure out ways of postponing his departure, and forestalling what really was inevitable.

And, of course, eventually the Congolese did withdraw their recognition of Nationalist China and Communist Chinese diplomats arrived in Brazzaville. In those days we were under instructions from the Department that we should not have anything to do with the Communist Chinese representatives. We were not to socialize with them and to ignore them to the extent possible. So my worthy Ghanaian colleague took great pains in putting the two of us, the Communist Chinese Ambassador and me, together at the same table or introducing us while we were standing at a cocktail party. Anything he could do to add to what he felt would be my discomfort. The Chinese Ambassador was just as embarrassed as I and we both would duck and got pretty adept at staring into the distance and ignoring each other. I think we carried out our mutual instructions satisfactorily.

Youlou, as I recall, was jailed, eventually released and taken under the protective arm of the Catholic Church, which restored him to priestly or semi-priestly status.

The new government was headed by Massamba-Debat who had been Minister of Planning. He had also been president of the National Assembly. His new cabinet was made up largely of young technicians of whom Ganao was one. They announced, as I recall, that they were going to follow a policy of non-alignment, and eventually established relations with Communist China, the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, etc. Israel, Chad, Central Africa Republic, Nationalist China maintained diplomatic relations and then eventually, Sampson Shen, the Chinese had to leave.

We couldn't put our finger on it, but we just knew that things were not going too well. First of all, Kolelas, who had been quite friendly to us and had been our main working contact in the Foreign Office, was suddenly kicked out or resigned and a man named Gomez took his place. I remember coming to the Foreign Office one day, hearing that Kolelas was no longer there, and innocently saying something to the effect that I was sorry to see Kolelas leave and hoped somebody would give him my regards and express my regret that we would no longer be working together. Then I was introduced to Gomez. Well, a few days later Foreign Minister Ganao called me in and read the riot act to me. He said, "You are interfering with our internal affairs." I said, "I beg your pardon, in what way?" He said, "Well, I understand that you expressed your opinion on the resignation of Kolelas. This is not your affair and a highly improper thing to do." I explained that we had worked with Kolelas, that I was not aware that he was in disfavor, and that I had sent my regards to him as a polite way of saying goodby. Ganao said, "Well it was a maladroit thing to do," and grumpily dismissed me.

I didn't really understand why he got all heated up about this until several weeks later when we learned that Kolelas had fled across the river to Leopoldville, and was being accused by the Congolese of building up an opposition movement to the new revolutionary government. Of course, if I had known this before, I would have kept my mouth shut.

Then I recall another episode. Governor Averell Harriman visited Leopoldville, (now Kinshasa but I am going to use Leopoldville because that is what we called it then), and wanted to be briefed on Congo Brazzaville. We were summoned. I came over with the political officer, David McDonough, and we briefed Harriman. He asked me specific questions about the new government. I said I could see evidence of communist influences. I couldn't tell whether the individual members were card carrying communists or not, but this would ultimately come to light, and it seemed to me unmistakable that this was the way things seemed to be moving.

Well, a few days later, Harriman was widely quoted in the press as saying that the new Congolese government was communist backed. He minced no words about it. Whereupon I was summoned by Foreign Minister Ganao who said to me, "Do you think we are fools? Don't you think we know what you are up to?" I said, "I beg your pardon?" He said, "Yes, we know you went across the river to see Harriman. We know what you must have told him because we read the paper and can put two and two together." I said, "Well, it wasn't like that at all. I told him what I thought was going on here," etc. etc. Well, what could I say really? Obviously he had me, but I tried to say that Harriman's words might have been taken out of context, that things haven't been going well so far as we were concerned so maybe he was just expressing normal concern.

Eventually I got a letter from Harriman saying he hoped we had not been too embarrassed by what he had said. I had to say, "Well, not really, probably your words were good medicine for the Congolese."

Anyway, our relations with the Congolese continued to go down hill. We began to get hints from the government that they thought the fact that we hadn't yet appointed a new ambassador meant we were about to withdraw recognition or take some unfriendly action against them. So I began to try to spur the Department into getting an ambassador in place, because I felt our only hope of

changing the bad tide that seemed to be running out for us was to appoint a new ambassador, try to change the psychological outlook and rebuild the friendly relations we had enjoyed under our former ambassador.

The Department was obviously working on the appointment of an ambassador and I think they may have speeded the process up a little bit on the basis of what I suggested. Henry (Barney) Koren was appointed. He was an old friend, a fellow Princetonian and Quadrangle Club member as well as a fellow swimmer and soccer player. I knew him from all of these areas. I had never worked with him before, but I welcomed his appointment. And, indeed, he was a very good choice. He spoke quite good French, not as well as Blancke, but pretty fluent. But he was an entirely different type. He was tall, about 6'4", angular, rather solemn looking-Abe Lincolnesque. He wasn't really grumpy but he had a deep growling voice. This was his first embassy. He had held important positions in the Department, had been attached to the Department of Defense at a high level and may have had OSS connections before that.

He wanted to run a tight ship. Of course, Wendell Blancke ran a very loose ship, so it took a little bit of doing to get our people used to the fact that we now had a person who knew what he wanted and wanted whatever he wanted right away.

At the same time, a few days after Koren arrived, Mennen (Soapy) Williams, Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, arrived on a goodwill tour. He was to be the other shell in our double-barreled shotgun approach. The Ambassador was to beef up the Embassy and restore the psychological atmosphere and Soapy was to bolster him and his position. They worked in tandem very effectively. All the government officials they saw were very agreeable and friendly. I remember Soapy Williams going back in the car with Ambassador Koren and saying, "Well, you see it is just a question of personality and personal relations." I said, "Well, Governor, that may be true and I hope it is true, but I can assure you that I think it is going to take a little bit more than personality to turn this thing around."

For a brief period after Governor Williams left, Ambassador Koren enjoyed a short honeymoon. Things looked a little bit better. Then one night I heard some hullabaloo over the squawk box. I gathered that our administrative officer was down by the dock. The Embassy had its own boat, a large motor boat that we used to ferry things across the river, something we continued to do without thinking about it too much. But on hearing this hullabaloo in the middle of the night, I went down to where the noise came from and found Marty Bowe, our administrative officer, trying to screw a spot light onto the top of our boat. What had happened was that some people from the British Embassy in Leopoldville had been out in a small boat which had malfunctioned in some way and had been swept down stream. The British Embassy was very concerned about them and asked us if we would take our large motor launch out on the river and see if we could find these people. I asked whether Marty had checked this out with the Congolese police, which indeed he had, so I gave my authorization to go ahead.

Well all this took a lot of talking back and forth across the river and pretty soon the Ambassador's car drove up with Barney Koren, the Ambassador himself, driving it. He had heard all of the noise and had come over to see what was going on. He also had some misgivings, but

eventually sanctioned our decision and the boat went out. With him, I might add, was the British Ambassador in Brazzaville.

Well, no sooner had they returned home, (I was not in on this but I heard about it later) there was a knock on their door. There stood Foreign Minister Ganao and another member of the Foreign Office, furious. They had heard all the noise too and knew what was going on. Ganao said to the Ambassador, "Don't you realize that the Congo River is a border between two countries and that you can't just cross the border and go back and forth without permission?" The Ambassador said, quite politely, "We thought we had permission. We had gone through the police." Ganao said, "No, this is not a matter for police jurisdiction. This is a matter for the Foreign Office." So they were quite upset. The Ambassador calmed them down a bit.

This was the first sour note the Ambassador had encountered since he arrived. Various other things happened that I don't really recall which kept things sliding down hill.

But the really big revelation occurred on the occasion of the first anniversary of the revolution of August 15, when the government held a parade and celebration in the stadium in Brazzaville. We were invited along with all the other diplomats. We came to our seats and noticed that Massamba-Debat was already sitting down with his entire cabinet. At the last moment in walked six or eight men with the unmistakable air of power combined with fake humility that communist officials adopt. I have seen it in China and in Russia. Each one wore a simple khaki uniform and a cap with a single red star in front. They took their places in a special section right in front of the president. They were obviously the Revolutionary Council, or politburo.

We had heard rumors that there was such an organization...I think they called themselves "revolutionary council"...but this was the first actual time we had seen for ourselves that such an outfit existed. Each of these men seemed very self-conscious, carried himself with dignity, even while sitting down.

Well, Massamba-Debat got up and made a few of the usual remarks and then said, "But I have something much more important to report to you. We have had a present from somebody. What was this present? Was it a box of chocolates? Was it this or that? No, I will show you what it was." At that point a flat top truck pulled out into the stadium and rolled in front of the assembled masses. I suppose there were 20,000-30,000 people there. On the top of this truck were a whole bunch of weapons...guns, machine guns, etc. And then, very conspicuously displayed right alongside these weapons were some cardboard boxes with the USAID symbol of clasped hands and the US flag on them. We could hear the crowd saying, "Les Etats Unis! Oh, Oh," and muttering. Then Massamba-Debat went on to say that these weapons had been smuggled into the country from across the river; that this was a present from those whom they had considered their friends, and more to the same effect. Then he calmed the crowd by saying, "But we must be mature. We must not react too harshly to something like this. We must handle ourselves like the civilized people we are."

At that point we realized that this was perhaps the clearest indication yet as to the way the political scene was developing.

I have to go back a little to say that I had been informed a month or so before this that I was going to be transferred to the Department. My successor, Mike Rives had already arrived in Brazzaville. He was with us as we witnessed this event in the stadium.

Later, Mike and I went around to pay my farewell calls and to introduce him to the various people I had known in the government. When we called on Mr. Gomez, our contact in the Foreign Office, by prearrangement with Mike I decided as a parting gesture to indicate to the Congolese that recent events had not passed unnoticed. I did this, not in an angry way, but as an expression of my concern over the way I thought the relationship between our two countries seemed to be developing; wondering if, indeed, we were headed for a rocky period. I mentioned five or six occurrences, including those mentioned on this tape, as well as various other disturbing episodes which I can't recall. I had prepared my remarks quite thoroughly and had my facts pretty well in hand. I was completely unemotional except to the extent of expressing concern. Mike didn't say anything because he had to keep the relationship going. Whatever they thought of me was no longer of importance since I was leaving.

Gomez' only reply was, "These things are all separate events. They don't have any connection with each other. There is no trend, no plot, etc." But, indeed, I think there was. And as events eventually turned out things certainly did continue to go down hill and eventually in February of the following year Barney Koren was withdrawn. His mission had failed and we closed our Embassy. It remained shut for about a dozen years.

Q: You mentioned a little bit of geography, the difference between the east coast and the west coast of Africa, did you notice a difference in the people as well?

VAN OSS: Well, yes, in the people we dealt with. If you mean the people out in the countryside, the villagers, etc., there were differences but not significant differences. The differences were differences in the different cultures.

Addressing the first, the differences in officials with whom we dealt with. The most noteworthy difference is of course the language. The people I dealt with in Uganda all spoke fluent English and we could understand each other thoroughly. The people I dealt with in Brazzaville all spoke French. My French was at a 3 working level only, so it was difficult to get established on the same footing of trust and understanding I had enjoyed in Uganda.

Further, other differences could be attributed to the French as opposed to the British colonial background. The Congolese were African Frenchmen more or less, and the Ugandans were African Englishmen.

Q: Was there an apparent difference in their education? Had the two colonial powers educated their people differently?

VAN OSS: Remember that Uganda had roughly 10 million people and the Congo had fewer than one million people. Having said that, I think on the primary school level, probably the French educated a higher percentage of the child population than the British. It was easier to do that because there were fewer to begin with. But the British had a flourishing university (Makerere)

in Kampala and the French, as I recall, had a training school in Brazzaville that went through the first two years of college. I would say that the education of the Congolese was about as high as any of the French Equatorial Africa countries, probably higher.

The Congolese were considered to be the most advanced group in that part of Africa. In Gabon, for example, many of the technical positions were held by Congolese. Just before I arrived in the Congo there had been a big blowup between the Congo and Gabon, all based on a soccer match, which the Congolese team had won in Gabon. Congo's players had bottles thrown at them when they left the field. Whereupon the Congolese in Pointe Noire rampaged against Gabonese nationals there and severely beat some of them. Whereupon the government of Gabon evicted all Congolese from Gabon. In doing so the Gabonese almost wrecked their economy because they had kicked out the people who were the most technically advanced and educated, and who held the most skilled jobs.

In the countryside, going to the second part of your question, I would say that the Ugandan tribes were generally head and shoulders more advanced than some of the tribes in the Congo. The main tribe in the Congo, the Bakongo, were quite far advanced and not far behind the Baganda, for example, but the Bateke, a tribe of about 150,000 north of Brazzaville were still quite primitive.

I remember going to the main Bateke village on two occasions. The first was during a national celebration of Brazza's conquest, or something of that sort. King Makoko of the Bateke was there running things. He was dressed in a red cloak, one eye was painted white and the other red. He had a sparse fringed beard. He would talk to his people like a cheer leader. He would say something and then the crowd would chant in response. Then he would say it again and the crowd would respond again. The atmosphere was rather primitive, if I can use that expression.

The second time I went there was at the death of one of Makoko's wives, maybe his main wife. Ambassador Blancke and I went up. The roads were terrible...sand and mud. We arrived in the midst of a keening and howling of the remaining wives over the coffin of the dead wife, and we were ushered into the presence of Makoko in a large hut. He was sitting on a "throne" with a number of young wives clustered about his feet. There were two figures, one on each side of the so-called throne, an old man and an old woman. To this day I don't know if those two were mummified or whether they were alive, because they did not move a muscle. They did not blink an eye or even seem to breathe. They sat motionless for the half hour or so that we were in the royal presence.

Q: And they may have sat there through the whole funeral.

VAN OSS: They may have indeed, if they were alive. If they weren't alive, they were remarkably well preserved corpses. The Bateke were a relatively primitive tribe and kept their customs pretty much throughout the period we were there.

Q: So you didn't travel much up country or into other areas very frequently?

VAN OSS: It was very difficult. You could only go in one direction for about forty miles or so outside Brazzaville and that was towards Pointe Noire. There was a navigable road all the way out to the coast. But going north, the roads became nothing but tracks. I did take several trips. I took a trip by land rover with our military attaché (Col. Bridenbaugh) soon after I first got there. We drove north of Brazzaville, through Sibiti and M'Binda and into Gabon to Franceville. We were following a railroad track. Colonel Bridenbaugh was on an intelligence tour for the military, checking road conditions, measuring bridges, and so on. I went along to learn something about the countryside. We stayed with missionaries and in one or two so-called hotels.

Q: What were they like?

VAN OSS: They were just plain houses with a couple of rooms with beds in them. That was it. There would be a common bathroom.

The missionaries' lodgings were not bad, simple but comfortable and clean.

Then later on we took a flying trip. We had a military attaché and an air attaché in Brazzaville. The air attaché had a plane, a C-47. We flew in it up to a town in the north, the name of which I can't remember--I think it was near Imfondo--where there was a young American missionary couple. We visited them and were put up at their house...the whole crew and myself slept in one room. By pre-arrangement we allowed the pilot, Colonel Hensch, and his co-pilot Captain Watell, to have single beds since they were the ones who had to do the flying. I slept in a double bed with one of the crew.

Q: What about the missionaries when the new revolutionary government came in? Were they the object of any attention?

VAN OSS: Not really, so far as I am aware, not while I was there certainly. When we went up north to visit the missionaries we took some films with us. The missionary, a very nice young man, Gene Thomas, I think his name was, and his wife and children were there. He was on good terms with the local officials. We had to discuss with the local political "commissar" what our films were going to be. We had to assure him that the films would not contain American "propaganda." One of our films was a personal hygiene documentary which showed people how to brush their teeth and that sort of thing. As I look back on it that strikes me as having been a little condescending. The other one was a film of Miriam Makeba, the famous South African singer. She was very popular. They loved that film. But the people were bored silly learning how to use a toothbrush. There were lots of people on hand. The screen was right out in the open. The missionary had his own generator and projector.

So far as I know our missionaries were never evicted or mistreated.

Q: You mentioned that our Embassy people in Leopoldville, for example, came across the river in 1963 to get provisions and supplies which were scarce in Leopoldville. After the revolutionary government came in was there any change in the availability of goods for the population?

VAN OSS: Yes. As I recall it became much harder to get things on our side of the river. In a sense, Leopoldville took on the role of PX. We used to get chickens and other foodstuffs there. But I don't recall any great change in the economic situation in the short time...you see I was there for only about a year after Youlou's downfall. I would say that in the beginning things did get hard to get. The prices were very high. But it seems to me that despite the fact that the new Congolese government became more and more Marxist as it went along, it still kept quite close ties with the French. French technicians remained in place, as I remember. I think a large number of the French superstructure of embassy and technical personnel stayed.

Now I don't recall what happened to the French military. There were some military airplanes there, and a detachment of French soldiers. I don't recall whether they stayed on or left. I think they left and reassembled probably in Gabon, and perhaps also in Chad and places like that. I know the French brought troops back into Chad later on when Chad had its trouble with Libya, and I know they brought troops into Gabon when there was an attempt to unseat M'Ba, then president of Gabon.

There really wasn't too much change in our personal lives between the two different time periods I was there. After the revolution, whenever we went out for a picnic, for example, or left Brazzaville, at some point or other we always would be stopped by a roadblock or by officials who would want to know who we were and what we were doing. There was much more of that sort of thing after the new government came into power.

But life in Brazzaville, itself, never changed much. It was quite pleasant. We had a swimming club, a tennis club, and a golf club. The French are very fierce competitors. In tennis one was ranked on a ladder and you were subjected to challenges from people below you on the ladder. I remember playing even more than I wanted to because challenges were constantly being issued. There was a golf course, which wasn't bad, except that the greens were really browns: there was no grass, it was all sand. When you were ready to putt one of the caddies would take a rake and a piece of board and smooth out the sand in front of your ball so that it would have uninterrupted access to the cup. If you played your cards right, he would scoop a little channel in the middle of the cleared strip so that the ball would be guided into the cup.

Q: What was the housing like in Brazzaville?

VAN OSS: Housing was okay, but not great. Our house, the DCM's house, was very small when we first got there. The individual rooms were large, but there were just two bedrooms, a master bedroom for us and the other bedroom for our three kids. We closed off part of the hall, walled it in and made a third bedroom. Eventually another bathroom and bedroom were added. It was a pleasant modern house. Airy and light. The other people had houses of comparable size, but somewhat less modern than ours. The Embassy residence was a very unusual place. It was built in the shape of a ship, more or less. In the center of the living room there was a bar with a mast in the middle which led out to the flag pole on top of the building. There was a very large picture window with no glass in it which looked out over the Congo River flowing past. It was quite roomy, very pleasant and colorful. It was revamped and refurbished for the Korens after the Blanckes left.

Some of the people lived out beyond the golf course. The air attaché, Colonel Ed Hensch, had a pleasant house out in that neighborhood. He was a very nice, decent person. He decided to raise turkeys, the idea being that he would turnover the establishment to some African friends after he left. He experimented with these turkeys. First, he filled a whole incubator with eggs, but misjudged the timing so the first batch he got were hard boiled eggs, rather than little turkeys. But eventually he had a couple of hundred all-white-feathered turkeys milling around in his yard. But alas, after he left the post and had turned the business over to his African friends, they ate all the turkeys and discontinued the breeding operation. So that was the end of that enterprise.

I would say that the housing was acceptable. It was not elaborate, but certainly acceptable.

One thing I think should be mentioned, we did do a certain amount of traveling among the countries of former French Equatorial Africa. Originally, right after World War II a single American ambassador was assigned to all of those countries...Gabon, Congo, Central African Republic, Chad. Then by fiat of Loy Henderson it was decreed that each country should have its own ambassador. But the air and military attachés in Brazzaville were still assigned to all four of the FEA countries. So they would use the air attaché plane to travel from one place to another. Other Embassy personnel used to piggyback on those trips as much as they could.

I remember very vividly a trip we took to Chad in November, 1963. We were in Fort Lamy on Anne's and my wedding anniversary, November 22. This happened to be the day that President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas. We were having dinner with my colleague, the DCM, Bob Redington, and somebody announced at the dinner that the President had been shot and was in bad shape. A little later the word came in that he had died. That put a tremendous cloud over everything. We tried to keep the social graces going, but it was impossible, it was just a sad occasion. Brewster Morris was our Ambassador in Chad at the time, but he was in the field on a camping trip some place and out of touch by radio. Somebody had to go out and get him. But in the meantime, Redington had to do everything that had to be done, put out a condolence book for officials to sign, etc. I felt that I should get back to my bailiwick to help do whatever had to be done there at the time. It was a very traumatic experience. I suppose all of us remember where we were when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and where we were when Kennedy was assassinated.

CHARLES E. RUSHING
Economic Officer
Brazzaville (1963-1965)

Charles E. Rushing was born in Illinois in 1929. He received his bachelor's degree from Augustana College in 1951 and his law degree from Duke University in 1954. He served in the US Army from 1954-1955. His career included positions in Italy, Eritrea, Southern Rhodesia, Congo, Laos, Liberia, Denmark, and Ireland. From 1985-1991 he served as an ambassador to the UN in Geneva. Mr. Rushing was interviewed by Thomas Dunnigan in July 1996.

Q: *After those years in Salisbury, you were transferred again into Africa. You went in 1963 to Brazzaville, the Congo, as economic officer this time, having been political officer in Southern Rhodesia. Was this a move you had requested?*

RUSHING: I had requested a French-speaking post in Africa. What I had in mind was Algiers or Rabat or Tunis, not Brazzaville. But, in those days, you went where you were told to go and that was it. There was never any thought of saying, "Well, I want something else."

Q: *Who was the chief of mission in Brazzaville?*

RUSHING: Wendell Blancke.

Q: *Wendell is an old friend from my Berlin days.*

RUSHING: Yes, he had been consul general in Frankfurt before coming to Brazzaville.

Q: *I was at his swearing in, in fact, in the Department when he was going off to be ambassador in Brazzaville.*

RUSHING: He was succeeded by Barney Koren.

Q: *What were the principal problems you had to deal with in Brazzaville?*

RUSHING: The complete answer to that would be too long to relate. The pro-French, conservative president at the time of independence was overthrown almost accidentally by a group headed mostly by a group of "intellectuals" who had been resident and studied in France for a number of years. In the process, they had become radical Marxists whose enemy number one was the U.S.

After taking power, they imagined that the U.S. embassy was concocting schemes to overturn the "revolution." In that atmosphere, it was difficult for us at the embassy to carry on with even routine business. The wife of the Foreign Minister was an American black who nervously avoided any contact with us, even socially at receptions and declined any invitations from the ambassador's wife.

But, specifically, the principal problem was the successive visiting U.S. officials who were jailed. They shared a cell with common criminals. The only sanitary facility was a hole in the floor. In the two cases that occurred before my successor's arrival, I think they were jailed for at least a couple of days before we could get them out. Those two cases involved a USIS [United States Information Service] technician and a USAID guy who were on TDY [temporary duty].

Q: *On what charges were they jailed?*

RUSHING: That they were spies.

To give you an idea of what prevailed, the Chief Justice of the Congolese Supreme Court was hacked in little pieces by youths who had been armed. You'd see these little kids walking around town with submachine guns. The remains of the Chief Justice were thrown into the Congo River. The kids would stop cars and take the doors and everything off. They would strip the car, looking for arms.

When my successor arrived and, before we could meet him at the airport, he was picked up by the police and taken away. We didn't know where he was. We later discovered that he was under arrest in a hotel. All of us at the embassy tried to make representations to our Congolese government contacts, but they wouldn't see us.

Q: *On what charge had they picked him up?*

RUSHING: The formal charge was that there was something wrong with his visa. It either had expired or wasn't yet valid. In other words, he either came too early or too late. Then, unknown to any of us, a day or two later, the Congolese authorities took him back out to the airport and put him on a plane to Paris.

The episode of my successor caused Washington to decide that although we would not break off diplomatic relations, we would close the embassy. We left U.S. interests in the hands of the British. I think the Germans took it up from there. The French were also helpful in briefing us on events there.

Q: *So you were there when our mission actually was closed?*

RUSHING: No. We had actually left.

Q: *You were the economic officer there. Didn't we have an AID mission?*

RUSHING: We had an AID mission when I arrived there, yes. I was the economic and commercial officer. A junior officer, who was also the consular officer, worked for me on the economic/commercial side as well. We had an AID office in Brazzaville and a few technicians in the field, but the program shut down sometime after my arrival and U.S. personnel were sent home. It was felt they felt they couldn't operate anymore with safety. They were under considerable scrutiny and pressure. I inherited what was left of AID operation, mostly files.

Q: *Any Peace Corps?*

RUSHING: No, but we did have two USIS Americans.

Q: *Throughout your comments about Brazzaville, its become quite evident that this was a very Left-leaning government you were dealing with. Who were their friends, the Chinese, the Russians?*

RUSHING: The Chinese, the Russians, the Cubans, all of whom established relatively large embassies there, and countries like Guinea, radical African countries. The Cubans were training the Congolese military.

Q: *Did we have any investments in the country that could be affected by their behavior?*

RUSHING: They were insignificant at the time. Later on, I believe American oil companies participated in the discovery and exploration of off-shore oil.

Q: *You left then in 1964 and came back to the Department of State.*

RUSHING: Actually, it must have been '65.

Q: *'65, that's right, you served in the Department in the Bureau of African Affairs.*

RUSHING: Yes, I was the desk officer for Congo-Brazzaville, Rwanda, and Burundi.

Q: *And somebody else had Leopoldville?*

RUSHING: Yes.

Q: *But you had three countries to yourself. How much did State have to say in what went on in those countries, say, in contrast with AID and CIA? Was State really the leading player? I guess that's my question.*

RUSHING: I think in Brazzaville, State was the leading player. AID had stopped, and the CIA station chief was probably as interested in what was going on across the river in Kinshasa, the relationship between the two countries. He was also concerned about the Congo's increasing radicalization and anti-Americanism. But major decisions and action were in State's hands.

L. MICHAEL RIVES
Deputy Chief of Mission
Brazzaville (1963-1966)

Michael Rives was born in New York in 1921. He received a bachelor's degree from Princeton University in 1947 and joined the Foreign Service in 1950. Mr. Rives' career included positions in Germany, Vietnam, Laos, Guatemala, France, the Congo, Burundi, Cambodia, and Indonesia. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1995.

Q: *You left there in '61. This was, obviously, a new Administration, the Kennedy Administration, and your Ambassador had gone. What did you do then?*

RIVES: I was an "African expert" by then...

Q: *How did you become that?*

RIVES: Because the Ambassador took a trip just after the referendum on West Africa and before they actually got their independence. Bill Whitman, who was the officer in charge of African Affairs in the Embassy, persuaded the Ambassador that this was going to be the last opportunity any of us would have to go to [French] Africa while it was still French. So we got the air attaché cranked up and we took a trip through all of West Africa, except one or two countries, for three weeks. We visited places that nobody else had been, so when we came back, Whitman wrote an absolutely brilliant paper on Africa... and when I transferred to Washington, I found myself an "African expert."

Q: *Did you get any feeling for French Africa, because some other interviews I had with people who went out there in the early '60s, were saying that there was still a residual, almost colonial outlook by our Consuls General who were in Dakar and some of the other places...*

RIVES: Well, there was. Of course, it was still French when I went there...

Q: *But, sort of a feeling that the Africans will never take over...*

RIVES: I think amongst us there, yes and no. You had people like Don Dumont, who was not that way. Some of the others probably were. Of course, we only had about three, I think. As I say, Whitman wrote this brilliant paper about Africa, which served as the basis for African policy for years.

Q: *When you came back, you had a full plate of African countries, didn't you?*

RIVES: Well, I was the Director for the four Central African countries.

Q: *This included what countries?*

RIVES: French Congo, Central Africa Republic, Cameroon, and Gabon.

Q: *The Kennedy Administration came in fascinated with Africa. You're the desk officer at this time... Soapy Williams is in... it's really a most exciting time for Africa. What was your impression of (1) our knowledge of Africa, and (2) how the Administration was seeing Africa against, what you were supposed to provide, the political realities.*

RIVES: Well, I think we were all naive about Africa. As I look back, more than when I was there, I guess, I think we all felt Africa was a newly independent country. [The colonies] had all been given constitutions based either on the French, British, or American constitutions...

Maybe one of the most important aspects of the policy was fear of the communists taking over. And so, in a lot of ways, it was a question of who got in fastest with the most money, I think. Whether Soapy Williams entirely went along with that, or not, I don't know. I don't think he worried so much about the communists; he just wanted to help the Africans. And I must say, his

policy in those days was not that exciting; I thought it was sort of naive. But if you go to the retirees' days in the State Department... I haven't been now for about four years, but the last time I went there, I went to a seminar on Africa, and it could have been Soapy Williams speaking. The problems were exactly the same. And the solutions offered were exactly the same. Only now, I think we're cutting back on the number of posts, and things like that. Congress in those days, of course, was much more receptive to economic assistance, so we poured money in various places.

The first thing President Kennedy did was to give every Chief of State a limousine, and every country either a mobile film unit or a mobile medical unit. And I must say, to me, it was fascinating in those days, because I had always believed in American know-how, and with every unit we sent a mechanic with a three-year supply of parts. Within six months we were getting frantic telegrams from those mechanics, saying, "Send us more parts. And please tell Ford, Chrysler, Jeep, and everybody else that they've got to have better springs." So we passed that word around, and the reply that came back from every one of the companies was the same: "Couldn't care less. We've got our market in America. Who cares about Africa?" That was the beginning of the end of American cars over there.

Q: *The area you dealt with, did you find there was much in the way of files or knowledge about the area?*

RIVES: Almost none. There was a little bit, you know, because we had a Consulate in Brazzaville.

Q: *Were you there during the famous trip, or had it happened already, was it Williams who took a swing through all the African countries?*

RIVES: Oh, I went with him on that one.

Q: *Can you talk about that?*

Q: Well, we had a special plane. In fact, I think it was Eisenhower's former plane, because it actually had bunks in it, whatever it was called. We visited all these countries... It was somewhat the trip I had taken with Ambassador Houghton, except we went to the Belgian Congo, which we hadn't in the earlier days. It was to show the flag, I think, and we had an Assistant Secretary of HEW with us, amongst other things. I always remember him, because in the Congo, when Soapy offered grandly, "What can we do to help you? Would you like some doctors?" And when we got on the plane again, this Assistant Secretary of HEW said, "For Heaven's sakes, don't ever let me hear you say anything like that again! If it wasn't for all the foreign doctors who work at the hospitals in the United States, we wouldn't be able to keep our hospitals going. Don't offer any." We went to a place in the middle of the Belgian Congo -- this was after the fighting had stopped, more or less -- I can't remember which town it was, but I had never seen anything like it. It was completely empty. There wasn't a soul in it. Every building was empty. But the Congolese Government brought people in, and there were a few Belgian planters still hanging around by the skin of their teeth in the outskirts, and they gave us this feast which must have been flown in by special plane from Brussels. It was a huge meal, and the perspiration was pouring down our faces,

no air conditioning, of course. Suddenly, "White Christmas" was played by a military band which marched outside the windows!

Q: *When you got back and you were in charge of this Central African office, what was your analysis that you were passing on about American interests in the area?*

RIVES: American relations in the area were very limited. In Central African republics, we did have interests: diamond people. Jackie Kennedy's boyfriend, Mr. Tempelsman, was always putting pressure for help there. And in Gabon, U.S. Steel and Bethlehem Steel were interested, at one point, in developing huge iron ore deposits inland, but it meant building railroads and things like that; I don't think it's ever gotten off the ground. In the Congo, we had no interests at all, really. After a while, of course -- all the road-making equipment used to be American -- the French developed their own, and they started closing the market on us. The French were really very colonial. They still are, because they support local currencies so they can exert pressure, things like that.

Q: *Did you have any feeling, in the area you were doing, about Soviet penetration at that time?*

RIVES: I was very interested by that, because I think we had misunderstood it for a long while. As I said in the beginning, we had visions, <u>fear</u> of the Soviets taking over Africa. And a lot of the governments that took over, after a while, when all these constitutions were overthrown, each country followed much the same pattern. It was very much a Soviet pattern. Guinea was the first one to do it. What they were interested in, what they used the Soviet pattern for [was this]: If you were the Soviet communist regime, then you could go to the government and say, "Look, this is the way you do it: you organize cells, you spread out the power from the center, and in five years you will have such and such in place, in ten years you will have such and such in place."

They'd come to us and say, "How do we establish democracy?" "What does it mean?" "Can you explain?" It's hard to explain. You grow up in it. It just develops. You have to have education, that kind of thing. They couldn't find anything for us to give them concrete to hang on to. So they'd all go that way. What finally evolved, and I finally realized this when I was stationed in Burundi, the communists realized the same thing. They would use the Soviet system up to a certain level, and then they'd throw it aside, and either swing somewhat towards our way, or just be themselves. And that's what happened. The Soviets cut back on their aid; we cut back on our aid at about the same time.

Q: *How did Assistant Secretary Williams use the desk? How did he operate within the Bureau?*

RIVES: I'm not sure that he used it any more than any other Secretary, or any less. We wrote papers and think pieces, you know, that kind of thing, put forward suggestions. But he set the overall tone at the top, which we followed. When all these new African embassies were established, we all had to work with him like mad to find places to live, where they wouldn't be spat upon by the neighbors, and that kind of thing... Soapy, I must say, was very conscientious, and having a lot of money, he was able to do things a lot of Assistant Secretaries couldn't have.

You know he was a very good square dancer. He was a caller for square dancing, and very good at it, too. So he would insist on having square dances, which was something. At the first one, on the eighth floor, all the Africanists, of course, had to be there. We all arrived there, and when we headed for the bar, there was no liquor. He didn't believe very much in drinking, although he did drink a little bit. So after that one, we all used to tank up before we went to these things! They were sort of drawn out. I must say, the African Ambassadors were not very pleased, either, but we all did the dosido's and things like that! And he held special classes for us in the Department of Commerce Cafeteria for this kind of thing.

And then we went on that famous trip. I think it was in Fort Lamy or Ouagadougou, or someplace like that, they put on native dances, and -- this was in the middle of the night, mind you -- and suddenly he turned to us all, and we had to get up and do square dancing. I think the people thought we were absolutely insane. Soapy called for us, and, as I say, he was a good caller... You know, he used us as his staff...

Q: *You left there after this, in '63, was it?*

RIVES: Yes. I went to Brazzaville as DCM.

Q: *What did you see in this area -- you had been looking at this area now for several years -- for future American interests?*

RIVES: Very slight.

Q: *Was there an Ambassador in Brazzaville?*

RIVES: Yes, Barney Koren. He became one of my best friends, although at the time I was assigned there, he didn't want me at all. Ambassadors, you know, can choose their own DCMs. He had one he wanted, and they wouldn't release him. I think he was at the War College or something like that. So he reluctantly accepted me. The thing, again, that broke the ice was he loved his dry martinis in the evening, so we sat down... and he loved to play golf, which I also played in those days.

I was in Brazzaville for just about a year, and our relations were in terrible shape. The Chinese were there, and the Russians were there, very influential, and we were really frozen out. We couldn't have contacts with anybody, and the Ambassador kept being called back for various reasons, so about half the year I was Chargé. Poor Mrs. Koren stayed there holding the fort while the Ambassador was back [in Washington]. Finally, they put two or three of our officers in jail, including the AID director, and I had a hell of a time getting them out. I guess it was the third time the Ambassador was called back, this time -- I must say, he was not a fool -- when we went to the airport, he was carrying suitcases and a heavy bag. I said to him, "How 'bout letting me carry something?" He said, "Fine." And I nearly fell, because he was taking home all the family silver. He said, "I don't think I'm going to be back."

While he was flying home, I got a telegram from Mr. Rusk saying, "You will close the Embassy in twenty-four hours." I went back and said, "I cannot close the Embassy in twenty-four hours. You've got to give me three days."

This was an eye-opener for me, because we thought our files were pretty low, but when we started burning, it really was amusing. Thank God the Congolese were not terribly [knowledgeable], because all night you could see the whole sky was glowing from the heat of our chimney, and the next day the entire area around our Embassy was covered in white ash. The British were going to be our protecting power, and the British Ambassador came up to me and said, "Are you snowing around here? There's snow in Brazzaville!" Anyways, I closed it after three days. In fact, we closed it the day of a national independence holiday, while they were having big ceremonies. As I was driving to the airport with the British number two (the British Ambassador was at the ceremony), on the radio Micombero, the President, was saying, "We regret the absence of the Americans..."

Q: *Let's talk about the year you were there. In the first place, what was the political situation, the economic situation...?*

RIVES: The economic situation was rather bad. The French influence was still quite noticeable, not only in economics, but the French military were still training the Congolese. Although they were caught just as flat-footed as we were when there was a coup. Politically, as I say, the Chinese had a large embassy there, and the Russians had a large embassy. They were probably the two most influential embassies there, except for the French, because of the French financial control.

Q: *What happened to cause the situation to be so bad that you had to leave. Arresting embassy people is not a good way to maintain relations...*

RIVES: Exactly. They were just picking on us, they were just making a thing... Maybe they were encouraged by the Russians and the Chinese, I don't know. But our relations were just dreadful.

Q: *Was there was a coup while you were there?*

RIVES: I was just trying to think. I think there must have been, because the French, as I said, were caught flat-footed. I guess that's when Micombero took over. Yes! That's right, because Youlou had been President. Then Micombero took over.

Q: *Was Youlou there while you were there?*

RIVES: I'm trying to remember if he was still there. Of course, he came to Washington. He was the first African Chief of State who came to call. I took care of him while he was in Washington, but I can't remember if he was still there when I was there, or not.

Q: *What caused the arrests?*

RIVES: Well, I think they just wanted to be unpleasant to the Americans, who weren't giving them much money. And the Chinese and the Russians, I think they were just taking sides. It was a Cold War thing, and they were making their choice.

Q: *Since arrests of Embassy personnel are rather unusual, how did this happen?*

RIVES: Well, I'll tell you what happened the second time, when the AID mission chief was arrested. He arrived, and he hadn't been able to get his visa renewed. He'd been out of the country, I think. His visa was to expire something like two days after he came back in. In spite of that, they seized it and claimed that he was there illegally, put him in jail. We had an awful time getting visas renewed for anybody in the Embassy, and the thing that saved us was that the UN session came, and they all had to have visas for Washington, and I just sat on them. I said, "You're not going to Washington until you give us our visas." So we got the visas.

Q: *How about the other person who was arrested?*

RIVES: I can't remember who else... let's see, the AID man was the main man. Then we had a couple of people coming and visiting us who were put in temporary [confinement] and then expelled without being allowed in the country. They were put in a hotel room. I couldn't even see them. They were just shoved about.

Q: *Were we at any point saying, from the Embassy side, "This is ridiculous, let's get out of here."*

RIVES: No, because the Ambassador and I both felt that it would be better to leave somebody. When we closed the Embassy, the Ambassador in Washington and I in Brazzaville both recommended against it. We recommended leaving one person there. Just as a thorn in their side. Which I thought would be more effective than getting out of there.

Q: *Did we sever diplomatic relations?*

RIVES: Oh, yes. There was no Embassy there for I think about five years, something like that. And we regretted it, because there was no way for us to keep in touch with what was going on there, except through the British and the French.

Q: *Were the British having problems?*

RIVES: They finally had to close. Even the French had a terrible time.

Q: *To close an Embassy, how does one do it? This happens so seldom.*

RIVES: I must say, it was an experience. We followed the book. We have instructions, thank Heavens, for what you do. The first thing was to destroy all the files that we could. Then we turned over to the British Embassy, and we had to make all sorts of arrangements about what happens to the buildings, who takes care of what, what happens to the cars and people's belongings. A lot of the people had to leave right away. I put people on every flight that went out of there, whether they went to South Africa or England or Kenya, or anywhere else. And then we

had to pack their things and get them out of there. The British did some of that for us after we left.

Q: *Couldn't you get in a canoe and cross over to [Leopoldville]?*

RIVES: Relations between the two Congos were not that kind. There was almost no communication. The two Ambassadors to the Congo -- Mac Godley was on the one side, and Barney Koren was on my side -- each had a telescope on their front lawn, and they could see each other across the river. Every day we'd wave to [show] we were still there!

ROY T. HAVERKAMP
Political Officer
Brazzaville (1964-1965)

Roy T. Haverkamp was born in 1924 in Missouri. He served in the U.S. Air Force in World War II and later earned degrees from Yale University and Cambridge University. Mr. Haverkamp joined the Foreign Service in 1952. His career included positions in Korea, Sweden, Japan, Cambodia, Congo, Benin, Vietnam, Guinea, the United Kingdom, Jamaica, and Grenada. He was interviewed on April 11, 1994 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: You went off to Africa which became one of your main concentrations. How did you end up going to Africa?

HAVERKAMP: Because I was assigned there after some of my colleagues in Phnom Penh spread the word that I couldn't draft. In a way that was true, I didn't believe I had much to say.

Q: Where did you go and when?

HAVERKAMP: My first assignment in Africa was the People's Republic of the Congo, capitol Brazzaville. It was just across the river from what was then called Leopoldville, the capital of the ex Belgian Congo. I arrived in October, 1964 and left in June, 1965.

We were having very difficult times there. While I was en route going through Paris they arrested one of the AID officers and kept him in jail for three days. The ambassador was called back and I was held up and had three weeks of "TDY" in Paris.

Q: Well, you have to take the bitter with the sweet.

HAVERKAMP: We had a large embassy building in Brazzaville because earlier on there were many regional offices there. It was during the time of Abbe Youlou, who you may remember was the priest who held press conferences and served champagne as the "only drink fit to drink". He visited Washington early in the Kennedy days, uninvited, just turned up wanting to see the President. We had very little contact with the government when I was there because Youlou had

been overthrown and replaced by a Marxist government which was supporting the Simbas, the people we were working against in the other Congo.

Q: The Simbas were?

HAVERKAMP: The Simbas were a rebel group in the other Congo supported by the Russians and the Cubans among others and were trying to overthrow the government in Leopoldville.

I think I went to the Foreign Office once or twice. Much of our effort there was asserting our rights not to be harassed and arrested and trying to iron out a few little things. Very little effort could be made to try and tell our side of the story because Massamba-Debat, the president, was in an hysterical Marxist phase. They had the pioneer youth, kids ten and eleven and twelve, going around with loaded weapons patrolling the streets, walking up and down the steps of the stadium when they opened the first African Games there.

I had two memorable experiences in Brazzaville. One was on New Year's night, I think it was. I went with one of the secretaries out to dinner at the local hotel. A group of people came and sat at a table next to us including Che Guevara. The Cubans were helping with training the Simbas. He sat chatting with a big cigar and paid us no attention.

Another time I received a call on a holiday and a voice said, "Are you the political officer at the embassy? Could you come down and see me at such-and-such a bar?" I hadn't had anything interesting to do since arriving, so I went down to the bar and was led into a little house in the back and I thought, "What am I doing here?" I went in and there were a group of people there. One was a leading Simba who was trying to get out of the country but said that he owed some money to the other people standing around in there. His brother was a minister in the Kasavubu government in Leopoldville and he asked if I could get a message to him. The message was sent.

Later on in June...Mal Whitfield, who was a regional adviser for USA and the greatest middle distance runner we ever had, came with the Ugandan team, on an Ethiopian plane, for the African Games. He said that he was going back and I ended up getting a free ride to Uganda and then went down to Kenya. On my way back I had to go through Salisbury, then Rhodesia, to get back to Brazzaville. I got paged at the airport. I couldn't imagine how anybody knew I was there because I didn't know I was going to be there. It was Hank Cohen, who was the duty officer at the consulate general and who later became assistant secretary for African Affairs. He said they had a telegram saying I am not to go back to Brazzaville. I hadn't a clue why. It later turned out that they had arrested another embassy officer and it was decided to fold up our tents and get out. So I never went back. I was there for only seven or eight months. I then went to Leopoldville.

Q: You were in Leopoldville from 1965-66. What were you doing there?

HAVERKAMP: I was deputy chief of the political section. At first I was supposed to go to Stanleyville as the consul, but a guy who was in Leopoldville wanted that job and by the time I got there he had it. He wasn't resident there, but he went out there. It was still very interesting because you had the Simba rebellion going on and the mercenary hoard was chasing them.

I tried to follow general politics in Leopoldville and also cover Brazzaville. People would come over from time to time from Brazzaville and I would talk to them. I did some Foreign Office reporting.

Q: To finish off Brazzaville. Did we just write it off? Were there any American interests there?

HAVERKAMP: They called the ambassador back. By the time he got back they had already decided to close the embassy, so they never had his input. Why have somebody there if you are not going to consult him?

In the two cases that brought about the decision to withdraw, U.S. officials came improperly documented but we were assured by the Congolese Embassy in Washington, that they would be allowed in. One was an AID officer and he was arrested and thrown in with a bunch of criminals. That happened while I was en route. The other one was a new economic officer. The ambassador went out with most of the embassy to meet him and before he reached the group there to meet him he was hauled off by the police because his visa was dated for some time in the future, two weeks later or something. But they had assured him back here that there would be no problem.

In addition to challenging a Marxist government and its role in the other coup, here was one other American interest. There is a large potash deposit there and American Potash together with a French firm, Potasse d'Alsace were going to invest in developing it. Moving the Potash, however, was a very costly procedure. When we closed the embassy American Potash backed out. Well, we found out subsequently that the French went ahead and in the end it didn't work out. They lost something like $70 million. So by accident we served an American company.

HENRY L.T. KOREN
Ambassador
Congo (1964-1965)

> *Henry L. T. Koren was born in New Jersey in 1911. He entered the Foreign Service in 1948 and served in Haiti, Switzerland, the Philippines, the Congo (Brazzaville), and Vietnam. He was interviewed in 1989 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.*

Q: You moved out of here all of a sudden. You were appointed as ambassador to Congo and Brazzaville in 1964, and you served then until 1966. How did this come about? I mean, here you were in Southeast Asian Affairs, and all of a sudden you're off to a country in Africa.

KOREN: Well, I suspect that what it was was Kennedy was looking around for people that were recommended to him, and I had been recommended to him probably by Harriman. There was the question of, "Where could he go?" and at that time, the repository for career Foreign Service officers was Africa. They didn't mind, as long as somebody had been selected to be an ambassador and had passed all through the White House vetting, which they did. Mr. Kennedy did. He had one person particularly who was the selector of ambassadors.

Q: Who was that, do you remember?

KOREN: Ronald McPhee, his name was. He was one of them. I forget the man. I remember the only inclination I had and indication I had that I was going to be an ambassador was being called over to the White House and interviewed by this individual.

Q: You went in '64, but you had been appointed under the Kennedy Administration?

KOREN: Yes. My appointment was on Mr. Kennedy's desk when he was assassinated, and the actual appointment was by President Johnson.

Q: Who told everybody not to submit resignations as called for by protocol and they went ahead with most of the appointments.

KOREN: No, no. I didn't have any specific notification from anybody in the White House except the man who selected ambassadors. He was a career ambassador selector, so I was just all of a sudden one.

Q: How did you feel about going to the Congo?

KOREN: I didn't know anything about it.

Q: But one went where one was sent?

KOREN: That's right. Frankly, I was glad to be selected.

Q: Also, I imagine by that time you were glad to be out of the hot house of the Southeast Asian thing, which was just getting more and more intense all the time.

KOREN: Well, as a matter of fact, to be quite frank, my satisfaction at being selected, knowing to be selected as ambassador, outweighed my relief or anything. I enjoyed Southeast Asian Affairs. I had a lot of fun in it. I would be happy to stay there.

Q: Could you explain what were American interests in--we'll call it the Congo, because the state remained called the Congo, but at one point there was a Congo (Leopoldville) and a Congo (Brazzaville), and later the Belgian Congo turned into Zaire, but we'll just call it the Congo. But what were our interests in the Congo? We're talking about 1964.

KOREN: In Brazzaville?

Q: Brazzaville, yes.

KOREN: Very small. Quite a few of phosphates, but primarily it was a foothold on the corner of Africa, which was, at that time when I went there, there were, as I remember, 23 embassies, all

of whom were Western oriented. When I left, I suppose there were six: Britain, France, U.S., West Germany. And the rest of them were all communists: North Korea, China--

Q: East Germany, probably.

KOREN: Yes. Well, the time they were there, they were all Western oriented.

Q: Well, in the first place, when you went there, what was the government of the Congo and what was its outlook? We're talking about 1964, when you first arrived.

KOREN: They had a brand-new independent government.

Q: It had been part of the French empire at one time.

KOREN: Had been part of the French empire, and like all the African nations, they were emerging in independence. The first election had been held and the president elected. And it was, as I say, primarily a West-oriented regime, but that changed historic Africa.

Q: You've made sort of a flip-over sign. What caused the flip-over while you there? How did we see it?

KOREN: Well, it had not been a great earthshaking event as far as the U.S. Government was concerned. It was primarily from the point of view of those who were assigned there. It amounted to the fact that the prime minister was communist oriented and he was the one who called the shots, and he was the one who began a change to a one-party system, and the whole thing suddenly did a 180 from--

Q: Was this done with military power, or was it just sort of a decision on the part of the prime minister?

KOREN: No. The military power behind the man who did it, but there was no bloodshed or anything spent at all. There was some terrorist action, but no bloodshed at all.

Q: I would assume that before this switch came, the French had predominate influence there. Did they play any role in trying to stop this? Did you cooperate with them, or were we trying to do anything, or was there anything we could do?

KOREN: Well, there was nothing we could do, and the French were there, background influence and aid, didn't do anything drastic at all. They allowed it to happen.

Q: Do you feel that maybe if they had really turned the screws--

KOREN: If they had turned the screws around, they could have--I wouldn't say they could have stopped it, but they could have certainly slowed it down.

Q: Were you over talking to the French ambassador and saying, "My God, why don't you do something?"

KOREN: No. We tried that, and he was a completely useless individual.

Q: Do you feel it was more ineptitude on the part of the French?

KOREN: I think it was lack of foresight on the part of the French. They didn't realize what was happening.

Q: It wasn't a matter of just letting it go?

KOREN: It wasn't a question of washing their hands. All of a sudden they woke up and found their hands were sticky.

Q: In the first place, how important was phosphate to us? Was this sort of driving our interest in the area, or was it just a minor . . .

KOREN: No, minor. We had no major interest in there at all.

Q: We had, we felt, the whole Western European group had a lot of interest in what was happening at that time in the Congo, particularly the efforts of Katanga to break away and you had the Simba revolt. How did that play in the Congo (Brazzaville)?

KOREN: Well, of course, that became affluent. At the time when we were there, the major problems were with the former Belgian Congo, Congo-leo, and the most extraordinary thing, each that we called the "Big Congo" and the "Little Congo" watched each other like leopards, interpreting every move as a hostile move.

Q: They were absolutely--

KOREN: Impeccable. There was so much jealousy between the two. In the old days, from talking with Mack Godley and others, the people from the Congo (Leopoldville) would come over for wine and cheese and fun in Brazzaville. But when we were there, the laces were completely severed, and we were not allowed to cross over to--

Q: It was just across the river, wasn't it?

KOREN: It was across the river, yes. And the river, you know, at that point is very swift moving, but it's hardly an obstacle. You get across there in a rowboat if you took your time and knew how to do it. And that was above the falls.

Q: Did you really feel what was happening there was sort of isolated, it wasn't impacted anywhere else?

KOREN: It was only of interest to the representatives that were there who were immediately affected.

Q: Well, did you feel that you were close to being expelled at some point?

KOREN: Oh, yes. Several times.

Q: In a way, did we care?

KOREN: No. I don't think they gave a damn in Washington.

Q: One way or the other. [Laughter]

KOREN: They didn't give a damn.

Q: I must say that when I look up the Congo (Brazzaville) in the publications which deal all over the world, there are some years when it doesn't even appear. Could you deal with the government there?

KOREN: I could in the beginning, but even offers or threats of taking away aid--we had very little aid.

Q: They couldn't care less?

KOREN: They couldn't care less. It was what you might call a nonprofitable existence.

Q: Well, sometimes a part of the justification is, "Okay, you keep the flag flying, because you don't know what's going to happen." I mean, these things can turn around, and if you walk away, you're not there to take advantage. Did you have that feeling?

KOREN: When I was pulled out of there in May, I think as far as the Department was concerned and as far as the U.S. Government was concerned, they could have shut down the place completely and not have missed it. And I came back and I argued from the point of view of keeping the flag flying and primarily as a listening post. This was the core of the spread of communism in Central Africa, and I said, "Just keep somebody there. I don't care who the hell it is."

Q: What sort of things were you getting from your position there? Were you getting an idea of how the communist movement was working within the area?

KOREN: Yes. See how it might spread, what were the things that were attractive to the masses and how they were playing them in the Congo and how that could be transplanted to another entity, another nation.

Q: You obviously had a very small staff there. Did you have a problem keeping up morale under those circumstances?

KOREN: Surprisingly enough, I had a large staff, because it had been right from the beginning. For instance, we had FAA people there and that sort of thing, and we had international representatives, WHO and international aviation people and that sort of thing, so we had, from the point of view of our intrinsic interests, we had a much larger staff than we really needed, but they were regional people.

Q: Was that being phased down while you were there?

KOREN: Well, yes. I mean, after I left, I guess six months after that, they shut down the embassy completely.

WILLIAM E. SCHAUFELE, JR
Congo Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1964-1965)

William E. Schaufele, Jr. was born in Ohio in 1923. He received a bachelor's degree from Yale University in 1948 and an M.I.A. from Columbia University in 1950. He served overseas in the U.S. Army from 1942 to 1946. Mr. Schaufele's career with the Foreign Service included positions in Germany, Morocco, Zaire, Burkina Faso, and Poland. He was interviewed by Lillian Mullin on November 19, 1994.

Q: *Before you finish discussing this post, I wondered about your reference to the Congolese National Army. Could you explain a little about what that consisted of? How many years had passed since the Belgians had moved out of the Congo and before they established this military force? I ask this because of the variety of tribal interests. It makes me wonder how they could put together an effective army if they had to...*

SCHAUFELE: Of course, during the Belgian colonial days there was the "Force Publique," the Public Force, which consisted of Congolese and was led by Belgians. They had Congolese non commissioned officers. That became the nucleus of the ANC, the "Armee Nationale Congolaise" or Congolese National Army. Actually, the Congo was much more divided under the Belgians than it has been as an independent country. The Belgians didn't want internal discipline destroyed by fights among different tribes or representatives of different tribes. However, as time went on after independence, the armed forces became more mixed. One of the reasons for the lack of effectiveness on the part of the ANC was that its personnel didn't trust each other. Another reason is that they were not paid. For example, there was a battalion of the ANC up in Bukavu. Money to pay them was supposed to be sent from Leopoldville to Bukavu, but it was always held up along the way. The ANC couldn't be trusted because, in fact, they weren't being paid. They wouldn't fight. However, they did fight for Mulamba, who was, in my experience, the strongest Congolese officer. He could lift them up, organize them, and lead them. But he nearly

always had to be on the spot. His influence with the ANC was not transferrable. The ANC was a pitiful army.

On the other hand, let me refer to the "white mercenaries" again. They had Congolese with them, but these Congolese had always been led by whites. They respected the whites. I don't know whether these Congolese ever knew that these "white mercenaries" came from South Africa. Perhaps it didn't make any difference. Those Congolese performed all right because they were well led. However, on their own, they never performed very well. I suspect that that's still the case.

Q: *Before we go on again, I wonder if you could talk a bit about the local political or government situation, after the Belgians left the Congo.*

SCHAUFELE: Well, let's be clear about what the Belgians did and didn't do. At the time of independence there were 13 Congolese university graduates. The Belgians never felt that they had a "civilizing mission," as the French did. They weren't trying to make them into Belgians. So the jobs that were held in government offices by Congolese were pretty much menial, clerical positions. Very few of the Congolese had any great responsibility, unless they happened to be tribal chiefs. In that sense, because they didn't have a Belgian in every tribe, there was always somebody that they would work with. The tribal chiefs would usually "purchase" that allegiance in one way or another.

The Belgian Flemish, who dominated the eastern Congo in particular, had very little respect for the Congolese. In fact, they didn't even want them to learn to speak French or Flemish. The man who rehabilitated our house before we moved into it was fairly typical in this respect. The house had been badly damaged during the uprising in 1961. I saw him beat a couple of the workers, who were speaking to my wife in French, which was the only language that she could use to communicate with them. He beat them and told them that they should talk to him, and he would then talk to my wife.

There wasn't much of a "developmental" psychology, especially among the Flemish. There was among some of the other Belgians, but they were all in Leopoldville. They trained some of the Congolese informally. However, they couldn't get them into colleges, I guess, because that didn't seem to be national Belgian policy. Some of those Congolese college graduates went to college in France, not in Belgium. On the whole, the Congolese had very little of what I would call "background" in modern administration and management.

As it happened, the president of Central Kivu province, who was a Swahili scholar, had a pretty good sense of how to operate within the whole context, although he obviously was going to run into difficulties with people of different tribes. These people were also Swahili speakers, because that was the "lingua franca" of the area. He had fairly good ideas but couldn't control his own ministers. They depended for their positions on their tribal affiliations and whatever money they could get their hands on. It was a very corrupt society. That was true throughout the Congo.

The Belgians trained some Army officers after independence. They brought them to Belgium and gave them training there. Some of them turned out all right. Mobutu, who was the commander of

the ANC, was a clerk in the Army. He hadn't fought, or anything like that. He was a "political animal," anyway.

So the Congolese really had less preparation for independence, in that sense, than any other country that I know of in Africa. The national infrastructure of the Congo was so limited. As I say, contact with people from the West and East probably existed but this was not very serious. That's why, when Lumumba escaped from arrest, he headed for his home territory. In the Congo that's always where you're protected. You could find some good people among the Congolese, but they were working under almost impossible circumstances, as we would see it, in terms of organization. There always was a problem of resources. However, the Congolese didn't make trouble for the Europeans in Bukavu.

The people who had plantations, stores, small manufacturing outlets, or the brewery -- technically belonged to some Congolese organization. However, every brewery in the Congo was run by a European. Even automobile repair shops were run by Europeans.

There was a German in Bukavu who operated a quinine plantation. That was a big thing. It was not owned by him. It was owned by a German company -- I can't remember which one. It was very fortunate because we were just finding out that "atabrine," which was used to suppress malarial symptoms, was no longer so effective as it had been during World War II. People had to go back to quinine. This plantation was a very profitable operation while we were there. I don't know what happened to it afterwards.

One thing I will say about the Belgians. They didn't have any depth. For instance, when the French carried out their "civilizing mission," they would have some depth in terms of French nationals. However, the Belgians, at least in the eastern Congo, had no Belgian "depth" in these various organizations. There were just a few of them. Perhaps that is one of the reasons why they learned Swahili.

Q: *Could you repeat that point in case we haven't mentioned the extent to which Swahili was used? Would you tell us where Swahili was used as a kind of "lingua franca"?*

SCHAUFELE: Swahili is the "lingua franca" of eastern Africa. It is used in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, and the eastern Congo. It is less used in Burundi and Rwanda, which had a language unique to themselves, since they came down from the Nile River area. Their language had some relationship to the languages in use up there in the Nile River region. Swahili is not to be disregarded. It is a classical language with a significant literature.

I studied Swahili. You find English words in it and words from other African languages. However, it's the only language that I've ever studied which had not only prefixes and suffixes but "infixes" as well. That is, you put an "infix" in the middle of a word. I could "chat" a little in it, but I couldn't conduct business in it because it is a complicated language. If East Africans and people in the eastern Congo want to be known as learned persons and didn't have other opportunities, they spoke Swahili.

Maybe I should mention that the "lingua franca" in the western Congo is called Lingala. That used to be a mixture of European and other languages. I learned later that, even in Lingala, if you were talking to somebody in it, he would refer to a "train" as a "train" or a "locomotive" as a "locomotive." I'm told by scholars of Lingala that there are Lingala words for those things. I remember that one man told me what one of those words was in Lingala. It must have been about 15 letters long. A "locomotive" became an "engine that was driven by..." Swahili isn't that complicated.

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Q: *So in 1964 you were transferred to a new assignment.*

SCHAUFELE: I was transferred to the Department as the Congo Desk Officer. I visited all three other posts -- Elisabethville, Stanleyville, and Leopoldville -- because I was going to be working on the Congo in the Department. On our way back to the U. S. we also stopped in Brussels. I don't think that Heather had ever been in Brussels before. It was very interesting, getting back to Europe after four years, although we had visited Europe from Morocco. For the previous 12 or 13 months in Bukavu we had really been at the end of the world, in a sense. So Heather and the boys enjoyed the visit to Brussels.

When we flew back home, Heather and the boys went directly to California to visit her family. I went to Washington. There was no question of my having leave, because of the growing crisis in the Congo. Interestingly enough, because bureaucracies are very funny, this came up somewhat later. After I had been back for about a few months, someone asked me when my family was coming to Washington. I said, "Any time now." I said that I was waiting for Heather to tell me what flight she would be on. I was informed that if I myself did not go out to California which was our home leave address, I would have to pay the Department for the family's travel to California. Under the regulations home leave was for the officer, not his family. So I flew out to California on a Saturday, and we flew back to Washington on a Sunday. That was my home leave. [Laughter]

I went back to work. It was the first time I had ever worked in Washington in the Bureau of African Affairs. A former DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission] in Leopoldville, Jim O'Sullivan, was the Office Director. His deputy was a man named Matt Looram. Matt had served in Africa but not in the Congo. I can't remember where he served in Africa.

Actually, they [people on the desk and in the Office of Central African Affairs] became less important as this story goes on, because the situation was so serious that nearly everything of any importance was being taken up in the Assistant Secretary's office, in one respect or another. Obviously, there were a lot of other people involved in this situation, including the White House, the National Security Council, and the U.S. military.

The press was also deeply interested in the situation. Journalists tend to prefer to talk to somebody who's actually been on the spot. I immediately became the main contact with the press. This probably would have happened anyway, because this happens to desk officers in crisis situations.

Q: *What were you telling the press at that time about the crisis? How did it look to you?*

SCHAUFELE: Well, I didn't always tell the press what I thought, but we tended to present the crisis as a crisis of the Left. The cause was Soviet influence on Lumumba, and in fact it went back to that, in the first place. It was clear that the rebels were getting help from somewhere, although they managed to get most of their weapons from the Congolese National Army. The Soviets were involved in this situation, to a certain extent, as were the Chinese Communists -- the Chinese in the eastern Congo and the Soviets in the western Congo. So we tended to describe the situation as an attempt to destabilize the largest and potentially the richest country in Africa -- excluding South Africa. The United States, through its interest in the stability of the area, had become involved. The Belgians were also involved, but they were really not as concerned as we were. They felt that they'd been "burned" or criticized for what they'd done or hadn't done for all of those years when they controlled the Congo. The Belgians were always kind of reluctant to get out in front. Besides, they couldn't match our resources.

The press tended to be very "down to earth." They wanted to talk about where the rebels were at this time, who was Soumialot, who was Kashimura, who was this and that. They weren't highly critical. Sometimes I felt that the United States was getting involved in something which we would not be able to follow up on. However, by the time I got back to Washington, everybody knew that anti-communist Cubans were flying air cover. Anybody who knows the United States or the American instinct understands that if we decide to intervene in a given situation, and it's not going very well, we tend to increase our intervention. This goes on until we get too deeply involved, and then we have to cut back. Vietnam is the prime example of this tendency.

There wasn't a whole lot of criticism of our policies. A lot of the Congressmen and the Congressional offices wondered if we were doing everything we should. It was very interesting when Tshombe arrived on the scene. There were two different opinions expressed on this. One was that Tshombe can straighten out the Congo. The other was that he had tried to secede once before and failed. We were asked if we were not building toward another secession, in case he fell from power. But it was all probably manageable. It didn't become a little dicey until the ultimate intervention at Stanleyville. We'll get to that later. However, I think that "Newsweek" followed the Congo situation most assiduously, probably because Bruce Van Voorst was the State Department correspondent for his magazine. I don't know where he works now. I talked to him nearly every day -- mostly over the phone.

Here we were in post-independence Africa. It had become very interesting. It seemed that everybody had focused on it, starting in 1960. African country after African country was getting its independence. The Congo had the worst post-independence experience because of the secession of Katanga, which brought in UN troops. And they fought. People forget that.

Q: *When was that?*

SCHAUFELE: 1961. They actually fought in Katanga. But that situation was unresolved. It seemed that the Congo couldn't run itself. The situation was getting worse and worse. Patrice Lumumba was deposed, under tragic circumstances. Kasavubu was still the President. Adoula

wasn't the first Prime Minister after Lumumba. I think it was Ileo. Anyway, this wave of African independence excited interest. The particular circumstances in the Congo added to the interest in it. Everybody was wondering if all this interest on the part of the UN was a wasted effort. Was there anything that anybody else could do? And so on and so forth. So we had a lot of company.

I don't remember going down to Congress and testifying a lot. However, I met a number of Congressmen, though I don't remember if I presented any testimony, particularly at the beginning. That happened later on. When things became much more complicated, when people learned about the "white mercenaries," and then with the intervention of the Belgian paratroopers, the State Department, and the U. S. Government itself, a lot of the impetus for our involvement came from the White House. A lot of people felt that this was a natural thing because President Kennedy had been assassinated. His interest in the independence of Africa made this a natural thing to do.

I would say that, for the first seven months I was there on the Congo desk, until Christmas 1964 and a little beyond that, I worked seven days a week -- over 100 hours a week. I never had any time off, except to fly out to California and back, as I mentioned, in a period of 24 hours. I still remember my son Peter asking whether I would be home for Christmas. Heather had to do her own house hunting. She looked at 75 houses before we bought one.

I had the stamina to do this. By that time we had reorganized the whole operation in the Congo. I can't remember the details. When I got back to Washington, we still had the normal organization under the Office of Central African Affairs, with a Director and Deputy Director. I was the Congo Desk Officer, with three or four people working under me.

Q: *This is a continuation of the interview with Ambassador William Schaufele. The date is February 11, 1995. Ambassador Schaufele, you were just talking about the organizational setup within the Department of State in the Bureau of African Affairs.*

SCHAUFELE: I think that it's useful to recall that the Bureau of African Affairs was established after 1960. Previously, African affairs were handled under the Bureau of Near East and African Affairs. By this time, 1964, it was a standard kind of operation. Former Governor of Michigan G. Mennen ("Soapy") Williams had been appointed to be the first Assistant Secretary for African Affairs. It was organized like the other, regional bureaus. I think that we had four or five major, geographical offices: North Africa, East Africa, West Africa, Central Africa, and Southern Africa.

It is still that way, except that North Africa has now gone back to the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs. However, when I was in Morocco, North Africa came under the Bureau of African Affairs. There were a lot of important, African meetings held in Morocco. From 1959 on my focus in the larger regions of the world was still in Africa, because it was still being run from the Department by those concerned with African affairs.

As I say, we had a "normal" operation when I got back from the Congo. We had some extra people because of the telegraphic traffic which the Congo generated. A young man who worked for me had just come from Greece. He was a Greek expert and was very good. I liked his

cynicism. He didn't have any background in Africa, so he was cynical about it. That was useful, I think. [Laughter] He kept asking, "Is it worth it?"

Well, I suppose in a sense it was. Nobody ever stopped to think about the mineral wealth involved. The resources went across from the eastern Congo down into Zambia, where there was copper production, plus other minerals. There was uranium. That was where the original supplies of uranium came from. Of course, that goes back to Belgian colonial times. It was easier to get uranium from the Congo than starting up uranium production in the United States, although we eventually did that.

I can't remember exactly when this happened, but the Department finally set up a Working Group for the Congo and named Joseph Palmer as the head of it. Joe was the Director General of the Foreign Service. He was almost our first African specialist. He had served in African affairs, beginning in 1941. He was our first Ambassador to Nigeria. He had had a lot of experience in the African area, although he didn't speak any African language. His first post in Africa was in Kenya, but again that was during the colonial period.

As I said, Joe Palmer was the head of the Working Group. They brought in a fellow named Tom McIlhenny as his deputy. Gradually, Jim O'Sullivan and Matt Louram handled everything but the Congo. Jim used to come up to the Working Group all the time. I can still remember Jim. He had a wonderful sense of humor. One Sunday morning he came in at about 11:30 AM. I said, "Jim, where the hell have you been?" He said, "I've been to church." I said, "I hope you prayed for us." He said, "Well, I prayed to St. Jude." I said, "Who is St. Jude?" He said, "He's the patron saint of hopeless causes." [Laughter]

That must have happened pretty soon after I returned from the Congo, because I recall a moment which was memorable for me. There was a meeting in the Secretary of State's office -- about 4:00 PM on a Sunday afternoon -- about the defense of Bukavu. So it must have been pretty soon after I returned.

Q: *Because the attack had started or was under way just after you returned?*

SCHAUFELE: That's right. Bukavu was attacked at least three more times.

Q: *Was this attack undertaken with Chinese Communist assistance?*

SCHAUFELE: Yes.

Q: *Could you explain that?*

SCHAUFELE: Well, we never knew for sure. There were reports that the Chinese Communists were seen with Soumialot in Bujumbura, where he turned up and where this all started. The Chinese Communists had a significant presence in Bujumbura.

Q: *Why was that?*

SCHAUFELE: Because they were interested in East and Central Africa. They had aspirations there, whatever they were. It was part of their attitude about colonial peoples. They had had some experience, historically, on the East coast of Africa. They also wanted to keep the Soviets out of there. The Chinese Communists were more worried about the Soviets than they were about us.

Q: *What kind of organization did the Chinese Communists have?*

SCHAUFELE: They had a large Embassy in Bujumbura. It was a large Embassy, for them. I say that it was large for them, because they didn't have any commercial links, to speak of, whereas we did. Our Embassy was certainly bigger. Ours would be bigger, anyway, because we always provide all of these services. So the Chinese Communists had a significant presence in Bujumbura. I'm convinced that they certainly helped Soumialot and his "Simbas," as they were now called. I'm sure of that. The Chinese Communists probably provided money and maybe some arms. There were some Chinese weapons, which were captured by the white mercenaries. But where they got them is not clear. That was the logical assumption -- that they came through Bujumbura. The first attack, in effect, came from Bujumbura across the Rusizi River and into the southern part of Kivu Province.

Q: *Did they seem to know what they were after?*

SCHAUFELE: I'm not sure. I'm not convinced. They thought that it was a good idea to encourage a rebellion against the Congolese government, which was more or less allied with Belgium, the United States, and the Western Europeans.

Q: *Even though this could bring in the U.S.?*

SCHAUFELE: That's right. The Chinese Communists still ascribed to the Belgians certain insidious, underhanded tactics to maintain their position of influence and power. Which is probably true, up to a point.

However, as I say, a lot of the rebels' arms came through capturing them from the Congolese National Army. I have to admit that the Simbas were pretty well led. They obviously knew how to use psychological warfare against the Congolese. I never knew much about Colonel Olenga, their field commander. He was killed at some point. We had some biographic material on him, but nothing that indicated much about his character or training. There was a report that he had been trained in China. I don't know whether that was true or not. I don't recall that I knew much about this.

So we had the Congo Working Group. I previously mentioned a meeting in Secretary Rusk's office about the defense of Bukavu. This meant that we were talking about airplanes. And the Congolese Army -- did they need anything to help defend Bukavu? I don't remember all of the details. There were at least two under secretaries and three assistant secretaries at this meeting. I was the low man on the totem pole. We discussed the situation for a while. Then Secretary Rusk dictated a telegram of instructions. His secretary went out to type it up. He offered us all a glass of sherry, which was a civilized thing to do on a Sunday afternoon. The secretary came back in,

and Rusk read the telegram. Then he went around the room and asked us, "Do you agree?" I was the last one to be asked. I said, "Well, I'm the only one here who has served in the Congo." No one else in that room had served there. I said that I had served specifically in Bukavu, and I said, "I don't agree." Secretary Rusk said, "Well, what do you suggest?" I can't remember what I suggested -- some changes. He said, "That sounds logical." And he went around the room again.

Rusk knew that he had to get everybody involved, because he didn't want anybody to come around later and say that he didn't agree. He wanted to be able to say, "You were at the meeting and you agreed." The only man who could oppose him on the Vietnam question was George Ball, Under Secretary of State. He took that gracefully from George Ball, as he did everything else. And George Ball would go on about the degree of American involvement in the Congo.

Q: *How much did all of this cost?*

SCHAUFELE: In terms of money I'd say...Well, regarding the Cuban pilots, we furnished the airplanes and paid the pilots.

Q: *What did they call this operation?*

SCHAUFELE: They had some name for it. Nominally, the Cuban pilots were under Congolese command and control. They were supposed to be part of the Congolese forces. However, we provided most of the money for the recruitment and equipping of the white mercenaries. We probably had six or seven U. S. Air Force C-130's in the Congo, flying supplies all over hell's half acre. The Belgians put in some money, too, but the largest part of it was ours. It didn't create any problems for the American military. They've grown up since then and are more sensitive about "intervention" -- mostly because of Vietnam, not the Congo. The American military were always "gung ho" to get us involved.

Q: *There was a job to do.*

SCHAUFELE: That's right. We didn't have many people on the ground. Tshombe -- it didn't make any difference to him. Tshombe preferred the Americans to the Belgians, because he knew where the power eventually resided. I'm trying to think about the people we had on the ground. We had the two colonels out in the eastern Congo. We had some other people back in Leopoldville, but they were mostly supply and procurement people. We didn't have anybody with the white mercenaries. At least, we said that we didn't, though I imagine that somebody "dropped in" on them occasionally.

That was a cross for all of us to bear -- the idea of white mercenaries, especially since they were nearly all South Africans and Rhodesians, as well as a few Frenchmen. They were an effective fighting force. There were only about 150 of them. They marched down the Congo River, right behind the Simbas, all the way to Stanleyville. They took everything they attacked. They weren't very nice about it, but, anyway, they did it.

It was a terribly exhausting effort for us back in Washington. I used to get into the office at about 7:00 AM. I wouldn't leave until 10:30 PM or so. I used to have an apple in the afternoon and put

my head down on my desk to rest for about 45 minutes. It was the only way that I felt that I could get through the day. And then the pressure from the press steadily grew greater. The Working Group also became a burden, with representatives from CIA [Central Intelligence Agency], the White House, USIA [United States Information Agency], and the Pentagon. We had a lot of people who had their own ideas but didn't know anything about the country. The National Security Council had its representatives, too. They would say, "The President thinks..." I would say, "Wait, wait, are you telling me that the President actually talked about this in some kind of detail?" And the representative would back up.

Q: *Did he really say that?*

SCHAUFELE: No, but the White House representative thought he was representing what the President wanted. That's the problem we always had. However, keeping control of the organization was important. Under Secretary of State Harriman got involved. He was Under Secretary for Political Affairs. He always liked to act like a brave warrior. Joe Palmer was there. He was very reserved. I don't know whether you know Joe. He is soft spoken and speaks slowly. That doesn't mean that he doesn't have strong opinions about certain things. However, Joe was never a guy to get out in front when he didn't have to do so.

We had a little problem within the Bureau of African Affairs itself, because the principal Deputy Assistant Secretary to "Soapy" Williams was a little bit at a loss during this period. He didn't know how to handle this kind of thing. He was Wayne Fredericks, an old African hand who knew a lot about Africa. He was always concerned about U. S. over involvement in Africa. I don't think that he was ever enthusiastic about our direct involvement in Africa. I used to ask him what else he would do instead. He never came up with any answers. There was this big "thing" in the middle of Africa, sliding into anarchy. Maybe we should have let it do so. I don't know. But that's what the Congo would have done.

So the war went on. The advance down the Congo River by the white mercenaries was steady. The ultimate crisis came, of course, when the Simbas captured Stanleyville and our Consulate. They took 330 hostages -- all whites. They killed the Congolese officials in Stanleyville. Our Consulate people were taken as hostages. There were only three people in the Consulate, I think. Mike Hoyt was the Acting Consul. You knew Mike. We'll come back to that later over lunch. He was the Acting Consul, because John Clingerman had been transferred back to the Congo Working Group in the Department, where he worked for me. There was a communicator and one other American in the Consulate who was a CIA officer.

So they were held with the rest of the hostages, including American and Belgian missionaries. The Simbas actually accused one American missionary, whose name was Carlson, of being a spy. I don't know what church he represented -- Disciples of Christ, perhaps. He was an ordained minister and a doctor. So for the first time we really became concerned about the fate of our people. We talked with Mike Hoare and the white mercenaries and asked them if they could get to Stanleyville. If they got to Stanleyville, would they be able to take the town rapidly enough to prevent any harm to the hostages? Hoare didn't think that that was possible. Stanleyville was a relatively big city -- bigger than Bukavu -- and taking it might cause real problems. That's when

we set up the air drop with the Belgians. That was done when Paul Henri Spaak was Prime Minister, with Governor Harriman doing most of the negotiating.

We had, not so much a difficulty, but we had to discuss how this was going to be done. The American concept for dropping paratroopers in an operation like this is a large scale thing. The Belgians didn't like that. In the first place, it was going to become public knowledge that much sooner. Secondly, you don't need all of those people. So the final agreement was that the Belgians would supply the paratroopers, and we would supply the planes from which they dropped. The Belgians supplied 300 paratroopers -- that's all they had. They would jump with little, motorized tricycles. They would race right into Stanleyville on these tricycles. No armored cars or anything like that.

This operation was all, obviously, "hush hush." The Belgian paratroopers were picked up in Belgium by our planes. That was all right because Belgium is a NATO [North American Treaty Organization] country. Then they were flown down to Africa. The planes refueled somewhere in southern France. We think that that was where one of the Belgian soldiers, who was a "stringer" for a Belgian newspaper, "let the cat out of the bag." However, the operation had not been publicized. We think that that's where he made contact with his paper. Obviously, the Belgian papers were very reluctant to publish this story. They didn't want to cause any trouble for their own people -- and, besides, nothing had happened yet. The next stop for the Belgian paratroopers was Ascension Island. I guess that they stayed there for a couple of days. Ascension Island is a British possession in the South Atlantic Ocean. The British could and did drop a "curtain" on communications from there.

However, that was still too far from the Congo. There was an old Belgian Air Force training center in the Congo, at a place called Kamina. The Belgians, the Americans, and the Congolese, in effect, took over Kamina for a limited time, so that the paratroopers could fly in, refuel, and do everything else that they had to do. Then, on the following day, the Belgian paratroopers jumped on Stanleyville.

There was one interesting aspect. I still kid him about it when I see him. Bruce Van Voorst of "Newsweek" came in after the jump. He said, "You lied to me the other day." I said, "What do you mean, I 'lied to you?'" He said, "I asked you this question." I said, "Do you remember the question you asked me?" He said, "Well, no, not specifically." I said, "Well, I can. You said, 'We have a report that there are Belgian paratroops on Ascension Island. Is that true?'" He said, "Yes, and you said 'No.'" I said, "That's right. They'd already left." [Laughter] He was kind of chagrined by that. That's right. He should have asked the question in a different way.

So I remember the night when the paratroops dropped over Stanleyville. It happened about 11:00 PM, Eastern Standard Time. Secretary Rusk and Deputy Secretary Ball came into the Operations Center, wearing black ties. That's another thing that I really should mention. That was the first time that I worked out of the Operations Center. It's a lot better now, but even then, they could reach any place in the world and wake up anybody. It's a real concept, the Operations Center. It was the military, essentially, who had developed the idea and expanded it into our Embassies and Consulates. It's incredible -- the reach of these people in Washington and the United States. So that took a big load off us. We could say, "Get us somebody, somewhere." We didn't have to do

it ourselves. That can be very time consuming. As I said, Secretary Rusk and Deputy Secretary Ball arrived in the Operations Center. "Soapy" Williams and everybody else were there. At some point -- I can visualize it, but I can't recall exactly what time it was -- the die was cast. There could be no further change. The Belgian paratroops dropped at the Stanleyville airport, got on their little tricycles, and raced into town. Meanwhile Mike Hoare and his white mercenaries arrived at the outskirts, though they had not gotten into town.

Q: *But the Simbas were in Stanleyville?*

SCHAUFELE: Oh, yes. They controlled the city.

Q: *And that was quite a large force of Simbas at the time.*

SCHAUFELE: I don't recall how many Simbas there were. We couldn't figure out how many there were, because they would pick up some people and drop others off. Stanleyville always was kind of a "revolutionary" town. In fact, at the time it was taken by the Simbas, it was under a special arrangement. They had a "commissaire" appointed by the central government, running not the province of Stanleyville, but a larger area. In fact, I was in contact with the same man in Bukavu. He was there when I arrived in Bukavu. He left about two weeks later. He was killed in Stanleyville by the Simbas -- pushed off a bridge. I don't know how we learned that.

The Belgian paratroops raced into town, right to the place where the hostages were. We knew where the hostages were. They were concentrated in one small area -- I suppose about a city block, in various buildings, surrounded by Simbas.

Q: *Had their families left, or were their families there also?*

SCHAUFELE: Mike Hoyt didn't take his family up there to Stanleyville, as he only expected to be there temporarily. However, there were missionary families there. I seem to recall -- I'll have to look this up later -- that there were 23 hostages killed. The Simbas just started firing indiscriminately. One of those killed was Carlson, the man they accused of being a "spy." But the State Department people in our Consulate were not hurt.

Q: *But were they in any danger?*

SCHAUFELE: Oh, yes. They were shot at, too. They ducked down behind cover and weren't hit. I don't think that the Simbas had any thought of sparing them. The Belgian Consul was freed safely. I don't know how many people he had in the Belgian Consulate there. So, as much as we regretted the death of any of the hostages, it was a "reasonable" operation from the overall viewpoint. There probably would have been more people killed if we hadn't gotten there in time. The white mercenaries then came in and took control of the town.

Q: *How did they get the hostages out?*

SCHAUFELE: They flew them out in C-130's, because we had dropped the Belgian paratroops from the C-130's. The planes circled overhead until they were sure that they could land safely at

the airport. They landed and took the hostages out. Two more airdrops were planned. The code name for the air drops was "Dragon," and they had colors. Stanleyville was "Dragon Rouge" [Red Dragon]. Another place was "Dragon Noir" [Black Dragon], which was supposed to be in Paulis, a place which was also held by the Simbas. The Belgian paratroopers did drop on "Polis." A few people were killed up there -- not as a result of the landing. The Simbas had already killed some hostages there. The third drop -- Bunia -- was cancelled. It was no longer necessary. The Simbas kind of "evaporated" into the mountains. In three days the Belgian troops were back in Belgium. That's the way that kind of operation should go. One Belgian paratrooper was killed.

Q: *So the Belgians went away. They really didn't exist.*

SCHAUFELE: That's right. We tend to overdo this kind of thing. It's like fighting the Gulf War. We take six months to gather an overwhelming force, and then the operation takes two days, or something like that. No, I think that the Belgians were right, for this kind of operation. Dropping 10,000 American paratroops who didn't speak French or any other foreign language would not have done much good.

Q: *So the operation was completed and the hostages returned. Were you still working seven days a week in the Department?*

SCHAUFELE: Yes, maybe not every week, but there were a lot of loose ends to clean up. There was a lot of cleaning up of the rebellion that also involved us -- not so intimately, but certainly, we had to keep our eyes open. Also, we had to try to keep the Congolese central government from exploiting their success. I'm sure that there would be people who would object to this, because we had provided so much aid to saving the Congolese central government.

The Congolese government kind of reverted to their old, corrupt ways. The big thing was that President Kasavubu was dropped, and Mobutu became the President. That determined the direction of events for a long time. You know, Mobutu has been in power for 29 years now.

Subsequently, when I had a little more time, I met with some of the people who had been involved -- mostly people who had been missionaries or were supporting missionaries. This continued right up through the time when I was Assistant Secretary. People would say, "Why isn't the Congo democratic? Instead of interfering in their affairs, why don't we let them decide by a democratic process? Let them have 'grass roots democracy.'" In the first place, we couldn't decide a lot of things that these people thought we could decide. The Congolese were in control of the country. Secondly, the Congo would immediately break down into their tribal groupings. You wouldn't have a Congo any more. You'd have a bunch of little fiefdoms. Some people find that very difficult to believe.

JAY K. KATZEN
Chargé d'Affaires
Brazzaville (1977-1978)

Jay K. Katzen was born in New York in 1936. He graduated from Princeton in 1958 and then received an M.A. at Yale the following year and entered the Foreign Service in 1959. He served in Australia, Burundi, Romania, and Mali. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in June 1990.

Q: Could you explain what the situation was in the Congo before you went and how the assignment came about?

KATZEN: Nicholas Mondjo is a Congolese who presently is working for the current president of the Congo. Mondjo had been Congolese ambassador at the U.N. for a long time. He and I, and he and Bill Schaufele, who was an Ambassador in our mission then and became assistant secretary for African Affairs and later ambassador to Poland, discussed the reestablishment of diplomatic relations. And it was in '77 that Mondjo and Schaufele, ultimately joined by Cyrus Vance and the Congolese foreign minister, came up with an agreement to reopen the American Embassy in Brazzaville. The Congolese, for their part, promised to respect our diplomats, which had been the reason for the closing in the first place, our people having been thrown in the slammer, as we discussed earlier. I had been asked if I would like to go out to the Congo to reopen that embassy, and did indeed go out there in October of '77 for that purpose.

The chancery was like a sealed tomb in a way. When the doors were opened, there were packs of cigarettes that were still lying on desks, and small change, and mail that hadn't been opened that was dated all those years past and so on.

We had a very, for me, satisfying time in pioneering those days. The Congolese were very curious to see what we were going to be offering them. The Congolese president at the time, a man called Yhombi-Opango, a military officer, was extraordinarily friendly. He had sent a Mercedes for my use to the plane when I first got off, which had the Soviets very upset, because the very act led them to be curious about what the Congolese were doing.

The Congolese had been using Marxism-Leninism for years as a mobilization tool, and I think it was more that than it was of any deep, ingrained philosophy. And I think the French, whose commercial interests there were far more profound than ours, certainly felt that as well.

In my first meeting with the president, he asked what I was bringing the Congo. After getting through the platitudes of friendship and others, he wanted me to get down to more concrete terms. And I replied that the only way I could do that was to travel all over the country, get to know the people, meet all the ministers and so on.

And for the first time, a foreign diplomat within his presidency did that--visited all the provinces by one means or another, including most of the time military aircraft, called on each of the ministers, called on the party officials, and got to know the country and its demands.

And it developed into a very informal relationship, the president and I exchanging birthday cakes and things like that. It was quite different from certainly any of the previous experiences I had

had and I like to think set a backdrop against which the successful development of our relations with the Congolese continued.

Q: The Soviets had been, as you said previously, meddling there and been responsible for much of the turning against the United States which eventually severed relations. What was their role by that time?

KATZEN: Well, I'll give you an anecdote again. It happened at a Soviet National Day reception, shortly after I arrived. I'd opened our embassy speaking in Lingala, which was a language that good old FSI had beaten into me years previously. And that night, the Soviet ambassador and the Congolese foreign minister and I were chatting, and the Soviet was chiding me and said, "Ah, obviously you are with the CIA because you speak the local language."

To which the foreign minister, with whom I had not much of a rapport having just met him, replied, "Well, Mr. Ambassador, there obviously then are millions of CIA agents here, because look at how many Congolese speak Lingala." Which I thought was a great reinforcer at that very early stage.

The Soviets remained very suspicious of what we were doing. They didn't need to be, because there was nothing untoward that we were plotting. Our early days there were focused on economic assistance, primarily on the American private sector whence I generated a fair amount of capital.

I came back from the Congo once on consultations and was asked by the then head of African Affairs for AID why I didn't want an official AID presence. I said I had three questions, and if any of them could be replied to as I felt it ought to, I could well change the recommendation.

The first was: Could AID come up with an implement, a physical object, say a hoe for an agricultural project, in less than 2.3 years from the time I signed an agreement? The reply was no, and for health material, that it took 3.2 years.

I next asked whether they could possibly do a feasibility study that took less money than the project itself might. Again, a no.

And thirdly, could they field an AID person for less than $100,000 a year? And again, the answer was no.

And I said therefore I felt that the private American sector could indeed focus on getting money there--whatever their reasons were. This was the early time of some American companies wanting tax deductions for significant overseas losses. And if they were getting money on investments in the Congo that were benefiting the Congolese, a number of them didn't seem to mind if they in fact generated tax losses domestically.

Q: Were there any great problems other than just the problem of getting things going?

KATZEN: No, but that was a very big problem. That was a problem that was far more significant than the bilateral political problem. The question of priorities. And, in candor, I was disappointed that a number of people on my staff were not quite as enthusiastic about simply being in the Congo and having what I still think was a very special time in a special place as I was.

Q: Were these not from the Africanist group, would you say, or had they just run out of steam?

KATZEN: Some were, some weren't. I think to a great degree many were affected by a syndrome which I'm critical of but I understand at the same time.

I remember in Leopoldville, a long time before and in much more primitive experiences, a number of the embassy family wanted a commissary. And it was, as Mac Godley did things, agreed that although he personally did not want a commissary, the embassy would have a vote and that majority vote would rule. The embassy decided overwhelmingly in that vote indeed to have a commissary. Well, the commissary was constructed, and it stocked (in addition to five different kinds of corn flakes) sardines imported from Portugal, which could easily be obtained at da Costas's grocery around the corner. Now you had a commissary, and with that the attendant lack of a real requirement to learn French, because you didn't after all have to use that French in your shopping, which was one of the key intercourses of a normal day. Well, not having French, it was hard to talk to all those other people out there, so let's all live together. Well, the galloping development then moved into embassy housing, motor pools, embassy dart clubs, bridge clubs, softball leagues and the rest.

As I say, I don't fully sympathize with it, but I understand it. But by the same token, I would say that while I am full of respect for our wonderful people in our service who are overseas under now far more trying experiences perhaps than we experienced, I think that some of those features are not why one ought to go overseas.

Q: Brazzaville is just across the river (although it's a big river) from Kinshasa. Was this helpful or a hindrance to you as you were trying to start this thing up?

KATZEN: They were, in Kinshasa, very helpful to me. They clearly had their own requirements. There were areas on the security side, just as I mentioned earlier with Mali on the economic side, where the physical distance, as well as priorities being based upon a regional framework, probably gave us a lower priority than one would have wished.

By the same token, problems that are attendant to opening a new post did affect the security side. My house, which overlooked the river, had a steep stone wall leading up into it. There were very inexpensive and ordinary ways of protecting that building, including simply improved physical security.

I received a tip-off that we were going to be robbed one night. I communicated that to the regional security man across the river, and was told that the only way to protect the house properly was to have some way of discouraging people who might use alpine-equipped boots to

scale the wall. Well, most Congolese, including the burglars who did indeed break into our house that night, traveled barefoot.

So I think that with regional assignments of responsibility, these things do occur. On balance, though, certainly Walt Cutler and his embassy in Kinshasa were very helpful.

Stu, I guess that one thing that we need to, and do, ask ourselves frequently as we pick up the papers, especially in these exciting times, is where did we fit into it. You are the author of a book which quite properly prevents people who have given glorious service to America from being forgotten--our consular service. I think we can take pride in being part of a process which has brought us to the point we are. I like to think that during those pioneering days in Africa and elsewhere we taught a few people whose, perhaps, grandchildren now are foreign ministers, that we represented democracy and freedom and that these ideals and capitalism all are worthwhile. I think we can take a lot of pride in being there in those early days and being a part of that process.

I'm very stuck too by a statement that Senator Moynihan made the other day, in which Moynihan said that we have to understand that what President Bush is doing now is forming a pattern for international behavior for the next 25 to 50 years. And that if, for example, he were to send a hit man into Baghdad, or were to authorize those volunteers whom I suspect already are there to do that, he would be encouraging a world order characterized by assassinations.

As the Hungarian ambassador here told me at Christmastime, "You Americans, as you tidy up the end of World War II, mustn't forget the reasons for World War I." We can't go in that direction. And I think that the president is indeed, and to a great degree perhaps because of his own years at the U.N., very conscious of the need to use that instrument, and to use some of that groundwork that you and I can take some pride in participating in for assistance in developing that world order for the future.

Q: Well, Jay, one final question. Having left the Congo, why didn't you continue on?

KATZEN: Well, I felt that I had done so much of what I wanted to do in government. I was not enamored, frankly, of the Carter years, or of a lot of its philosophy of foreign affairs. By the same token, I was sufficiently realistic to know that that was not going to go on forever either.

I received an offer to leave government and go to work for a single company, and decided that I didn't want to swap one bureaucracy for another. The gentleman who had offered me that job, who was the chairman of that company, asked instead if I would serve as an advisor to a consortium of five chairmen.

As each of us leave the womb, we ask absurd questions in the expectation that we'll get a "no" which will enable us to return to the comfort we know. Each question I asked came up with a positive answer. I went to Personnel, to our mutual friend, Andy Steigman, and they suggested my going on leave without pay status, which I did. I extended that several times, learned then that I could retire, and did indeed do that. The department, though, during that period I was on leave and, in candor, subsequently, has made several very flattering offers to return to government. And several times I've been very tempted. My concern is, were I to do that, whether

I could reconstruct thereafter what I presently have, given the brighter and younger people who are available now to take up what I am doing in industry.

Q: You're basically a consultant to firms dealing in various parts of the world.

KATZEN: Yes, right.

CONSTANCE J. FREEMAN
Peace Corps Director
Brazzaville (1978-1979)

Constance Freeman was born in Washington, DC in 1945 and graduated from American University and the University of Denver. She served with the Peace Corps in Brazzaville and Yaounde and with the Foreign Service in New Delhi and Nairobi. She was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1996.

Q: You left about the middle of '78?

FREEMAN: I left in the summer of '78. When Humphrey died, in many ways the heart went out of the subcommittee. The main committee had never really liked this bunch of Young Turks bashing around the world. Spockman took over as chairman of the subcommittee, in addition to being chairman of the main committee. The main committee staff began to control these young folks, like me, to an extent that made a number of us feel that it might be time to move on. And so, along with some others, I started looking at how I would leverage myself out of what had been quite a powerful staff position, certainly for that young a person, on the Hill, into the best kind of job that I could find in the executive branch. It's fairly classic Hill staff hopping.

Q: This is the way the system works.

FREEMAN: This is the way the system works. But, unlike some, my goal was to become a Peace Corps director. And I was recruited to be the Peace Corps director in Congo, Brazzaville. I was recruited both by ACTION, which was then heading up Peace Corps, and by the then-chargé, Jay Katzen. The one barrier there was that it was French-speaking, and I didn't speak French. But they were convinced, after a lot of toing and froing, to give me French lessons, which is something Peace Corps had not done before. And so my leveraging was not into a top executive job somewhere in AID or State, but it was to go back to the field, because that's what I wanted to do, go back to Africa. I had a long history with Peace Corps and really wanted to be a country director, and that's what I became.

Q: You were a country director from when to when?

FREEMAN: I started out in the summer of '78 doing language training. I was finally posted in January of '79 in Brazzaville. We were thrown out of Brazzaville in June. We spent that time both training volunteers to come in and building up a program. But Congo, Brazzaville, had a

coup, and they moved left, and Sassou-Nguesso, who is currently in the press in the conflicts in Brazzaville, took over.

We could not go forward with our program without a country agreement, because we had been a [joint] program with CARE in an integrated rural development program. It was actually amazing, because the planning of this program was done hand in glove with the Congolese, who were fully qualified to do that. They had a wonderful consultant who came in. But in order for that to work in the bush of Congo (which was really *the bush*), we had to have a lot of tools and other kinds of things for our volunteers to work with. There was nothing there. Therefore, we had to have this partnership with CARE, and CARE could not obligate any money without a country agreement.

And so, right after the coup, when things had died down a little bit, we had to go in and push the government on the country agreement, which they had not yet signed. We had volunteers in Togo waiting to get on the plane to come down, having been trained in West Africa. I believe that because we were forced to push the Congolese government at that time to make a decision, that the Soviets weighed in, did not want a handful of Peace Corps volunteers wandering around the villages of this country, and the Congolese, as much as they kind of liked the idea of the program (certainly at the second- or third-tier level of the ministry they really liked the program because they created it) were not willing to buck the Soviets for 15 volunteers. And so their decision was, no, we will not sign your country agreement, and you may leave.

Q: You were already in Brazzaville?

FREEMAN: Yes.

Q: What was the attitude prior to the coup and then after the coup?

FREEMAN: I really enjoyed my time in Brazzaville tremendously. The Congolese were warm and open and caring people. They were an example of real equality. There were not tremendous divisions in wealth; everybody was dirt poor, is what it amounted to. But well educated, because Congo was the seat of the Free French in the Second World War. A high level of education. And also very, very Marxist.

Q: Was it sort of French Marxist?

FREEMAN: Yes, certainly. My deputy, Roger Meese, and I, it was just the two of us there building that program. We were literally constructing buildings, and finding housing in areas where no Americans had lived before. Building this from the ground up on almost no money. Volunteers should not have been in training before we had a country agreement. But the powers-that-be made that decision, and so we were pushed on this and had to go forward. But it was a very creative environment for Peace Corps. And Peace Corps went back in 10 years later.

Q: What had been the history of the Congo, Brazzaville? Was that the time we had severed relations?

FREEMAN: Ten years earlier, in the '60s.

Q: Ten years earlier, and things were really...

FREEMAN: They jailed our diplomats.

Q: So this was not a good situation. You say they were so friendly, why did they do that?

FREEMAN: What happened was they jailed our diplomats, and there was a real falling out, and we pulled out of Congo, Brazzaville, on August 15, 1965, and only went back in, on October 30, 1977, when there was a move to the right. During that two-year period, the government was much less radical than it was after the coup. The French, I believe, had looked after our property, and we moved back into old sea-captain type buildings and embassies, etc. The then-chargé, Jay Katzen, was very anxious to have a deliverable as fast as he could, and AID couldn't deliver very fast, and so he was anxious to have Peace Corps, and have Peace Corps on the ground. When I was in Brazzaville, there were seven Americans in town. I was mistaken for a Cuban a number of times, just sort of standing around. People didn't know who we were or know anything about us.

But on a working level, with the under secretary for agriculture, this was a very congenial and warm and embracing kind of environment. And it was safe; there was almost no crime. I was living in a suburb where no white woman had ever lived before. And they were very questioning of that. They kept summoning me to the local party committee, to review me. And because I was the director, I had diplomatic status and it was not appropriate for me to go, so we kept sending our local staff guy. They kept saying, "What are you doing here? What are you doing here? What is this presence here?" And one day I finally told him, "Tell them I'm running a brothel, and be done with it." But that was simply the strangeness of the process.

When we were invited to leave, after they said they wouldn't sign the country agreement and they didn't want the volunteers, we had to get out of there as fast as we could. But we had to build-down our infrastructure; turn it over to CARE is what we did. We couldn't simply get on the next plane. It took two or three weeks, at least, to do this. Roger and I said to the Congolese who worked for us and to all of our friends, "We will understand perfectly if you no longer know us. It is dangerous to know us; they could take retribution against you." And, to a person, they stood by us, including great masses of people who saw us to the airport. That was the people-to-people relationship, as opposed to the East-West clash that went on about us.

Q: Were you there during the coup? What type of coup was it?

FREEMAN: I was there. They weren't shooting at my house; I wasn't right in the middle of it. It was sort of movements of troops here and there. There were also party committees and meetings and stuff coming through in the newspaper. It was a very yeasty kind of a period, flowing back and forth. It was unclear what was happening all the time. And while we were watching it, we were also rather deeply involved with constructing the office and other things like that, and not knowing how this would fall out, except knowing that we couldn't press the issues.

Also during some of that period, I was in Togo with my volunteers in training, so I met some of them.

There were lots of barricades that you had to go through, and my most exciting one was after the coup when they were consolidating this. I was taking some Congolese friends home on a Saturday night, because I had one of the few cars in our group of acquaintances. I had to go across the city into a suburb on the other side, and I had to drive back by myself. There were barricades up, and I had to run a barricade. There were soldiers who were standing there with guns up, and I was afraid I was really going to be accosted. A couple of our friends were in the military, and they said that I should just pretend that I didn't speak French. Well, I didn't give them time for that. There was movement in the bushes behind the soldier who had stopped me, and he turned around to deal with that, and I just sped right out of there. Now I was still pretty young and taking a lot of risks. That was a fairly risky exercise.

But it was with phenomenal sadness that I left that country. Just phenomenal sadness. We were caught in the ways of the East-West process, and there wasn't much we could do about it. We might have played our cards differently, in terms of how quickly we went in. If we could have waited six or eight months before we pushed the issue of a country agreement, we might have gotten in then. Ten years later, Peace Corps went in. Now it's out again because of the tremendous violence that's been going on in Brazzaville.

Q: Connie, I think this is probably a good time to stop, because I like to stop at a...

FREEMAN: At a good stopping point.

Q: So I'll put on the thing here that you have been thrown out of Congo, Brazzaville, in 1979.

FREEMAN: Stay tuned for the next exciting chapter.

Q: We'll pick it up with, after Brazzaville, what.

FREEMAN: Ask me about the POV decision.

Q: And I'll ask you about the POV decision.

***

Today is the 14th of August 1997. Connie, the POV?

FREEMAN: The POV decision. Well, let's just say it's a story of bureaucracy. When the Congolese government decided they didn't want Peace Corps, and we were needing to leave as quickly as we could, which took a little while because we'd built up an infrastructure and had to break it down, we couldn't get any kind of a decision from Washington about where I was supposed to go and what I was supposed to do. Peace Corps had no obligation to keep me. They could send me to another post or whatever, but I didn't know, and I was getting very annoyed and very concerned about this, and was about to call them on the phone and push them in a direct

fashion. But my deputy, who was very clever at the wiles and ways of bureaucracy, said, no, send them a cable and ask them what you should do with your POV, your privately owned vehicle. They'll have to answer that, because that's an administrative question that needs answering. And, sure enough, I sent them a cable saying what should I do with my POV, and they told me to return to Washington. So at least I got a decision out of them.

Q: This is '79?

FREEMAN: This would be June of '79.

ALAN W. LUKENS
Ambassador
Congo (1984-1987)

Ambassador Alan W. Lukens was born and raised in Philadelphia. He joined the Foreign Service in 1951. His career included positions in Turkey, Martinique, France, Morocco, South Africa, Senegal, and Kenya, and an ambassadorship to the Congo. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1989.

Q: *What the Italians would call it a parenthesis. How did you come to be named to be Ambassador to the Congo, Brazzaville?*

LUKENS: Well, it's the way these strange ambassadorial assignments come. They just asked me. I had near misses on two or three others. I was supposed to get them and then political people did. I was hoping to get one all the time I was in South Africa, and finally they asked if I would go to Brazzaville, and I don't think, frankly, in their great world that they even knew that I had been there before. But I figured enough time had gone by so that there wouldn't be any problem, either personally because I had had another family, or because of the different kind of regime there. So things grind slowly. It takes nine months to produce an Ambassador, like a baby, and finally it came through and I went off in the summer of '84.

Q: *You were there from '84 to '87.*

LUKENS: So I actually ended up...I've had more time there than any other American diplomat. I still have.

Q: *What was the situation then?*

LUKENS: The situation was that, to date back in '79 we had reestablished relations and I was the third Ambassador--Bill Swing and then Ken Brown had been two years each. I was there longer. And relations began rather slowly to thaw out. The Soviet presence was still about 700, with East Germans bugging the place, and heavy influence of the East. But the Congolese realized that this hadn't paid off very well and they were looking for American investments. So the period when I was there was one of thawing and warming up to us. And I felt that there I could play personally

an important role, and we saw a certain amount of progress. We got American oil companies in, we got an American construction company, and a lot more things are still cooking away. But at the beginning there was a definite feeling of suspicion of the United States. But we kind of worked up to the time when Sassou, the president, who had come in a coup ten years earlier, became head of the OAU and took the traditional visit that most heads of the OAU do to the United States. That was a very interesting but frustrating time, because the White House refused to invite him, because in the Reagan administration, a certain number of people said they didn't want the President to meet a two-bit communist, a Marxist. And there were people who were very much against his coming. Well, he came anyway. You can't tell a person not to come to the UN if he represents all of Africa. But it was nip and tuck whether he would get into the White House. And he came to Washington, because Shultz promised him he would see the President. Shultz gave a lunch for him in New York. Governor Thornburg, who had been out to the Congo, was a great friend, had him up to Harrisburg for the day, and that was a wonderful success.

We came within an hour of getting into the White House. He was at the Willard Hotel next door and was all set to call on Bush during which Reagan would come in for the photo opportunity. But, at the very last minute, through a series of circumstances that I never will fully understand, Bush was called to the Senate to preside over an impeachment of a judge and they switched the interview to the Senate. So we drove down there. We had a wonderful hour with Bush, who couldn't have been nicer; he met us at the car, and he called in Senators Kassebaum, Lugar, Kennedy, and Hart. Sort of a seminar that lasted well over an hour. At the end Bush asked us if we wouldn't like to see the Senate in action, and somebody took Sassou up there. And then Bush turned to me and said, "How is it going? Isn't he going to get to see the President?" I said, "Didn't you know? Of course, he was supposed to meet him and it got changed." He said he didn't know anything about it. He said, "Wait a minute." He opened his briefcase and took out a special telephone number, called the White House, and said, "Do something. We've got to get him in." And he said, "Wait a minute. They'll call you right back--my secretary is out in the hall." The Sheik of Araby or somebody was waiting to come in. So I waited outside and finally they called back and said, "There's no hope." They would try to get a phone call from the President. So I went back with Sassou to the hotel and there were very, very long faces and very unhappy people. They somehow thought it was my fault. We did manage finally to get a phone call from Reagan to Sassou in the hotel. I had to break up a meeting Sassou was having with Jesse Jackson to get him to the telephone. And then finally we tied it in through the State Department interpreter and Sassou talked to Reagan for 15 minutes. At the end he hung up and said, "That was very nice but why couldn't I have gone over there for 15 minutes." So that was very unfortunate, but everything else about the visit worked well, but it was too bad.

Q: *Who was opposed to...*

LUKENS: It's hard to say. There were some people who were opposed, and some that didn't push hard enough in the Department. But basically there was some opposition from the Ollie North crowd and some others who didn't see the importance of this, and didn't want to do it. There had been a red herring, in that Sassou's Foreign Minister two weeks earlier had made an anti-Semitic speech in the UN when he tied South Africa to Israel and the Nazis all in the same sentence. Nobody noticed this but the Israeli delegation, and that almost screwed up the whole visit. So I had to go to Sassou and get a personal apology from him. He didn't even know what

the Minister had said. And we thought we had it back on track but the Israelis kept on bugging somebody in the White House and I think that was one of the problems. Anyhow, that was one of the high points of my time in Brazzaville.

Q: *In Brazzaville, any particular problems--say, dealing with the Soviets and all this.*

LUKENS: I got to be a very close friend of the Soviet Ambassador. I mean, they were very much in their element there. They weren't kept locked up and they were all over the place. They all had French cars. They were doing everything and they ran all the military. The Soviet Ambassador was a good fellow when you got to know him. He began to open up, although he used to bug me, and the French, all the time, every time we'd see him about, "why don't you stop nuclear testing," and questions like that. But their influence is definitely waning. The real hold that they had on the Congolese was supplying spare parts for the planes, and the military depended on them, and Sassou depended on his military and they wanted their toys. So when the Soviets began to cut those down, he had to weigh the balance. Whether he could keep his military in line without the toys, and thereby snub the Soviets, or not.

Q: *Well, looking at this--I mean, after all, you'd served in that whole area for a long time, did you see this as really any threat to anybody, or is this just that the Soviets had a one little foot hold and they were using it but it wasn't going anywhere.*

LUKENS: No. I don't think it was a threat at all. I think the Americans tend to exaggerate. It wasn't a threat at all. Again, you have to be, and I'm probably as inconsistent as the next guy, but you have to take some of this, not take it at face value. They mouthed all the slogans, "down with imperialism," "down with capitalism," and so on. And they're opening up and asking for investment, and being perfectly open to us. You have to ride with the punches. I think some Americans are too liberal. They say these people are hypocritical. Well sure they are, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't be flexible.

Q: *I was Consul General in Naples and we had a communist mayor who used to asked me, "When could he get more fleet visits from the Sixth Fleet?" Particularly repairs, it meant jobs.*

LUKENS: I remember the famous communist mayor in Martinique, Aimé Césaire, had the most wonderful time giving him a bunch of books on Lincoln. And they were scared in Washington that he was going to start a communist rebellion in Martinique. So it was a very satisfying time in Brazzaville, except for not getting Sassou into Reagan there, but nevertheless we liked the people very much. I felt I had good access. As good as anybody. Sassou was a cold fish in a way. He didn't want lots of visits from Ambassadors, even the French. But the other people did, pretty much, so I felt it was a very productive three years.

Q: *Well, looking back on this, what gave you your greatest satisfaction, would you say, in your career?*

LUKENS: It is hard to compare because there were so many different things. I mean, it was very exciting doing that Portuguese bit; it was very interesting for the three years in South Africa, and, of course, it was satisfying to have my own mission in Africa; and to feel that I had

accomplished something in Brazzaville. It's very hard to compare. People always say, "Which one did you like best?" Well, they're all so different that it's really hard to compare. But I don't think...I can't compare, but all of these posts have been interesting and they've had a certain somewhat illogical track to them.

JOSEPH C. WILSON IV
Deputy Chief of Mission
Brazzaville (1986-1988)

Ambassador Joseph C. Wilson, IV was born in Connecticut in 1949. He attended the University of California at Santa Barbara and after working in a variety of fields joined the Foreign Service in 1976. Wilson has served overseas in Niger, Togo, South Africa, Burundi, the Congo, and as the ambassador to Gabon. He has also worked in the Bureau of African Affairs, as the political advisor to the Commander in Chief, US Armed Forces, Europe, and as the senior director for African Affairs at the National Security Council. Ambassador Wilson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.

WILSON: I went out to Congo, Brazzaville. as Deputy Chief of Mission.

Q: And you were there from...

WILSON: 1986 to 1988.

Q: You were off in 1986 to the Congo, Brazzaville. Could you describe the type of government. What was the political and economic situation in Brazzaville, and how did you get the job?

WILSON: I got the job because I had already been DCM in Burundi, so I had a track record as DCM. A fellow that I had worked with in South Africa by the name of Alan Lukens - he had been consul general in Cape Town and had been named ambassador to Brazzaville - asked me if I'd like to go and be his DCM. I said "Sure;" it sounded like a lot of fun. The Congo, Brazzaville, is a former French colony as opposed to the Congo, Kinshasa, which was a former Belgian colony. The Congo has traditionally been one of the most politicized of all African countries. They have had political movements and violent demonstrations in the streets for virtually their entire modern history. When I was there, there were in the throes of, I guess, the second or third Marxist-Leninist socialist fascist military dictatorship, which basically meant that the military was in control. There was a military colonel, Denis Sassou-Nguesso, who was in charge of the government. He had overthrown his immediate predecessor, Joachim Yhombi-Opango, who had been made president after the assassination of the country's first military leader and second president, Marion Ngouabi, who was a Communist to the core. He had changed the flag so that it was a hammer and sickle on a red background.

The Congo in the mid-1980s still mouthed the Marxism-Leninism rhetoric, and in fact their best allies were the Soviets. The Soviets had a very large embassy there. There were a lot of

scholarships given to Congolese to study in the Soviet Union. A fair number of them brought Soviet women back with them as wives; so within the Brazzaville population you had a fair amount of Soviet women married to Congolese. The Soviets occupied quarters right down by the port where the ferry went back and forth to Kinshasa; it was a pretty interesting location for them. They could pretty much see everything that was going back and forth between Zaire and Congo, Brazzaville.

Q: They didn't have relations with Zaire?

WILSON: Yes, there were relations. One could get back and forth. The ferries ran every day. The two countries met periodically. Relations were not ever terribly good, but I think that was a function of the various personalities. I think it was a pretty much conscious attempt by Mobutu not to have very good relations with any of his neighbors. The Congo's economy was driven principally by oil. Despite the Marxist-Leninist rhetoric, the principal trading partners remained the French who basically ran the oil business to the extent that I think, if anybody were to study it thoroughly, they would find that the French oil company made an absolute fortune over the previous 40 or 60 years. American oil companies, when I was there, were interested in some concessions and actually got some concessions. Amoco and Conoco were present in the Congo, although Conoco later backed out of most of its west African investments. Chevron was down a little further south in Angola. There were some missionary groups who were working in the north; they had been there for many years. That was the extent of our American presence.

I first visited the Congo in late 1978 when we were just reopening our embassy there. Our embassy had been closed at the time of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, and we were just reopening it. We were hoping to have a Peace Corps program in the Congo, but then came the coup that brought Sassou power, and all our efforts stopped. We opened the embassy at a very low level. We had an ambassador and maybe half a dozen people working there. The embassy grew slowly from that time, from the late 1970s, till the time I went back in 1986. It was an interesting time. Sassou was making overtures towards the West and was reducing, I think, his dependence on the Soviets; he was openly interested in closer relations with the United States. When I got there, he had just been named president of the Organization of African Unity - the OAU. Historically the head of the OAU, when he goes to New York for the UN General Assembly, has an opportunity to meet with the American president; he comes on either a private visit or working visit as the head of the OAU representing Africa. There was not a lot of interest in the Reagan administration in meeting this avowedly Marxist-Leninist military dictator. We tried to make the case, as did the Bureau of African Affairs, that Sassou was to be met not as the Congolese president but as the head of the OAU. We had been reasonably successful in making this pitch in the first few weeks that I was there in 1986. Then Sassou's foreign minister went to the UN General Assembly. During the course of his remarks to the UN General Assembly, he equated Zionism to racism, which was a whole new way of looking at Zionism. That predictably really gave pause to the Israelis and their American friends in Washington. I got a phone call from the deputy assistant secretary saying, "Look, they have just queered any chance of a meeting with Reagan unless they do something dramatic to basically denounce their foreign minister or otherwise correct the record." The ambassador asked me to go see the president's secretary general to explain to him that something dramatic had to be done. The ambassador suggested that I tell the secretary general that they ought to fire the foreign minister.. In the car on the way to

the presidential offices, I thought about it for a while, and concluded that I really couldn't go so far as to tell them to fire their foreign minister. I thought that they might take that rather badly. I tried to finesse the issue by just saying that if they hoped to have a meeting with our president, they were going to have to clarify the minister's statement in a way that made it very, very clear that he had not been speaking on behalf of the government. Then the secretary general asked me precisely what I had in mind in terms of a dramatic way of making amends and I said, "Well, far be it for me to suggest how you deal with issues that are really your own, but it has been suggested in Washington that if the foreign minister were to lose his position, that would be viewed positively by your friends in Washington." Then I left. I thought I had finessed it pretty well, but of course the secretary general went right in to see the president and told him, "Wilson just came by and said 'Fire the foreign minister.'" The secretary general then apparently told Sassou, "The hell with that. We'll just get rid of Wilson. That'll show them." I've been told by a counselor close to the President, that a meeting was held shortly thereafter which decided that I wasn't really a big enough fish to be worthy of declaring *persona non grata*; so they didn't do anything. But for a brief period of time, my credibility with the higher reaches of government was pretty much compromised. Literally a few weeks later another counselor went to see the president and said to him that "You know this story that Wilson said to fire the foreign minister is just not true. You ought to take a look at the minutes of the meeting, because there was a notetaker in that meeting." So Sassou called for the minutes, and the minutes of the meeting made it very clear what I had said and what I hadn't said. Sassou was satisfied that I had not in fact been interfering in the internal affairs of their country. My relationship with him got better right after that.

As for Sassou's visit to the United States, he went to Washington, but Reagan wouldn't see him. They just wouldn't put him on Reagan's schedule. All we could do was to get Reagan to call him. He was staying at the Willard Hotel. Reagan gave him a call and said, "Welcome to Washington. I hope you're having a good time, etc...," after which Sassou hung up the phone and said, "That was very nice of him to take the time to call me. Given that I'm literally only about 100 yards away, it would have been nice to have been able to go over there and shake his hand." He was quite right on that. It didn't stop the Congolese press, however, from taking a picture of Reagan seated and picture of Sassou seated and putting them together on the front page of their local government-run newspaper, suggesting that a meeting had taken place.

Substantively while I was in Brazzaville and during the time when Sassou was president of the OAU, we worked very hard to do two things. One was to increase the level of American investment in the Congo by supporting our petroleum companies' efforts to expand their presence. And, two, in his capacity as president of the OAU, Sassou had defined two Africa-wide problems worthy of his attention. One was debt relief, which was a nonstarter - just not a major issue in 1986. It is now in 2001, but it wasn't then. The other one was the Angolan civil war. There had been a hiatus in our discussions with the Angolans. There had been no dialogue between the Americans and the Angolans or the Cubans or the South Africans on the Angolan issue for the previous 18 months. Sassou wanted to restart the dialogue. The Congolese were in a very good position to influence the Angolan side because most of the leaders in the MPLA had been in Brazzaville during the time that they were running their war against the Portuguese. Many of them had occupied positions in the Congolese administration. Almost all of the Angolan political leadership was friendly with the Congolese leadership; so there was a good

rapport. For 18 months, we worked with the Congolese to put together a series of ideas to transmit to Washington. We found that the most difficult part of putting the negotiating process back on track was convincing our Assistant Secretary Chet Crocker that the Congolese were serious and could deliver. Crocker held out; we finally sent somebody to Washington who was very close to Sassou - a very interesting character, a Malian author and politician, a Maoist who had spent seven years in jail in the deserts of Mali in the 1970s under Moussa Traore. This fellow had been a Modibo Keita guy, and when Traore came to power he was thrown in jail. His name was Sadu Banian Penate, a well known west African author and a well known west African Maoist at the time. He left Mali and was in exile in the Congo serving as an adviser to Sassou. He and I became very, very good friends. We sent him to Washington and he was actually able to persuade Chet Crocker, who was not a Maoist, that Sassou was good for his word and that he could deliver. Crocker described Sassou pretty much as I have described him, but he also used terms like "Marxist-Leninist lightweight who enjoys his Pierre Cardin suits and reads *Afrique Aziz* as his weekly reading material." *Afrique Aziz* is a kind of socialist, left-wing, lightweight news magazine. We finally got Crocker to come out to test the waters. This was in the middle or about the end of 1987 or just beginning of 1988. Crocker came to Brazzaville. It was agreed that the Angolan minister of interior, who was effectively the number two in that country would come from Rwanda to meet with him. Crocker got out there, but the president of Angola had gone to India. According to the Angolan rules of governance, the president and the minister of interior could not both be out of the country at the same time. So Sassou sent his airplane down to Rwanda with a very senior personal advisor - their ambassador the UN, or somebody of that rank. They bundled up the Angolan minister of interior and brought him to Brazzaville despite the fact that in leaving the country the minister of interior was in violation of his country's rules of governance. In any case, Sassou and the minister of interior met and that relaunched the process. We went from that to having a quadripartite meeting with the South Africans and the Cubans and the Angolans and ourselves, followed by a series of negotiations that led to what is known as "the Brazzaville protocol to the New York accords." The New York accords effectively de-internationalized the civil war in Angola, got the Cuban the South African troops out of Angola. That was a pretty significant piece of diplomacy; it was a lot of fun to work on it and to watch. I think for Chet it was one of the big breakthroughs in the management of the "constructive engagement" policy that he was trying to implement.

Q: What was in it for the Congolese to work on this?

WILSON: I think for Sassou it was a way of legitimizing himself in the eyes both of Africa and of the United States, of the Western world. He was able to crown his OAU presidency with a pretty significant success. I think that was part of it. Also in retrospect the Angolans were coming under a lot of pressure, and this was one way of the regime to ease some of the pressure on it - military pressure coming from the war against Savimbi by at least taking the South Africans out of the equation and by moving forward on lessening the scope of the conflict. But I think for Sassou it was principally a question of actually accomplishing something during his tenure as president of the OAU. It was in our interest to actually see that the Cubans go home. We didn't like the idea of Cubans hanging around central Africa destabilizing governments or potentially destabilizing governments or being in a position militarily to do that.

Q: You mentioned that the Malian intermediary was a committed Maoist and that Sassou had Maoist tendencies. Where did this come from? Was it sort of a homegrown thing, or where did this...

WILSON: I don't think Sassou was ever really a Maoist. I think Sassou was much more steeped in Marxism and Leninism, principally as a political organizing concept. Fundamentally the part of the concept that appealed to him was that he and his cronies would control the levers of power in the name of "The Party" - the ruling party. I'll just talk first about the Congo - a lot of it came from a vehement rejection by a highly politicized society of the yokes of colonialism at the time of independence. As a consequence, they made a decision to go in another direction from the direction under which they had labored for the 40, 50, 60 years being a colony of France. The people who in the early 1960s reached out to the Congolese in a very successful way as the Cold War was being played out in Africa, were the Soviets and their allies. They offered scholarships; they offered military training; they offered political training. They had their political people there helping to organize the party. The Congolese political leaders, while they were military guys, operated through the party. I think that was more than anything else that drove him. I don't think Sassou who is still president now was motivated by a sense of Marxist-Leninist principles - all power to the workers -but for him it was a question of providing controlling power to the party, which was organized the same way the communist party was organized. Mali was also a country that at the time of independence which rejected the French pretty strongly and turned to those who would help them as they were being isolated or ostracized by the French. At the same time they were ostracizing the French. Keita was one of those who for some reason or another seemed to become close friends with the Chinese. The Chinese were and are very, very active in Africa -major commercial partners. All those things that the Africans need, whether it is tin pots or silverware or the sorts of stuff you see in the open markets, small trade type items, all are made in China - not unlike a lot of what we see. So in both the Congo and Mali, I think it was a matter of turning to those who are willing to extend the hand of friendship at a time that they were looking for alternatives to the way that they had been governed by the colonial powers.

Q: You mentioned scholarships to the Soviet Union. My experience has been that the Soviet - and I have more experience with Bulgarian - scholarships were really a two-edged sword. They would invite Africans to go to Moscow, Sophia or wherever, where they would be treated like dirt. The Slavs don't take kindly to Africans. It's extremely apparent. So this often backfired. Did you find any of this?

WILSON: I think that's right in one sense. Most of the guys went to Leningrad. That is where the big university is - the Patrice Lumumba University. They would go there and they wouldn't be treated very well; so they would come back with not fond memories of life in the Soviet Union. On the other hand, it was higher education; whether they liked the Soviet Union or not, their experience with higher education was learning about life, whether it's politics or economics or sociology, as it was taught by Soviet professors. As a consequence, whether you liked the Soviets or not, the students' outlook on the world was going to be somewhat slanted by the education that had gotten, which was considerably different from the education that they would have gotten in Western Europe or the United States. As I have said, I've always thought that the big mistake that we made at the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall was not doubling or tripling our scholarship funds to these African countries and to other Third World countries; this was the

time when the Soviets and the East Germans and the Cubans and others who had big scholarship funds were reducing theirs. I thought so for two reasons: one, education has got to be the foundation for development and for progress in these societies; and, two, there was just a wonderful opportunity to step in there and bring a lot of people over to the States to learn in our universities and to see our system.

Q: How about the role of the French, not only in intellectual life but economic life and political life, in the Congo?

WILSON: You mentioned that studying in the Soviet Union or in Sophia, Bulgaria, as being sort of a double-edged sword. The relationship with the French is very much the same in that there was a certain amount of resentment over the way that the French continued to dominate the political and economic life of their former colony. At the same time, the language in Brazzaville and Paris was the same; there were historic ties; everybody had a relative who lived in France; people went there on vacation. There were a lot of French in the city of Brazzaville; that maintained a certain familiarity which to a certain extent overwhelmed the contempt, not by much perhaps, but to some extent. It was very, very difficult for these African countries to completely break their ties with the former colonial power just because there was so much common history.

Q: Did you find that while the embassy was working on relations with the Congolese, the French were in a way doing the same. Was there a certain rivalry in that?

WILSON: The rivalry - we're talking about 1986 to 1988 now - was on commercial matters. The French government supported French commercial activities very aggressively in their former colonies, and wherever they think they have an edge, they're going to use. The French oil company, Elf Aquitaine, was and to a certain still is a power unto itself. In Africa, Elf Aquitaine was the repository for French intelligence operatives; it was used as a funnel - and this is now coming out now in the French justice system - for money going to these former colonies and their governments when it came time for elections. Some of the money came back when it became time to fund French political parties at election time.

Q: They're having big scandals going on now.

WILSON: Big scandals now. It'll take a number of people down. It'll be interesting to watch. In a sense, there was always a rivalry. There was one case where the French had developed a cloning process for eucalyptus trees in the Congo. They were trying to produce stock for a paper mill plant, paper mill, but they could never get the paper mill up and running very well. There were literally hectare upon hectare upon hectare of eucalyptus trees, each of which looked like the one next to it because they were all cloned, and each of which, to an American eye, looked like telephone poles or electric poles that you would use to string wires across countries. The French had been working on this project for 20 years. They didn't have any idea as to what to do to commercialize the product. An American came in and said, "Gee, these look like telephone poles to me." He worked a deal with the Congolese to take possession of all these eucalyptus stands and was working hard on turning them into telephone poles, shipping them out to Syria and to the Middle East and places where they didn't have trees, but where there was a need to

run a lot of power lines. He was well on the road to commercialization of the tree stands. Then the French stepped in and undercut him in a big way. They did it just as the French can do everywhere, with a little money here or a little threat there and some underhanded deal somewhere down the road. They managed to take that the stands back, putting the American out of business. Those were the sorts of things that we would occasionally come up against. By and large in the 1980s, there was a tendency to allow the French to take the lead in areas that were not of primordial importance to us - and the Congo wasn't. "Constructive engagement" was essentially a southern African policy, and that was the African focus at senior levels of the American government at the time. When we had to deal with things like Liberia, or if later on we had to deal with Mengistu in Ethiopia, we did so on an emergency basis; "constructive engagement was where our continuing focus was.

Q: Did you feel very much, while you were in Brazzaville, that the real attention in the immediate area was on Zaire (Congo, Kinshasa)?

WILSON: Very much so. Congo Kinshasa at the time had our largest single embassy in Sub-Saharan Africa. It was the largest, or the second largest, in terms of personnel in the world if you include Foreign Service nationals. Everybody was in Kinshasa.

Q: What was the feeling or reflection you were getting from the Congolese government towards Mobutu and what he was doing?

WILSON: The sentiment towards Mobutu was that of all the neighboring countries - it wasn't just in Brazzaville, but it was also in Burundi and to a certain extent, although I wasn't up there very much, in Uganda. The sentiment amongst the neighbors was that Mobutu was going to do everything he could to keep them weak while making himself strong. That included efforts to destabilize his country. The neighbors were always looking askance at Zaire and wondering what Mobutu might be up to. They would go to the meetings in the region that Mobutu would attend. Mobutu's was kind of the "big brother" or the potentially threatening neighbor with whom you had to somehow make your peace with if you hoped to live to fight another day. There was a lot of healthy concern about what Mobutu might be up to and at the same time a recognition that they were relatively much weaker than he and his ilk. This was in the 1980s before Mobutu's decline and fall.

Q: Did we ever get a Peace Corps into the Congo while you were there?

WILSON: We had a Peace Corps staff in the Congo in the late 1970s and then because there was a coup, that office closed. When I was there from 1986 to 1988, we had a lot of discussions about starting a Peace Corps program. We had people coming in to make surveys, and we may have actually had an office open towards the end of my tenure, but it was just getting barely off the ground at that time. It's certainly obviously closed since then, in light of the renewed fighting.

Q: What about the American missionaries? Did they play much of a role?

WILSON: They had been there for a long time. There were not as many there as I've seen elsewhere in Africa, but there were these odd families -not in the sense that they were odd people

but there were just a few families scattered here and there in the north, principally working with the pygmy populations. We would see them as they would come through Brazzaville but they pretty much kept to themselves. They were not a real active part of Congolese life.

Q: Did tribalism play much of a role while you were there?

WILSON: Not when I was there. I think the heavy hand of the central administration was such that you didn't see much tribalism. It hadn't really reared its ugly head. That came about principally after I left when they got involved in the liberalization of the political sector. They had their national conference and brought all the political groups out of the woodwork. When they began to develop political parties in the Congo, most of the parties then grew up along tribal lines. That's not to say that there wasn't sort of tribalism; it just wasn't on the surface visible to the untrained Western eye. The marriage between Sassou and Antoinette, his wife, was essentially a marriage between the north and the south. He was an M'bochi from Oyo, and she was a Vili from Pointe-Noire; so one was from the coast and one was from the north. The coastal politics were the politics of oil and wealth, because they owned all the oil. The M'bochi ran the military and the Vili had run commerce from the exterior historically, which also happened to be where the oil fields were. So there was a division there. This all got played out in Brazzaville which is Congo territory I guess. Essentially there were the three different ethnic groups and three political groupings that played out their rivalries in Brazzaville. Right before I got there, there had been some problems between the south and the north that had resulted in a couple of tribal leaders being thrown. The leader of the southern group - the mayor of Pointe-Noire - had been convicted of terrorism in a real public trial. It was on television everyday all day long. He was sentenced to 20 years in prison. He was later released and, as far as I know, is back in Pointe-Noire. The people in Brazzaville became more active as Sassou opened up the political system.

Q: Did you feel that one of the jobs to get the Congo, Brazzaville off the "bad countries" list maintained by Department of State because it had certainly been there for some time?

WILSON: Yes, absolutely. We had had no relations with the Congo for a period of 10 or 12 years -something like that. Then we had had very modest relations with them. They were not bad enough to be hostile because the Congo just wasn't important enough to be hostile, but they were not friendly. We had a very small mission in a country which hosted a very large Soviet mission and where the Soviets really held sway. When I was there, it was at a time when the Congolese were reaching out and trying to improve their relationship with the United States; so one of our roles was to convey that desire to Washington and to convey then to the Congolese what it is that they needed to do if in fact they did want to get off our "bad countries" roster. Their involvement in the Angolan peace process was clearly a way of doing it. Since we had initialed the Brazzaville protocol in the fall shortly after I left - September of 1988 - and then we signed the New York Accords in December of 1988 or January 1989, Sassou returned to the United States and was able to meet with President Bush.. That was, I think, in recognition of their efforts to play a positive role in the solution of a regional problem. So to a certain extent we were successful in our efforts.

Q: Did you notice any diminution of Soviet efforts in that part of Africa but particularly in the Congo? This was the time of the Gorbachev reforms and perestroika and other things, so things were really changing in the Soviet Union. I'm not sure if they're hit yet, but was there any reflection of this?

WILSON: During the time that I was there, the DCM was the one who generally represented the U.S. embassy at Soviet functions; that dates back really to the invasion of Afghanistan. So both in Burundi and in the Congo I was the one who basically went and hung out at the Soviet receptions when they had all their military days or national days. I was the one who got to know the Soviets diplomatically through this. In fact, from 1987 on, it was pretty clear that the Soviet embassy was not getting the same sort of resources and the same sort of support that it had been getting. The number of Soviet personnel was down. Soviet activities in the country were down. Soviet interests in the Congo seemed to be waning. I think towards the end of my tenure there - that would be the 1987-1988 time frame, we began to see some signs that the Soviets were lowering their profile in that part of Africa - certainly in the Congo. So, to a certain extent, the answer to your question is "yes," although it was not highly visible or dramatic. It's certainly a far different Russian presence in Africa now than it was when I was there; the change has been dramatic since then.

Q: Did you view the Chinese influence there as benign, hostile or what?

WILSON: The Chinese influence has always been of a different nature. The Chinese have a different way of looking at development assistance. They will offer you development projects but the projects are designed to show what the Chinese can do and generally involves a large Chinese worker presence. We would export expertise. The Chinese would export workers who build roads or build stadiums or build buildings - e.g. National Assembly buildings. They were pretty good at that. Then their development people would stay in the country and bid on international projects. So if they had a development project to build a National Assembly, then they would bring 600 or 700 people over to do that - workers that would build the National Assembly - who then they would stay on and bid on World Bank projects or on other international opportunities. They would establish a worker presence in the country, who pretty much stayed by themselves. They were autonomous. They were self sufficient. You rarely saw them in town except when they came in to sell vegetables or buy things at the store. Their diplomatic presence was significant but not in any way hostile. They didn't fight the Cold War against us the same way that the Soviets did. You could go to a Chinese reception and be treated nicely. You go to a Soviet reception and you would have to fight the "kitchen debate" with the Soviet Third Secretary who happened to be half smashed on vodka just because he thought that he would have a good Congolese audience to listen to him rant and rave. That happened to me several times. The Chinese were more polite. I always thought that the Chinese offered a pretty good "south-south" type relationship to these African countries. They made products which were very cheap and the Africans provided a ready market for a lot of them. I've always thought that we ought to really worry more about the Chinese in Africa if we really care to maintain some influence or not to lose some of our influence. Today that might not be terribly important, but if you have a constellation of powers supporting China, including all of Africa, someday that might be important to protecting our interests in the international forum.

Q: Were the Libyans fishing on these waters at all?

WILSON: The Libyans had a very good relationship with the Congolese. There were some Libyan officers operating there under cover of a Libyan timber company. They were the ones who were the principal suspects in the planting of the bombs that went into the UTA airplane that crashed over Niger, along the Niger-Chad border.

Q: That's the one that killed Bonnie Pugh?

WILSON: That's right. That bomb was planted in Brazzaville.

Q: Did the Brazzaville people do anything about it?

WILSON: I was gone when that happened. I know that the Libyans reduced their presence, but whether that was forced by the Congolese, I don't know.

Q: Is there anything else we should cover - any other developments there? Any problems with the embassy personnel?

WILSON: No; we had a pretty good little embassy. Allen was there for the first year I was there, and then Len Shurtleff was there.

Q: Who?

WILSON: Len Shurtleff was there as ambassador the second year I was there. Actually the Congo was an interesting period for me because I was the one who was responsible for all the activities dealing with Angola; I'd be running back and forth between Bodion, who was working for Sassou, and the ambassador. We would meet two or three times a week, Sassou and Bodion and me. The ambassador and I would get together maybe once a month or once every six weeks to go over things and talk about what was happening on Angola. Then we would get the principalis together a couple times, a couple or three times, to discuss the situation. That was a lot of fun. Towards the end of that, Crocker's special assistant flew out to Brazzaville to see me. He was a guy by the name of Robert Cabelly. We went out to lunch, and he said, "Look, Crocker wants you to know that he thinks you've done a great job on this, and he wants to reward you by giving you any job you want. So what job would you like? I will carry back your wish to Crocker, and we'll make it happen." I said, "Well, the only thing I've every really wanted in the Foreign Service was to be the "Africa watcher" in our embassy in Paris. I've been in Africa now for the better part of 10 years, and I'd really like to follow events here from Paris." So Cabelly said, "All right, you've got it. Not a problem." He got on the airplane, and while he was flying back from Brazzaville to Washington... Remember that even in the 1980s, if you wanted to make a phone call to Washington, it often took three days; if you wanted to call Kinshasa, you would have to call through Paris and Brussels and back down to Kinshasa, which could take days as well.

JAMES D. PHILLIPS

Ambassador
Congo (1990-1993)

Ambassador Phillips was born in Illinois in 1933. He received his Bachelor's degree from the University of Wichita in 1957 and his Master's in 1958. After serving in the US Army from 1953 to 1955, he entered the Foreign Service in 1961. Postings throughout his career include Paris, Elizabethville, Luxembourg, The Gambia, Copenhagen and Casablanca. Mr. Phillips then became the ambassador to Burundi and Congo. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on May 5, 1998.

PHILLIPS: The Department offered me a second embassy in Brazzaville. The Congo also had a Marxist dictator named Denis Sassou-Nguesso whose policies were ruinous for the country. I don't know if my experience with Bagaza was the reason for choosing me for Brazzaville, but it may have been a consideration. In any case, I was happy to accept.

Q: *So you were in the Congo, Brazzaville from when to when?*

PHILLIPS: I was there from the summer of 1990 until the early fall of 1993.

Q: *What did you find out about Congo, Brazzaville prior to going? I assume you came back to Washington and went through confirmation and all of that? Were there any problems with confirmation or anything like that.*

PHILLIPS: Well, there was a long delay in my Senate confirmation. Jesse Helms again had an issue with someone in my group. The Department tended to send groups of nominees before the Senate at the same time, and if one got delayed all got delayed. Eventually I was sworn in and arrived at post in July of 1990. It was hard to prepare for the Congo because there was not a vast literature on the subject in English. I went to the State Department library and the Georgetown University library and read a number of books and articles in French. There is more written about the pre-independence period than about the post-independence period. I read what I could and talked to academics like William Zartman who teaches at SAIS and is an expert on Africa. I contacted my predecessors who were still available, Al Lukens and Len Shurtleff, both of whom were very helpful. I had a full array of briefings from all the agencies interested in that part of the world.

Q: *You have to explain when you say the Congo?*

PHILLIPS: This was the Congo that didn't change its name. We used to distinguish the former French colony and the former Belgian colony by calling one Congo Kinshasa and the other Congo Brazzaville. Congo Kinshasa became Zaire under Mobutu and Congo Brazzaville never changed its name, or more accurately, changed it only slightly. It became a one-party regime shortly after independence in the early 1960s and as a badge of its radical Marxism adopted the name "People's Republic of the Congo" echoing the term used in some Asian and European communist countries. But it was most often called simply the Congo.

You can never learn enough about a country, but after my consultations in Washington I felt fairly well prepared. I spoke French, I had served in Zaire and I knew the region. It was helpful that State Department policy never permitted a change of Ambassador and DCM at the same time. The Deputy Chief of Mission, Roger Meece, had been in the Congo for two years and knew a great deal about the country. He provided expertise that I lacked.

Q: *What were American interests and concerns in the Congo and did you have a mental agenda that you took with you?*

PHILLIPS: Our interests were strategic and economic. The Congo had been a Soviet enclave. Brazzaville is right across the river from Kinshasa. If you think of Minneapolis and St. Paul, that is the relationship between Brazzaville and Kinshasa. It could be one city divided by a river. It was a listening post for the Soviets, a window on Angola, Zaire and all of Central Africa. It was an island of Soviet influence in the middle of a very troubled sea. One of our main interests was simply to know what the Soviets were up to. When I got there, Sassou Nguesso was the President. He had been elected like other communists leaders in sham elections and had been in power for 15 years. There was a huge Soviet, East German, North Korean and Chinese presence and just a smattering of Western embassies.

On the economic side, oil had been discovered offshore near the Atlantic port city of Pointe Noire. Congo's offshore fields are part of a vast area of oil deposits stretching down the Atlantic coast from Nigeria to Angola. Some analysts believe deposits in that area are equal to those in the Arabian Gulf. The oil is readily accessible because of new deep-water drilling technology. It is attractive to oil companies because they can add to their proven reserves, which is their basic goal. They love to have known deposits they can draw on when the time is right. If the Soviets were the most influential power politically, the French were the most influential power economically. Elf, the French quasi-national oil company, developed the oil fields and had worked out a very cozy relationship with Congo's political leaders. If you want to see corruption at its worst put together an international oil company and a communist dictatorship. There are absolutely no controls. No free press. No checks and balances. Elf was rather handsomely taking care of top Congolese officials and party leaders, probably not more that three hundred prominent families, and creaming off the rest for itself.

American companies wanted to do business with the Congo even though it was a Marxist state, and they had made some inroads into what the French regarded as a special sphere of influence. Conoco, Chevron, Citizens Energy, Amoco and Apache all had a foothold in the Congo. They were mainly working in areas Elf had rejected. Amoco had some production and the others had drilling rights. Just a bit south in Angolan waters Chevron had huge offshore production. So a major interest of the United States was to try to assure that American companies were treated fairly in a difficult environment marked by strong Soviet political influence and French economic ascendancy.

Q: *When you arrived in June or July can you give a feel for how you saw Brazzaville and how you were received?*

PHILLIPS: Let me answer with an anecdote. President Sassou-Nguesso was in his mid-forties. He had a daughter in her twenties who was engaged to marry the President of Gabon, Omar Bongo, who was in his sixties. It was a political marriage and a major event for both countries. The marriage was scheduled for a day or two after my arrival and the Chief of Protocol told me the President wanted me to attend the wedding and had arranged for me to present my letters of credentials immediately. This was an unusual gesture because normally Ambassadors had to wait weeks or months to present their letters. Ambassadors cannot have official contacts in a country before this ceremony takes place. The local press made a big deal out of it, taking it as a sign that the Congo wanted to move closer to the United States. Actually, I believe the Congolese were beginning to wake up to the fact that they weren't getting their fair share of the oil revenues and they wanted American oil companies to balance Elf's presence. So I was the object of a minor charm offensive.

I presented my credentials on a Thursday and the wedding was next day. There was a huge outdoor reception on the grounds of the Presidential Palace. The diplomatic corps was there along with about 2000 guests. The King of Morocco sent a plane full of cooks and waiters in Moroccan native dress to cater the event. I knew some of them from my time in Casablanca because they were the same crew that catered the King's parties. The reception was surreal, like something out of a Fellini film. Driving to the Presidential Palace you passed through miserable slum after miserable slum. In spite of the Congo's oil wealth most Congolese were dirt poor. The roads were terrible, the schools, hospitals and clinics were dilapidated and the city was generally dirty and shabby. Even in Burundi the University had something of a campus; but at Brazzaville University the students were literally attending classes under the trees. So this sumptuous wedding reception was held against a backdrop of abject poverty. The Moroccan buffet was elaborate, with whole lambs roasted on spits. There was a bottle of Dom Perignon champagne in front of each guest's place at the table and it was constantly replenished as the evening wore on. The Congolese men wore beautifully tailored suits and their wives were dressed in Paris gowns and were covered with jewelry. The dinner went on until midnight and then the dancing began. There were lovely Congolese women available for anyone who needed a partner. Finally about four in the morning the German Ambassador said he was exhausted and asked me if I wanted to leave, which I was ready to do. We tried to go but the soldiers at the gate told us no one could leave until the presidents left. We had to stay until around six thirty in the morning. So that was my first impression of the Congo; a country of brutal contrasts between a wealthy elite and an impoverished people.

Q: *Americans have a missionary background. We can't help it. Did you have any feelings of trying to do something about the situation?*

PHILLIPS: Well, I had been in the Service for 30 years and I was pretty realistic about what I could do. We had no AID program because the Congo's oil revenues made it a middle-level income country by World Bank standards and we could not assist middle-income countries. I knew that aggressively working with opposition groups was a non-starter. Ambassadors could support democratic movements, but instigating them was another matter. It was also not in the larger interests of the United States to challenge France too directly in Africa because we needed French support in other areas. Things were happening on the world stage that completely overshadowed anything going on in the Congo. The Soviet Union was collapsing and no one

wanted to rock the boat. My brief was basically to report on what was going on politically and do what I could to help American business interests. So I did not bring much missionary fervor to the job.

Q: *I would imagine that you would have arrived at an embassy that at its own level would have been stacked heavily with CIA or Soviet Union types not looking at the Congo per say but looking at the North Koreans and others. This was a real transition time as the Soviet Union came apart while you were there. It was obvious the Soviets were withdrawing. Did you find that the embassy was pointed at something that was disappearing?*

PHILLIPS: Yes. The Soviet empire was crumbling before our eyes. In Brazzaville there was both a West German embassy and an East German embassy. The East German embassy was five or six times larger than the West German embassy. But during my first year in Brazzaville East Germany was absorbed into a united Germany. The East Germans were sent home and the West German Ambassador inherited a huge embassy building. He called me one day and said he wanted me to understand what he was doing because it was purely personal and had no political significance. The East German Ambassador was leaving Brazzaville and he was giving him a little champagne reception. He said he liked him as a person and thought that he might well be arrested when he got back to Bonn, so he wanted to make a farewell gesture. That was the sort of thing that was happening.

The Embassy adjusted rapidly to the new situation. Quite a few people were transferred and the post was seriously downsized. But we maintained a CIA presence because the Chinese and North Koreans were still in Brazzaville in force. Once a North Korean defector came to the embassy on a weekend asking for political asylum. The CIA station chief was on vacation and I had to call on Kinshasa for assistance. They sent a team over and whisked him across the river to Zaire and eventually got him back to Washington. It turns out he was a scientist the North Koreans wanted out of Korea for some reason and had posted him in Brazzaville. I learned that he gave us critical information about North Korea's nuclear program. The incident taught me that an intelligence capacity is like insurance, you never know when it will pay off.

Q: *By 1990 or so Mobutu was in our bad books. He was no longer considered the bastion against communism. Was there any standby in case all hell broke loose in Zaire?*

PHILLIPS: There was certainly the possibility that all hell would break loose in Zaire. By 1990-91 the U.S. hadn't totally abandoned Mobutu, but he was certainly out of favor. He had lost touch with his people and he ran what came to be called a kleptocracy. But he was still useful. He supported Savimbi in Angola which was popular with some powerful Republican senators, and he was helpful in resolving regional problems. Zaire was on the Security Council at the time of the gulf war and Mobutu consistently supported U.S. positions in the UN. So relations were cool, but the U.S. was not actively trying to oust Mobutu. Our hope was that Zaire would eventually elect a new leader.

Q: *We'll move back to Mobutu. As a non-African expert I would think that in a place like the Congo, free and fair elections sounded good but had no pertinence to the tribal currents and all and communications in a place like the Congo?*

PHILLIPS: Are you taking about Zaire?

Q: *Kinshasa, Zaire.*

PHILLIPS: You are right. Nothing could be more difficult than organizing free and fair elections in Zaire. Later, after I retired from the Foreign Service, in 1996 I believe it was, I led a mission to try to determine what it would take to hold elections in Zaire. Our team of six people from the National Democratic Institute and National Republican Institute spent about six weeks in Zaire looking at everything from infrastructure to communications to political will. We concluded that well over three hundred million dollars would be needed just for election logistics. In fact we came to believe that it will take years and much more of an investment than that to organize meaningful elections in a country whose infrastructure - roads, telecommunications, administrative services - are broken or non-existent.

Q: *Brazzaville was not a center of dissident forces then that we were stroking?*

PHILLIPS: No, absolutely not. There may have been dissident forces opposed to Mobutu in Brazzaville, but we had nothing to do with them.

Q: *What was your embassy doing during the time you were there?*

PHILLIPS: I would like to tell the story in several installments. The first chapter began when I arrived in June of 1990. Sassou-Nguesso was in power as the Marxist head of a one-party state. The embassy was organized as a listening post and an economic support post. We had almost no consular work. We had a cultural center which was a magnet for anti-U.S. protests. Relations were improving, however, because Chet Crocker, the Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, used Brazzaville as a base when he was trying to broker a peace agreement in Angola. Sassou-Nguesso had been helpful because it was in his interest to see the Angolan conflict resolved.

That was the setting, and had business continued as usual my life in Brazzaville would have been rather uneventful. But in September of 1990 a major labor dispute broke out that had unforeseen consequences. The labor unions were normally part of the communist establishment, but because of changes in Eastern Europe and the decline of Marxist influence worldwide, the Congo's labor leaders were emboldened to challenge the regime. There was a strike that the government handled rather badly. Other dissidents began openly criticizing the regime and the security forces appeared unwilling or unable to crackdown as they would have in the past. In fact the Marxist regime was reeling. It could no longer convincingly justify its hold on power. A university professor told me it was as if people were waking up from a bad dream; they were asking themselves why they were on foot while party leaders were riding around in Mercedes.

There were no lack of cause for popular resentment. For example, a beautiful, modern building in Brazzaville had been built with European assistance funds as part of the university. But instead it was being used as headquarters for the youth wing of the party. It was a hangout for all the young Marxist thugs. Ordinary people began to question such things, and the government had

no answers. The old argument that the party served the interests of workers and peasants rang hollow.

Sassou-Nguesso tried to buy time by proposing new elections, but he was fast losing credibility. Opposition leaders came out of the woodwork and began insisting on a uniquely African institution called a national conference. The idea was to bring people together in a setting where everyone could have a say on the model of palavers held in African villages. The point of such a gathering was to establish procedures for adopting a new constitution and eventually electing a new government. Sassou-Nguesso fought the national conference idea tooth and nail, but it gained momentum and he had no choice in the end but to convene one.

The National Conference met in the parliament building, displacing the communist legislators. It was a grass roots institution and was launched with high hopes. I say that a bit wistfully because the story has a sad ending. But at the time we did not know how things would turn out.

Q: *Were the progressive forces in France paying attention to this and thinking of giving support and were we involved or other Europeans? I am thinking of the socialist/labor left of European politics which was helpful in Portugal and other places like that.*

PHILLIPS: The Congolese at this point were not relying much on outside help. What was occurring was a full-scale popular revolution, but a bloodless and disciplined one. I don’t think the French immediately saw it as a Pandora’s box in terms of their interests. As the National Conference progressed, however, it became clear that its participants harbored tremendous resentment against both the Soviet Union and France. Speaker after speaker demanded an accounting of the Congo's oil revenues, alleging they had been lost to Elf and government corruption. Speakers also expressed the strong belief that the ruling party could not have maintained its hold on power for so long without French complicity. But the aim of the conference was not so much to rehash the past as to build the future. Its main goal was to establish a transitional government that would organize democratic elections. The new situation brought dramatic changes for me. The new leaders expected support from the United States, particularly in preparing for elections. The difficulty was that Washington had a narrow focus in Africa, limited largely to South Africa and Angola, and had no budget for assisting emerging democracies like the Congo.

Q: Could you have tapped into the various non-governmental organizations? You mentioned the institute of democracy. There are various things in the United States that are quasi supported by the government. I would think you could say come on over here and help.

PHILLIPS: It was more difficult than you might think. The bureaucratic process in Washington was cumbersome and ineffective when it came to assisting emerging democracies, and the NGOs were part of the system. I am getting ahead of the story but let me say that once the Congo set a time table for elections, I pleaded regularly with Washington for assistance funds. I remember sending one telegram that ended with the plaintive questions: “If not the Congo where. If not now, when?” The answers I got were bureaucratic gobbledygook. There was an interagency committee on democracy assistance that was tied up in knots. It was incapable of acting in a timely fashion. Moreover, Washington's idea of help was to send consultants to lecture, for

example on the role of a free press in the democratic process. Important sure, but not the kind of help the country needed. What the Congo needed was assistance with transportation, communications, election materials and equipment, things that cost money. Neither official Washington nor the NGO community was prepared to provide that kind of assistance.

But lets go back to the late 1990 early 1991 period. The National Conference got off to a good start. The delegates elected a Catholic bishop as their presiding officer and set up committees to deal with legal, political, economic and social issues. They decided to choose an interim government to prepare for elections and manage the country until an elected government could take office. Two main candidates for the job of interim Prime Minister emerged. One was Pascal Lissouba, a well-educated biologist who had been jailed and then sent into exile by the communists. He had been living abroad for years, working for UNESCO. The second was Bernard Kolelas, a political activist who saw himself as the Nelson Mandela of the Congo. He had been tortured on several occasions by the government and would not hesitate to show you his scars. He had been a gadfly to the Marxist regime for 20 years. To his credit he saw that his election as interim Prime Minister might be too much for the Marxists to swallow. They still had the power to cause trouble and Kolelas wanted to avoid a fight just then. He planned to run for President eventually, and made the tactical decision to stand aside for a surrogate candidate named Andre Milango, an economist who had spent a number of years in Washington at the World Bank.

Because Lissouba had lived in Paris while working at UNESCO and Milango had lived in Washington, the press and local political observers claimed that Lissouba was favored by France and Milango by the United States. Rumor soon had it that I was actively supporting Milango. The truth is that at that point I had never met either man. I think it is human nature to see politics as theater. It was inaccurate but made good theater to believe in a French candidate and a U.S. candidate. The National Conference was fairly evenly divided between Lissouba backers and Milango backers, but Milango was narrowly elected by the delegates.

The National Conference started in December of 1990 and ran through July of 1991. It ended on a positive and rather moving note. There was a massive fountain in the courtyard of the parliament building and all of the country's political leaders, including the former dictator Sassou-Nguesso, gathered there on the last day of the conference for a hand-washing ceremony. The symbolism was meant to suggest they were done with the divisive past and were ready for a united future. The conference decided that henceforth the Congo would have a multiparty system of government, changed its name from the "People’s Republic of the Congo" to the "Democratic Republic of the Congo" and adopted as its slogan the familiar words, "of the people, by the people and for the people." It was a hopeful beginning. I shall always believe the United States should have and could have done more to help this small country which had courageously overthrown a Marxist dictatorship. But we didn't give them much besides advice.

Now starts the second chapter in my Congo saga. I was the first Ambassador to meet with Milango after he was sworn-in as interim Prime Minister. He asked for United States help in preparing for elections. I said I would inform Washington of the request and suggested he make up a list of priority needs to distribute to friendly governments, the European Union, the UN and non-governmental organizations. His government prepared such a list, but it reflected a lack of

experience and a lot of wishful thinking. It included a fleet of cars, helicopters and airplanes, among other complete non-starters. But it also identified many practical things that were essential to the electoral process. France, Germany, Italy, the European Union and the UN used it to shape their assistance programs. The U.S. contribution was minimal. We did send a team of election observers to monitor the voting, but we simply had no funds for much else. In fairness to the Department, it was not clear at that time what would happen in South Africa and significant funds were frozen to meet possible requirements there. I was able to do one thing. The political parties wanted transparent ballot boxes of the kind they had seen in France. They wanted boxes you could see into. So I went to Conoco, which was a subsidiary of Dupont, and asked if they could contribute some sheets of heavy plastic to make the boxes. They agreed to provide sheets of a transparent plastic material and to contribute the funds needed to have the ballot boxes constructed locally. But the Conoco manager told me it was very expensive to fly in the material because it was heavy and they could only send so much. When it arrived we gave it to a local firm to make the boxes. A day or two later the firm called to say there wasn't enough to make all the boxes the government needed. They proposed making two sides of the boxes out of the plastic and the other two sides and the top and bottom out of wood, and we said okay. I invited all the political leaders to a cocktail party to unveil a sample ballot box. To a man they complained that the boxes "were not really transparent." You could see into them of course, but that wasn't enough; they wanted all four sides transparent. They had no experience with democratic procedures and were deeply afraid of being cheated. Still, they found they could live with "semi-transparent" boxes.

During the transition period tensions with Elf flared up. The Milango government wanted to take a hard look at Elf's dealings with the former government, not least of all because when it took office the treasury was absolutely bare. There was literally no money in the till. But Elf stone-walled and the investigation got nowhere. The government then asked the World Bank to audit Elf 's operations in the Congo, but again Elf refused to open its books. At about this time there was a big oil spill near Pointe Noire and Elf refused even to let the Minister of the Environment on its property to inspect the damage. Elf had been all-powerful in the Congo during the previous regime and was behaving as though nothing had changed. But the company was beginning to realize just how much reform could threaten its interests and it lobbied the French government to put pressure on Milango to leave Elf alone. France became much cooler towards the new regime and Elf, for its part, apparently decided it would do whatever it took to maintain its dominance. It caused a great deal of trouble as the Congo's new institutions tried to take hold.

Presidential, legislative and local elections were scheduled for the summer of 1991. The government secured enough funding from European countries, the EEC and the UN to finance the elections and it did its best to ensure that they would be free and fair. As the election campaign began, however, it became clear that the country was fracturing along ethnic lines. The problem is endemic in Africa. In the Congo's case, ethnic divisions had been masked by an authoritarian, one-party system for nearly thirty years. But the introduction of multiparty democracy brought them to the surface and perhaps exacerbated them. There were no great ideological differences among the newly-created parties. They all to a lessor or greater degree favored democratic pluralism and a Scandinavian-style mix of socialism and free-market capitalism. So they differentiated themselves on the basis of ethnicity. This was done almost subconsciously. Party leaders didn't overtly play the ethnic card, but they didn't have to. Most

voters just naturally gravitated to candidates from their tribal group. As the campaign intensified this tendency solidified. By the time election day rolled around the vast majority of Congolese voted on the basis of ethnic preference.

The results of both the municipal and legislative elections, which preceded the presidential elections, confirmed the reality of tribal politics. On a map of the Congo we used different colored pins to track the strength of the different parties in each region of the country. Of course different ethnic groups were dominate in different regions, and the electoral map ended up being a mirror reflection of the ethnic map. For example, the northern regions of the country showed mainly red pins, the center green pins, the south yellow pins. One district would go 90 to 95% for party "A," another would go 90-95% for party "B," and so forth throughout the country. Since there were a number of small ethnic groups in the Congo and no one dominate group, a number of small parties won seats in the legislature. The voting system was a single-district-majority-winner system, but it might as well have been proportional representation, given the results. With no party or ethnic group winning a clear majority the country would have to be governed by a coalition.

The presidential election used the French system of two rounds of voting. The first round was held on the second Sunday in July and the second round on the following Sunday. If no candidate won a majority of the votes in the first round, the two candidates winning the most votes faced each other in the second round; all the other candidates were eliminated. All of the major political leaders ran in the first round, and I think many observers were surprised by how little appeal they had outside of their ethnic groups. For example, Sassou-Nguesso, the former President, got only 8% of the vote, almost exactly proportional to the 6-9% percent of the population his Mbochi tribe represents in the country as a whole. This may explain why the Mbochis embraced Marxism as a means of attaining power and then once in power resisted democracy so fervently; they knew that as a small ethnic group they would be hard put to win elections based on majority rule. This, by the way, is true throughout Africa. Daniel arap Moi, the dictator in Kenya, belongs to a tiny tribal group and would have a hard time winning in fair elections.

The two first round winners in the presidential contest were Pascal Lissouba and Bernard Kolelas. Lissouba represented a coalition of related ethnic groups located in the center of the country, and Kolelas was the leader of the Bakongo people who lived in the heavily populated areas in and around Brazzaville. Lissouba won the run-off election with sixty-four percent of the vote, handily defeating Kolelas. He did so by forming an alliance with Sassou-Nguesso and several other political leaders who had been eliminated in the first round of voting. European and American election observers noted some irregularities but by and large judged it a free and fair election. Kolelas, the persecuted, long-suffering opponent of the Marxist regime, could not believe that he could lose except through foul play. He protested loudly but got no international support for an investigation into alleged electoral fraud. There were rumors that France had given financial support to Lissouba's campaign and that the U.S. had done the same for Kolelas. I can't say what the French did, but I can assure you the United States contributed nothing to Kolelas.

Because he needed a majority in the legislature, Lissouba was obliged to form a coalition government. He named a Prime Minister who began negotiations with the various parties. The obvious partner was Sassou-Nguesso's old Marxist party, rebaptized a European-style Socialist party, because it had thrown its support behind Lissouba in the second round of voting. Although it only represented 8% of the vote, Sassou-Nguesso's group demanded the key ministries of Interior, Defense, Finance and Energy. Some observers speculated that these demands were based on the simple arrogance of a party used to governing; others contended old regime activists needed powerful posts to stave off embarrassing investigations of their tenure in office. Whatever the reason for their demands, Lissouba and his Prime Minister were not about to give them that kind of power. They offered them instead the ministries of Education, Public Works and Health. It is unclear if Sassou-Nguesso's party actually refused these posts. But what is clear is that they opened discussions with other parties with an eye to forming a legislative majority opposed to Lissouba. The only party large enough to achieve this end was Bernard Kolelas's party, the arch enemy of Sassou-Nguesso and company for nearly 30 years. Nonetheless, Sassou-Nguesso and Kolelas began negotiating.

About this time Kolelas asked to meet with me privately. I agreed and we met one evening at the DCM's residence. By then Roger Meece had been assigned to a new post. My new DCM was an excellent officer named William Gains who had established a personal friendship with Kolelas. After some embarrassment, Kolelas told me he was about to form an alliance with Sassou-Nguesso. He explained that he still considered Sassou-Nguesso the devil incarnate, but that politics makes strange bed-fellows. He claimed to believe Lissouba was potentially a worse dictator than Sassou-Nguesso and that a political marriage of convenience was the only way he could be stopped. The idea was to form a bloc in the National Assembly which would vote to reject Lissouba's choice for Prime Minister. This would bring down the government because the constitution provided that the President had to select a Prime Minister from the ranks of the majority in the Assembly. If his nominee was rejected, Lissouba would have to turn to the Kolelas-Sassou-Nguesso newly minted majority for a Prime Minister, and by extension for his entire government. Now the constitution was somewhat ambiguous on this point. I still recall that it was Article 72 that provided that the Prime Minister must be selected from the Assembly majority, but it also provided that the President could dissolve the Assembly and call new elections if his nominee for Prime Minister was rejected. The problem was that the constitution, modeled on French constitutions past, was not clear on whether the Congo would have a strong president and a weak legislature, or a weak president and a strong legislature. There are precedents in French history for both. The Kolelas-Sassou-Nguesso alliance forced the new regime to confront the issue within weeks of its inception.

I told Kolelas that I thought it was a terrible idea. Not only would he lose credibility by joining Sassou-Nguesso, he also risked throwing the country into chaos. I pointed out that the new institutions were in the infant stage, that no supreme court existed to sort out constitutional questions and that average Congolese citizens had no experience with democracy, let alone with a democracy that posed complex constitutional issues several weeks after a bitterly contested election. I argued he would be better off to accept the role of leader of the "loyal opposition." He would then be in a strong position to run again in the next elections. Kolelas listened politely, but it was apparent he had made up his mind. Within the week the scenario played out as Kolelas said it would, but only partially. The new Assembly majority rejected Lissouba's Prime Minister,

but instead of turning to Kolelas and Sassou-Nguesso in naming another one, Lissouba dissolved parliament and called for new legislative elections.

The stakes were high. Sassou-Nguesso and Kolelas were trying to marginalize Lissouba by shifting power from the Presidency to the National Assembly. They were trying to win by constitutional maneuvering what they failed to win in the elections. Both sides dug in their heels; both honestly believed they were in the right. When it became evident that Lissouba was serious about dissolving parliament, Kolelas supporters staged a protest march in downtown Brazzaville. This is when the first blood was shed. Lissouba's security forces confronted the marchers and shots were fired. About a dozen protesters were killed. This effectively polarized the country and created a situation marked by acrimonious charges and counter-charges and political ambiguity. Both sides thought the constitution justified their position. A hostile stand off was created that lasted a long time.

Lissouba called for new elections, but the opposition parties declared they would boycott them. I met with both sides to try to get them to work out some kind of compromise and eventually they did agree to a date and procedures for new elections. But this time it was the Lissouba administration that was in charge of organizing the elections, not a neutral transition government or a national conference. So the opposition was suspicious of every aspect of the preparations. In the event, Lissouba's party and its allies won a slim majority in the National Assembly, but the Sassou-Nguesso/Kolelas forces cried foul. They claimed that serious fraud had occurred in seventy voting districts: If their allegations were true in even a majority of these cases and if the results were reversed, the opposition would have a majority in the Assembly and the country would be back to square one. That is, Lissouba would be obliged to select a Prime Minister from the ranks of the opposition. It boiled down to the question of who would govern the country. Lissouba argued that his victory with sixty-four percent of the vote in a legitimate national election for the presidency gave him a mandate to govern. His opponents claimed they had won a majority in the National Assembly in the first legislative elections and had been cheated out of a majority in the second elections. Although European and American monitors had declared the second elections free and fair, suspicion and animosity now ran too deep for either side to back down. Political leaders began demonizing each other, political parties began recruiting and arming militias and the country was on the brink of civil war. All sense of tolerance and national unity had been lost in the several months since the end of the National Conference. I don’t know how many people were killed in the ensuing fighting, but I would guess that it was in the tens of thousands.

Q: Was it tribal mainly?

PHILLIPS: At first ethnic groups formed into two loose coalitions, but as time went on there was some switching of sides. Towards the end each tribe came to believe it could only rely on itself, and there was near anarchy. But yes, the fighting was largely tribe against tribe.

Political problems were becoming intractable and economic events were also proving to be divisive. When Lissouba took office he inherited an administration that was dead broke. He couldn't provide even rudimentary services. Civil servants hadn’t been paid for nine months and there was no new money coming in to pay them. Elf informed Lissouba that the previous

government had in effect mortgaged the Congo's royalty oil far into the future. Lissouba went to France hat in hand asking for financial support and he did get a little from the French Government and from Elf, but he was infuriated by Elf's refusal to open its books. Elf was telling him basically to be a good boy and he would be taken care of. Lissouba refused to play along and insisted that the Congo have at least treatment from Elf equivalent to that given other Francophone countries such as Gabon. Elf at the time was operating like a state within a state and the company turned on Lissouba when he became too insistent. Lissouba's relations soured not only with Elf but with France.

Q: Was he finding that the cause picked up any supporters among the French investigative press? It sounds like maybe everyone was in the game.

PHILLIPS: Politicians and journalists were either in the game or didn’t care. Neither the Socialists or the Gaullists wanted to upset Elf's apple cart. France saw its former African colonies as a special cultural and linguistic sphere of influence and were paranoid about encroachments, real or imagined, by other countries, especially the United States. The French government was protective of Elf and began to see Lissouba as a threat to its political and economic interests not only in the Congo but throughout Africa.

Q: *And Brazzaville has a particular spoke in the Gaullist thing.*

PHILLIPS: That is right. When De Gaulle left France to set up the free French movement during the second world war, he went initially to Brazzaville. He lived there for some time before he went to London. Brazzaville was called the cradle of the French resistance. They French Ambassador lived in the villa that had been De Gaulle's residence, and there was a statue of De Gaulle in downtown Brazzaville. But even before that, Brazzaville had been the administrative capital of French colonial Africa. So the French believed Brazzaville was special for them and they resented Lissouba for raising embarrassing questions about Elf.

Q: *During this very critical time what was your relationship with the French ambassador and what was he doing?*

PHILLIPS: Our relations were good on a personal level. The Ambassador was an accomplished diplomat named Michael Andre. We were quite friendly at first, but when Occidental Petroleum got involved in the Congo, we began to deal with each other with more circumspection. Ambassador Andre tried to be even-handed, but he had to implement French policy which became more and more a hostage to Elf's interests. We were always cordial, but in the situation that evolved we could hardly remain close friends.

Q: *You were talking about Occidental?*

PHILLIPS: Yes. Lissouba's early efforts to woo France had failed and by the fall of 1991 he was distinctly out of favor. France was disenchanted with the Congo's somewhat messy democratic movement, and Elf didn't hide the fact that it would have preferred to have Sassou-Nguesso back in power. But at first Elf 's tactic was simply to stone wall Lissouba whenever he requested a more open and beneficial relationship. Later Elf played hard ball. The trouble started when

Occidental came in with a very high-powered team to try to win an offshore drilling concession. But the more Oxy looked at the Congo, the more it saw a unique opportunity. As I mentioned earlier, the Lissouba government was desperate for money. The second legislative elections mandated by the dissolution of parliament were fast approaching. Lissouba badly wanted to pay civil servant salaries before the elections. The Congo had some "royalty oil," that is the government's share of the flow of oil produced by Elf and its partners, that wasn't mortgaged, and Lissouba tried to use it as collateral for a massive loan from Elf. But Elf didn't want to help Lissouba politically and refused. Oxy, however, had no qualms about helping Lissouba and began negotiating for the outright purchase of the royalty oil. Both sides recognized the huge risk involved because of increasing political instability, so the price was advantageous for Oxy. But the deal was also advantageous for Lissouba because of the timing. He needed to pay the civil servants and show some financial benefit for the country to win the legislative elections and maintain his hold on power, and the Oxy deal was all that was available in the short run. The result was that Lissouba agreed to sell Oxy the royalty oil plus drilling rights in two major offshore blocks for 150 million dollars. I was kept informed as negotiations went along, but I couldn't become directly involved as Ambassador because that would have been showing special favor to one U.S. company. Chevron and Amoco, for example, might have asked why I didn’t do the same for them. But I was as supportive as I could be. Dave Martin, who was the president of Occidental Petroleum, called me one evening to say that agreement had been reached and that Oxy planned to transfer $150 million to the Congo. I asked when and he said, "tonight." I suggested wiring the funds to the local branch of a Belgian bank. I knew the French would have fits when they found out about the deal and that money sent through the main bank in Brazzaville, which was French, might get conveniently "delayed." This had actually happened in the past, causing irritating delays in several of our PL480 rice sales to the Congo. The next morning the astonished manager of the Belgian bank called me to ask if I could explain why he suddenly had a 150 million dollars he didn’t have yesterday. I told him it was for the treasury of the Congo so he wouldn't have it for long.

When the French found out about the deal there was a major hue and cry. Local French businessmen led by Elf accused the United States of trying to replace France in the Congo and perhaps in all of West Africa. This was absurd. All we wanted was a fair shake for American firms trying to do business in the Congo. We even advised U.S. companies that they had a better chance of succeeding if they took on a French partner. Elf knew this, but was terrified that opening the market to American firms would force it to open its books for public inspection. Elf did not want to explain publicly why the Congo got only 13% of the oil produced on its territory while Gabon and other African countries got the normal 51%. Elf was in fact in the process of covering up a major scandal which eventually resulted in its CEO being fired and jailed, but at time we are discussing it was still all powerful. It had its own intelligence service and allegedly supplied money and arms to African allies when it suited its interests. It began actively opposing Lissouba and supporting Sassou-Nguesso.

All of this occurred ten days before the elections. Lissouba used the money to pay the civil servants some six or seven months in salary arrears, which was wildly popular, and his party went on to win a majority of seats in the election. Now the French were sure America had bought Lissouba and the elections. They did all they could to undermine the new Oxy/Congo relationship. Elf told Lissouba that if he would cancel the Oxy contract it would give him $150

million plus for the same deal, but Lissouba refused. He was pleased to have an American presence to balance Elf's power and went so far as to request that Oxy provide him with a team of advisors to help him put the Congo's oil production on a more solid footing. In my view this was a terrible idea because I thought it would create unnecessary headaches and in the end would prove impractical. Oxy thought Lissouba was asking for technical advisors and agreed. But the French thought he was trying to use Oxy for the much larger purpose of exposing Elf's corrupt practices. The French loved conspiracy theories and saw the whole thing as a design to exclude Elf from the very lucrative oil fields in neighboring Angola. Elf went ballistic, and the French government was almost equally upset. France saw Lissouba as nearly a traitor and began to behave accordingly. My relations with Lissouba improved significantly, but unfortunately I lost the trust of Sassou and even Kolelas because they thought the Embassy was implicitly involved in the Oxy deal and therefore in Lissouba's election victory. It took me some time to regain Kolelas's trust, and I never did reestablish particularly good relations with Sassou.

The final chapter in my Congo story is decidedly unhappy. Lissouba's coalition won the elections but the results were violently contested by the opposition parties. There was no Congolese institution capable of resolving the dispute and neither side would accept a compromise that excluded it from power. The country slid into a prolonged period of low-grade civil war. By low-grade I mean that there were never two fully equipped armies engaged in conventional warfare; rather there were a series of guerrilla skirmishes fought by ragtag militias. Of course Lissouba was able to rely on the Congolese army to some extent, but not entirely. He couldn't count on army elements from the northern provinces where Sassou's ethnic group held sway. There were strong indications that Elf supplied the opposition forces with money and arms, although I don't have concrete evidence of this. In any case thousands of Congolese lives were lost. The violence was concentrated in the Brazzaville area and I had to evacuate non-essential Embassy personnel. The evacuations were complicated by the fact that Kinshasa experienced sever civil unrest at the same time. So we had evacuees coming across the river to Brazzaville just as we were contemplating sending evacuees across to Kinshasa. In the end, both groups left from Brazzaville's airport which miraculously stayed open through all of the turbulence. Eventually both sides suffered enough causalities to become war-weary. They asked me to mediate which I tried to do, but a compromise agreement proved illusive at the time. A month or so later they turned to a United Nations mediator who, with the help of the President of Gabon, finally brought the two sides together. In early 1993 they agreed to have the election disputes resolved by a team of international jurists. The jurists investigated claims of fraud in seventy electoral districts and found 13 cases where irregularities had been serious enough to constitute fraud. Of these 13 contested seats they decided 10 should go to the opposition and three to the government coalition. That decision did not alter the majority in the National Assembly and it confirmed Lissouba's hold on power, but the opposition was exhausted and accepted it.

When I left in September 1993 a sort of uneasy peace had been established. The Embassy evacuees were able to return. Lissouba made Kolelas the mayor of Brazzaville and another opposition leader named Thystere-Tchicaya the mayor of Pointe Noire. This helped the process of reconciliation, but did not go far enough. Lissouba feared and hated Sassou-Nguesso and refused to give him any sort of face-saving position.

So that was the situation when I left the Congo. As an epilog I can tell you that Sassou-Nguesso eventually mounted a bloody coup d'etat with the help of French arms and Angolan soldiers. Our Embassy and residence were destroyed in the fighting. Sassou-Nguesso is once again President of the Congo. Lissouba is in exile in London. Oxy sold its interests in the Congo back to the government. We have an Ambassador to the Congo, but he is resident in Kinshasa. He will not move to Brazzaville until we get a new Embassy building and residence, so probably not any time soon. That's how things stand now.

Q: *During the time you were there was the African Bureau so fixed on South Africa and what was happening there that in other areas interest was just lacking?*

PHILLIPS: Yes, it was a case of bad timing. Suppose events in the Congo had occurred in the 1980s, before the Berlin wall came down. Imagine the interest that would have been focused on an oil-rich African country that overturned a Marxist dictatorship and established a democratically elected government friendly to the West. Our financial and moral support would have been overwhelming. But by 1991 events in the Congo were just a side show. By then the only place in Africa that drew sustained U.S. interest was South Africa. Moreover, Washington wasn't prepared to challenge the French claim to a special sphere of influence in parts of Africa. The attitude was that France wouldn't seriously challenge the United States in Panama, for example, so why should we seriously challenge France in the Congo. This is not to say that Washington was not supportive of Oxy and other American oil companies that tried to gain a foothold in the Congo. But there is support and there is support, and we were never prepared to go as far as the French in using political and diplomatic means to secure economic ends, at least not in France's African backyard. Oxy left the Congo voluntarily in 1995. Other American oil companies came in, but mainly as partners with French firms.

Q: *Do you have any feel about Elf, have they changed their spots?*

PHILLIPS: Well, when I left Elf was still unreconstructed for the most part. It had re-negotiated some contracts to give the country a better deal, but it was still profiting immensely from its Congo holdings. Since that time Elf has been entirely reorganized and privatized and I understand it no longer operates as a state within a state.

Q: You mentioned the lack of a real university. What would you say about the educated level of people in the government and business?

PHILLIPS: It was very high. Brazzaville had been the administrative capital of French West Africa. In the geography books when I was in grade school French West Africa was always colored blue, British Africa was pink and Portuguese Africa was green. The blue stretched all the way down the west coast of Africa, from Senegal to the border with Angola. The capital of that vast territory required administrators and clerks and the French educated a number of Congolese to fill those positions. This produced a well-educated elite. Ordinary people in the cities were by and large literate, but in the countryside the people were uneducated. Success in the Congo came to be defined as having a government job, a notion that was reinforced by the Marxist regime. The work of farmers and laborers and even entrepreneurs is not highly valued to this day. This mindset in not helpful as the Congo tries to develop a modern economy.

Q: *What happened to the three hundred?*

PHILLIPS: If you mean the three hundred Congolese families that I estimated thrived during the Marxist period, they lost their perks when they lost power. But most of them had money socked away in foreign banks. Some moved to Paris. Some moved back to their homes in villages in the northern part of the country. Elf continued to keep some on its payroll. Many came back to positions of power along with Sassou-Nguesso in 1996.

I would like to make a point that is not entirely related to your question. This is not based on extensive research, just on my own observations and reading of history, but I believe there is a pattern. Colonial powers, whether French, British, Belgian or Portuguese tended to favor large ethnic groups that lived along lines on transportation, a river, a railroad, later a highway. They would draw on these groups for their clerks, priests and minor functionaries of all kinds. They would give them whatever education it took to perform these tasks. At the same time they would draw on smaller ethnic groups from the more remote areas, often located in the north of the country, whose main activity was hunting as opposed to agriculture, for their security forces, for the native soldiers in the colonial armies and police forces. In the process they created an educated elite and a military elite from different ethnic groups. When independence came the educated elite, which had often provided leaders for the independence movement, claimed political power and formed the first post- independence governments. But it didn't take long for the military elite to realize they had the guns and therefore the real power and they deposed the educated elite and took over the government. They tended to be authoritarian and anti-democratic because they were from minority ethnic groups that could not win in a one-man-one-vote system. Examples that come to mind are the Congo, Zaire and Kenya: Sassou, Mobutu and Moi are all from minor, "warrior tribes." There are other examples, but that's enough to illustrate my theory about how Africa came to be ruled largely by military dictatorships from the mid-1960s to the mid-1990s.

Q: *Did you have any significant visits from the powers that be?*

PHILLIPS: No. There were not many official visitors while I was there. A few senators, some State Department officers at the Assistant Secretary level and some American businessmen, but those visits tapered off when the civil unrest began. There was one incident with a visitor that was tragic but bizarre. A young woman courier had to stop over in Brazzaville for several days during the height of the fighting. There was a curfew and most of the city was sealed off by barricades. She stayed with another young woman on my staff, a communicator. They were both interested in wildlife and the zoo was one of the few places one could still visit, so on a Sunday they took some food over to the zoo to feed the animals. This was an act of kindness because the zoo had been totally neglected during the fighting. The courier got too close to the lion cage trying to toss in some meat and a lion reached out and badly mauled her. Her friend called the Marines and they took her to a French clinic. The doctor called me and said he would have to amputate her arm nearly to the shoulder and that the only alternative was to med-evac her to South Africa where they had better equipment and might be able to save her arm. There was a Swissair ambulance service available that we could use, but we needed to get permission from Washington to use it. I also needed her husband's approval, either to have her treated in

Brazzaville or sent to South Africa. Finally, I needed the Congolese government to open the airport which was closed because of the curfew. So I spent the rest of the day on the phone. I called the husband, I called the State Department Medical Division duty officer and I called President Lissouba and got him up from his lunch. It was difficult to explain to them, especially Lissouba, how it happened that this person was attacked by a lion. I think the President thought I was drunk until I told him the whole story. Finally the husband and Department okayed the evacuation and Lissouba had the army open the airport. The French doctor bandaged her up and we sent her out on the plane that arrived about eight hours later. Unfortunately, the doctors in South Africa couldn't save her arm and it had to be amputated.

This sad story involving an animal reminds me of other, happier, encounters with wildlife. During my time in Burundi I became fast friends with the great chimpanzee researcher Jane Goodall. Her main base of operations is at Gombe Stream, in Tanzania and I met her there on a mini safari we took in 1988. She was deeply concerned about chimpanzee orphans and she asked me to help her set up a chimpanzee reserve in Burundi. Adult chimps are hunted as part of an extensive bush meat trade in Africa. The babies are often captured and sold as pets. Baby chimps make adorable pets for two or three years but they become unmanageable and quite dangerous as they get older. Once in captivity, however, they can never live again in the wild because they simply do not have the necessary survival skills. African zoos are not the answer because they generally provide at best run down, miserable cages. Since chimps live forty or fifty years it is terrible to condemn them to a life in animal prison. Jane's idea was to set up a sort of "half-way house" where the chimps could be in an enclosed natural area but would still be taken care of to some extent by wildlife experts. I went with her to discuss the idea with President Buyoya who agreed to set aside some land in a national park for a reserve. Jane brought in some people to manage it and they trained some local Burundi as guards and research assistants. And it worked well until the civil unrest forced Jane to move the chimps to Kenya. I helped her establish a similar reserve in the Congo near the port city of Pointe Noire and it still exists. It is a major facility that was financed in large part by Conoco and today houses over sixty chimps. It has somehow survived the Congo's civil wars.

There was one chimp named Gregoire at the Brazzaville zoo who had been in the same tiny, dirty cage since De Gaulle's days in the Congo. Jane took an interest in Gregoire and tried to find ways to make his life more bearable. She enlisted the aid of Brigitte Bardot, who financed a new, ultra-modern living space for Gregoire at the zoo. It was very touching to watch Jane gently encourage him to move into the new space. It was terrifying for him at first because he had lived in the same cage for over forty years, but he finally moved and he is now quite healthy and appears to be very happy. I continued my association with Jane after I retired from the Foreign Service as a member of the board of directors of the Jane Goodall Institute.

Q: *You left the Congo in mid-1993?*

PHILLIPS: I left in September of 1993. I was assigned as a diplomat-in-residence at the Carter Center in Atlanta, Georgia, and stayed there until September of 1994, when I retired.

End of reader